OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL

2026 - 2027

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Opportunity School
114 East Jefferson Street
Ottawa, Illinois 61350
815-433-2731
www.ottawaopportunityschool.org

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Dear Families,

Welcome to Ottawa Opportunity School. The Board of Directors and staff are proud of our school and pleased that you chose our school for your child's preschool education. We are all looking forward to getting to know your family.

We believe that parents and family play a vital role in their child's growth and development. We recognize the family as the child's first and most important teacher. For that reason, we encourage family involvement during your child's learning experiences at our school. We hope that you will interact daily with your child's teachers, volunteer in the classroom and attend special events.

We, in turn, will do our best to provide a safe, nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment so that your child may become a confident and competent learner.

Please feel free to contact us with concerns, questions or information you may want to share.

Sincerely,
Amy Marek
Director

Ottawa Opportunity School History

Nancy Savage established Ottawa Opportunity School in 1968 with a small group of concerned friends. They had a great deal of enthusiasm and enrolled eight children. They hoped to provide these children with a variety of interesting and enriching experiences. Opportunity School was established primarily to meet the needs of children whose families would not otherwise be able to provide an opportunity for a preschool experience.

The First Presbyterian Church, where Nancy Savage was a member, quickly took on this venture as a mission project. The membership was willing to finance the new project as well as provide the necessary space to house the program.

As time passed, the program grew beyond anyone's expectations. Suddenly, more room was needed and outside financing had to be sought. It was also necessary to recruit more teachers to add to the small volunteer staff that pioneered the program.

Although many families pay tuition, the objective is still to serve all families regardless of their ability to pay. This financial assistance is provided by many generous and caring groups and individuals in the community such as the Child Welfare Guild and Sunrise Rotary.

Mission Statement

The mission of Ottawa Opportunity School is to serve children and families in our community by providing a high quality, affordable early childhood education program and by establishing a working partnership between family and school.

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Statement of Purpose

Ottawa Opportunity School will:

Provide an opportunity for two, three, four and five year old children to expand their world with a variety of materials and experiences and to form relationships with children and adults outside the family in a safe and loving environment;

Provide an early childhood education program for all children; especially children who would not otherwise have the opportunity for preschool experiences. The school will attempt to accept all students who apply, without regard to sex, race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin.

Ottawa Opportunity School shall be regarded as part of the mission and outreach programs of the First Presbyterian Church in Ottawa.

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Philosophy

Opportunity School supports the philosophy that children learn through active engagement with materials, other children and adults in their environment. This engagement is structured around play. Play is an essential part of development through which children can build a positive self-image, problem-solve, acquire small and gross motor skills and expand their understanding of the world. Developmentally appropriate activities such as block building, language experiences, dramatic play and art provide experiences that support all areas of development: physical, social, emotional and cognitive.

Opportunity School believes that all children are unique with special needs and abilities. We accept these children as they are and help them to grow and develop. We believe that a child's self-esteem is very important to how they learn and to their future school success. We offer opportunities to gain self-worth, competence and confidence.

We believe parents and family play a vital role in their child's growth and development. We recognize the family as the child's first and most important teacher. A working partnership between family and school is central to the program's philosophy.

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Goals

- To provide a developmentally appropriate educational program to increase the likelihood of school success for all children
- To provide positive, nurturing experiences essential to helping children develop intellectually, socially and emotionally
- To provide opportunities for children to gain self-worth, competence, and confidence

- To provide a secure and stimulating preschool environment where children may become confident, competent learners
- To provide opportunities for children to interact with and understand their community
- To provide child development information, modeling, worthwhile experiences and reinforcement to help parents develop positive parenting skills
- To provide opportunities to address parental concerns for their children – academically, socially and emotionally

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Board of Directors

A Board of Directors governs Ottawa Opportunity School. The Board consists of ten directors, with no fewer than two directors who are members of First Presbyterian Church. The Board members are elected for a three-year term. Qualifications include having an interest in the work and purpose of Opportunity School. Board members are elected to represent a diversity of backgrounds. The Board meets quarterly and determines school policy as well as oversees the operation of the school.

Two parent members serve on the Board as voting members. These parents are nominated by the Director, approved by the Board, and serve a two-year term.

The Director of Opportunity School is an ex-officio member without full voting privileges. Income Tax, Etc. handles all fiscal responsibility. Pat Campbell attends all board meetings to present financial statements.

The Board of Directors:

Wendy Sanders, President
Janelle Armstrong, Vice President
Morgan Strow, Secretary
Dan Mestelle, Treasurer
Molly Breslin
Cheryl Mounts
Ashley Buckingham
Myleigh Rossiter, Parent Representative
Kendl Hermes, Parent Representative

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Department of Early Childhood Licensing

The Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) licenses Ottawa Opportunity School. In order to maintain this license, the school must demonstrate full compliance with the standards set forth in the Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers. Licenses are issued for a three-year period.
During that time, a IDEC representative visits the center to monitor and provide consultation.

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Communication with Staff

A staff member who meets the qualifications of director* shall be designated to assume decision-making responsibility whenever the director is offsite. When possible, the person designated as alternate director will not be in the classroom so that she/he will be available to speak with families

and handle day-to-day situations.
(* Director qualifications: 60 semester hours of credit from an accredited college or university with 21 semester hours in courses related directly to childcare and or child development from birth to age six.)

A conference to discuss questions or concerns regarding your child or the program may be initiated at any time. These conferences may be scheduled with the director, or lead teacher. If differences cannot be resolved during these conferences, families have the option to present their concerns to the board of directors.

Confidentiality

Staff members respect the confidentiality of a child's record and any information obtained through written forms or verbal communication with families.

Information pertaining to the admission, progress, health, or discharge of an individual child shall be confidential and limited to staff designated by the director unless the parent or guardian of the child has granted written permission for disclosure or dissemination.

Prior to the release of confidential information, the parent or guardian shall sign a release form that specifies to whom information may be released and the length of time the release form is valid.

No personal information on the families enrolled at Opportunity School will be released to anyone without written consent from the parents.

Each child's health and safety file is confidential but is immediately available upon request to:

Administrators and educators who have consent from a parent or legal guardian to access the records.

The child's parents or legal guardians.

Regulatory authorities

Staff /Staffing
Qualifications

The Director(s) conducts the overall operations and procedures of the school. She/he shall hold an associate degree in child development or early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any discipline with a minimum of 21 hours in early childhood development or early childhood education.

Lead teachers plan, teach, organize, supervise and are responsible for a group of children. Lead teachers must have a minimum of 60 hours of college credit with 18 semester hours in courses related

to the field of early childhood education.

Support teachers assist the lead teacher and help teach, supervise and are responsible for a group of children. Support teachers must have a high school diploma.

The Director and each staff member participate in fifteen hours of professional development training each year (e.g. assessment, sensory disorders, classroom management, math and science, ADHD, autism, etc.). In addition, staff members maintain Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid certification.

All employees of Opportunity School have a background check and health clearance on file before beginning to work with the children.

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Substitute Teachers/Student Teachers/Volunteers

Substitutes and student teachers have the same personnel, health, administrative and professional qualifications required of staff when they substitute, including completion of a background check. Substitutes receive orientation and training by the Director before working in the classroom.

Volunteers whose duties require contact with children on a regularly scheduled basis of more than once per month meet the same personnel qualifications required of other staff, including orientation and training.

Volunteers or guests who have not had a background check will not be left alone with a child or have supervision of a group of children.

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Child/Staff Ratios

The number of children in a group is limited in accordance with the Department of Children and Family Services Licensing Standards and the National Association for the Education of Young Children criteria to facilitate adult-child interaction and constructive activity among children.

AGE OF CHILDREN	STAFF/CHILD RATIO	MAX. GROUP SIZE
Two years	1 to 8	16
Three years	1 to 10	20
Four years	1 to 10	20
Five years	1 to 10	20

Opportunity School strives to keep smaller than recommended group sizes and lower staff/child ratios to allow for more positive interactions among staff and children and enhance developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Staff as Mandated Reporters

The Director and staff of Opportunity School must report instances of "suspected" abuse or neglect of a child to the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline as required by the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

In the event that Opportunity School is informed that a formal child abuse/neglect investigation has commenced relating to an employee/volunteer of Opportunity School, that employee/ volunteer will be suspended with pay, pending the outcome of the investigation.

All records concerning reports of child abuse and neglect and all records generated as a result of such reports will be confidential and will not be disclosed except as specifically authorized in the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

Program Operations

Admission Requirements

Opportunity School offers programs for 2 (accompanied by parent or parent substitute), 3, 4 and 5 year old children. The admission requirements are:

The **two-year-old** Explorer Program offers a 1.25 hour class once a week to children who are 2 years old accompanied by a parent or parent substitute.

Three year olds enrolled at Opportunity School must be 3 by September 1.
Four year olds enrolled at Opportunity School must be 4 by September 1.

The admission process includes completion of all the required forms, including:

- Application for Admission
- Confidential Information
- Permission to Release Child from the Classroom
- Parent Consent re: emergency medical care, permission to photograph/videotape, social media, field trips and record keeping
- Emergency Card
- Parent Signature of Discipline Policy/Late Pick Up Policy
- Medical examination by a licensed physician no more than 6 months prior to enrollment
- All required immunizations according to the age and recommended schedule for the child
- A copy of the child's certified birth certificate

All children are required to have a preschool screening. These screenings include vision, hearing, speech, language and readiness. The LaSalle County Alliance for Special Education (LEASE) conducts the screenings.

Opportunity School admits students of any sex, race, color, creed, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, creed or national and ethnic origin in administration of its policies, admission requirements, scholarship program and other school administered programs.

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Program Schedule and Hours of Operation

The Opportunity School year begins in September and continues into May. A school calendar, given during school visits, lists the days that the children will have no school.

Tuesday and Thursday classes, Monday, Wednesday and Friday classes and Monday-Friday classes are held in the morning from 8:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. and afternoons from 12:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m. These classes maintain a low pupil/teacher ratio and are instructed by a lead Teacher and support Teacher.

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Tuition and Payment Policy

Exploring Opportunity School	$ 60 /month
Two day class	$150/month
Three day class	$210/month
Five day class	$290/month

Automatic debit is available by filling out an application. Monthly invoices will be distributed to those not on automatic debit. Tuition is due the 1st of each month. Payment may be given to your child's teacher, or the Director. Forms of payment accepted are cash or check.
Receipts will be written as proof of payment.

Financial difficulties, which prevent prompt payment, should be discussed with the Director. Unless other arrangements are made, tuition that is two months overdue will be cause for a child to be dropped from the program. New services cannot be initiated if there is an outstanding balance due.

Financial assistance is available. Families who cannot pay tuition are urged to apply.
Financial assistance is not based only on family income. Considerations are made regarding family size, medical bills, or other circumstances that may prevent a child from attending school. All applications are confidential and will be acted on by the scholarship committee of the Board of Directors.

Materials Fee: A materials fee, per child, will be due at the beginning of the fall semester. This fee will cover the costs of and other materials.

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Arrival and Dismissal Procedure

AM Arrival:

- **Option #1**: For families who want to drop off their child and go, the parking lot on Jefferson Street will be used as a circle drive. Cars pull in and stay to the right until they circle around putting the passenger side of the door near Opp School doors. Please pull up to the Orange Cone so several cars at a time can be dropping off their child. The teachers and director will be outside at **8:30** to welcome students.

- **Option #2**: To alleviate congestion and long lines, families are encouraged to park in the city lot behind the building and walk their child to the outside door to meet their teacher.

PM Arrival:

- Park and walk your child to the door during arrival time. The teachers and director will meet you at the door at 12:00.

If a family is running late and doors have been locked, please call 815.433.2731 and you will be met at the door.

Dismissal: If your child ends their day on the playground, then families will gather near the gate at dismissal time. If your child does not end at the playground, families will enter the building and children will be dismissed from their classrooms. If play time is indoors due to weather, all families will pick up their child from their classroom. For dismissal doors will open at 10:50 and 2:20.
We wanted to share some of the benefits to entering your child's school.

- Builds a sense of community
- Children love to show off their art in the hallways
- Better family/teacher connection

*No smoking/vaping is allowed during drop off/ pick up or any school activities.

If a child is to leave with an adult who has not been previously designated by the parents as someone authorized to pick up the child, written notification regarding this is required in advance and should be given to the Director. No child will be released without written permission of a parent or guardian.

The staff shall refuse to release a child to any person, whether related or unrelated to the child, who has not been authorized by the parent(s) or guardian(s) to receive the child. Persons not known to the staff shall be required to provide a driver's license (with photo), a photo identification card issued by the Illinois Secretary of State or other photo identification to establish their identity before the child is released to them.

The time of each child's departure from school shall be noted on a daily departure log and signed or otherwise documented by the person to whom the child is released.

Parents or emergency contacts will be called if the child has not been picked up within 15 minutes of dismissal. Children who are not picked up on time at dismissal will be made comfortable, occupied

and secure with the teacher in charge or with the Director until the parent or other adult designated by the parent arrives. The late pick up will not be discussed with the child. If the child has not been picked up and no parent or emergency contact can be reached, then IDEC and/or the Police will be contacted for additional assistance.

It is the custodial parent's obligation to inform the school of any change of status with regard to custody, orders of protection or persons authorized to pick up children.
A call is appreciated when your child is absent. You may call and leave a message or wait until school opens at 8am.

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Discipline Policy

We believe that children learn best through experiences. We believe that the teachers must lovingly guide and redirect the children to help them learn to cooperate with their peers and to have positive educational experiences that encourage and enhance their growth and development while in our care. We believe that we can best accomplish this by the following methods:

1. Having a variety of activities for the children.
2. The use of group management techniques, limiting the number of children in an area of the room to avoid overcrowding and allow for sufficient materials and an opportunity for constructive interaction.
3. Using lower than the Department of Children and Family Services' required ratio of adults to students.
4. Developing rules with children that are stated at the children's developmental level. We try to be as consistent as possible with our classroom rules so that the students will know what is expected of them.
5. Speaking in a positive manner with a child if his/her behavior is inappropriate for the area or the material the child is using, i.e., "This is the way we use the paint brush", "Walking only, please."
6. Redirecting a child who is having a problem cooperating in an area of the room, i.e., "Peter, this is not how we play in the block area, please go to the water table or dramatic play area."
7. After exhausting these methods, if a child still has a problem with appropriate behaviors, the child is asked to sit apart from the group to think about what he/she has done and discuss appropriate behaviors. This time lasts no more than one minute per year of age.
8. Parents will be informed of consistent inappropriate behavior to enlist their assistance in working with the child and developing an individualized plan. If the child's needs go beyond the scope of the current program and its existing resources, staff will work with the family to determine additional resources. This is seriously considered only when the health, safety and welfare of this child and/or that of another child are at risk.

Please be advised that any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment or withdrawal of food is prohibited in all childcare settings and will not take place at Opportunity School. Restraint of a child is permissible only in situations where the safety of the child or the safety of other children is an immediate concern.

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PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS REGARDING BEHAVIORAL AND SPECIAL NEEDS

The teachers will communicate with families regarding any behavioral situations and special needs. If situations or special needs are not resolved the Director will provide written notice of the problem and at the same time request in writing a meeting to be scheduled to discuss the problem with the family. The family will be given at least one week to arrange this appointment. If the child is enrolled, the child may continue to attend unless the child's behavior presents a clear and imminent danger to themself or the other children in the program.

The purpose of the meeting will be for staff and parent(s) to gather information regarding the nature and severity of the child's special needs, if any. These may include disabilities, behavior problems, and psychological or medical conditions. The information must be sufficient to determine the appropriateness of the center's program to the child's needs. Such information may be contained in psychological, psychiatric, or medical evaluations requested and required from the child's parent(s). In addition to these reports, staff will observe and document the child, consult as needed with the parent(s), physicians, psychologists, counselors, etc., to determine special needs, compliance to medication schedules, behavior modification techniques, and/or possibilities for new, increased or changed medications.

In attempting to meet the child's needs, staff will look first to enhancing existing resources by increased or specialized staff training, parent meetings, schedule modifications and any other practical, doable measures which may be accomplished within the current program using its resources. If the child's needs go beyond the scope of the current program and its existing resources, staff will work with the family to determine additional resources. This policy complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

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Snacks and Birthday Treats

In accordance with Illinois Department of Early Childhood Licensing Standards, Section 407.330:

All food consumed by children under the supervision of child care center shall be provided by the center, except as follows:

1. Parents may provide food for any child requiring a special diet that cannot reasonably be provided by the center.
2. Parents, as part of holiday or birthday celebrations, may bring in commercially prepared food. Food brought in for this purpose must arrive unopened as packaged by the bakery or manufacturer, or it will not be accepted.

Nutritious snacks are provided each school day. Snack menus will be posted on the bulletin boards outside the rooms.

Opportunity School tries to serve snacks that are low in sugar. We feel this is important for the physical, dental and cognitive development of the children. Instead of sending a snack on your child's birthday, you may want to send in special plates and napkins for the children to use with their school snack. Another possibility would be to provide special juice and cups. Juice must be 100% fruit juice.

If you would like to send a birthday snack, we prefer NO COOKIES OR CUPCAKES. Following is a list of alternative snacks that children enjoy: fruit juice bars, frozen yogurt, string cheese, muffins of all kinds, crackers and cheese, pudding, pizza, granola bars, etc.

A note about birthday invitations: to avoid hurt feelings, please do not send birthday invitations to school unless you are *inviting the entire class*. With parental permission, addresses will be provided upon request.

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Toileting Policy

All children attending Ottawa Opportunity School should be toilet trained unless a disability makes training impossible. If, however, a toileting accident occurs at school, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Every effort will be made to make the child feel comfortable.
2. The Director or her assistant will be called to assist.
3. The child will be encouraged to change his/her own clothing if possible.
4. If adult assists in removing soiled cloth, universal precaution* will be followed and the bathroom door will be kept ajar.
5. In the case of toileting accidents that involve bowel movements, every effort will be made to contact the parent for consultation as to whether the child should be changed at home or at school. If parents are not available, the child will be changed at school. In the event this should happen, universal precautions will be followed.

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Right to Privacy

At Opportunity School, the dignity and privacy of all students will be assured with regard to toileting accidents. All students will be changed within private areas. These activities will be conducted under the supervision of Opportunity School personnel.

**Universal precautions*: Everyone is treated the same: as possibly infectious. Latex gloves will be worn when taking care of toileting accidents. Hands will be washed before and after when using gloves.

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Field Trips

Field trips are planned throughout the year to enhance the learning experiences of the children. Ottawa Elementary School buses are used for field trips that are not within walking distance.

Parents sign a permission slip at the time of enrollment that allows their child to go on field trips. Parents will be notified in advance whenever the children are going to be away from the school for any reason.

We depend on our parent volunteers to decrease the adult/child ratio and help ensure the safety of the children. We encourage an adult family member to attend with the child. We discourage bringing siblings, if this is a problem, please contact your child's teacher.

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Clothing

Children should wear clothing that is comfortable, washable and suitable for all activities, including messy projects and outdoor play. Please keep in mind ease of removal for using the bathroom. Buckles on overalls and tights are sometimes hard for the younger ones to manage.

Warm apparel for outdoor play should be worn during the winter months. This should include hats, mittens and boots.

No clogs, flip-flops or loose-fitting shoes should be worn as these can cause accidents. No boots should be worn except as protective covering for shoes on snowy or rainy days.

If needed, parents should apply sunscreen and insect repellant before children arrive at school. Permission in writing would be necessary for a staff member to apply sunscreen or insect repellant on any child.

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Emergency Closing Procedure

· Due to reasons beyond our control, there may be times when it is necessary to close Opportunity School. To ensure the safety of children, families, and staff the school will monitor the situation and take into account the guidance and suggestions from the authorities on the situation. The director will notify teachers of closure of Opportunity School and post it on Facebook. Teachers will notify their families via classroom apps. In general, decisions to close will be made only when conditions are severe enough to close the public school.
· If it is decided to close the building after the school year begins, the school board will make decisions regarding alternative learning opportunities, staff pay and tuition.

Program and Curriculum

Curriculum

Based on the theory that children learn through play, Opportunity School classroom routines encourage active involvement, experimentation and reinforcement through repetition. Children are provided with opportunities to play independently, as well as in small and large groups. Developmentally appropriate activities are provided that support all areas of development: physical, social, emotional, and cognitive.

Toys and materials are organized into centers. Centers include dramatic play, blocks, science, discovery, art, manipulatives, writing, and reading/listening. Teachers plan fun, thought provoking and open-ended activities in these centers for the children to investigate. Activities are developmentally appropriate, and child centered rather than teacher directed.

Creative movement and musical activities are provided using songs, musical instruments and CDs.

Language and literacy development is encouraged in many ways such as: providing time for conversations with and among children; providing a print rich environment; using flannel board, puppets, finger plays and stories; and encouraging children's emerging interest in writing.

Social skills, such as cooperation, taking turns and problem solving are encouraged throughout the day. Emotional development is supported by helping children develop strategies to solve conflicts and by encouraging children to verbalize feelings.

Time is provided each day for active play such as jumping, running, balancing, climbing and riding tricycles.

Children learn about the outside world through walks around the buildings or neighborhood and by taking trips into the community. (For example, the fire station, hospital, library or farm.)

Cultural diversity is stressed by providing books, materials, images and experiences that reflect diverse cultures that children may not likely see, as well as those that represent their family life and cultural group.

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Schedule of Daily Activities

All classes use the following schedules with time variations:

Arrival

Teachers greet the children and talk with parents.
Children find hooks and hang up their coats and backpacks.
Children find name tags.
Children are free to visit the activity centers. Teachers visit with children.
Children visit with each other.

Group Time I

Language development activities involving some or all of the following: Calendar
Weather chart Helper chart
Stories, poems, finger plays Discuss and plan daily activities

Activity Center Time

Science
Books and listening
Discovery (sand, water, other sensory materials)
Blocks and block props
Manipulatives/Pre-math
Dramatic play
Writing

These centers provide a balance of activities and equipment with which the children may interact with individuals, explore, make choices and develop self-discipline. The teachers prepare the centers with child directed activities. Teachers then interact with the children, facilitating play, asking open-ended questions and helping children solve their own problems.

Group Time II

Language development and music

Snacks (Often included in Center Time to create a small social environment for developing language skills)

Children often help prepare their own snacks.

Teachers and children sit together to encourage conversation and good manners.

Children clean up their area.

Large Motor Activities

Climbing toys, balls, balance beams, riding toys, and slides are available. Children have time to play freely either inside or outside on safe equipment as well as participate in organized games.

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Family and Staff Communication

Opportunity School's philosophy reflects a committed partnership between families and staff. Most importantly, we recognize that the parents/guardians are the FIRST teachers for their children and that families provide lifelong consistency as teachers for their children.

Students and their parents will be invited to come meet their teacher and see their classroom at a scheduled time before school begins. Each child will be under the supervision of the support teacher during this time.

Opportunity School usually has an open-door policy where parents are welcome to visit, observe or participate at any time and one parent or parent designee may also accompany classes on field trips. At times these policies may be more restrictive due to health guidelines set by IDEC.

We believe that close communication between parents and staff is very important. Remember that a crisis at home affects the child's behavior at school. Let the staff know about the joyous happenings, upsetting events or important changes at home so we will be prepared to offer the appropriate responses. All information will be held in confidence.

Please check your child's backpack every school day for school communications. You can expect classroom/director newsletters and notes every month listing activities and important dates. We will communicate at least weekly with parents.

Families or teachers may request a conference with each other at a mutually agreed upon time to discuss questions or concerns. The first line of communication involves the teacher and parent(s); however, the Director is also available to assist staff with conferences as requested or needed. These procedures are included to resolve any conflicts between families and program staff. Board member emails are provided to all families to address concerns.

Family/teacher conferences for child evaluations are scheduled in November and April. At this time, teachers share the child's learning portfolios with the families. Teachers solicit and incorporate families' knowledge about their children into ongoing assessment and planning.

Opportunity School has many excellent resources for information on child growth and development in

the Family Lending Library. Resources include books, periodicals, pamphlets and videos. Also included in the Lending Library are books and learning activities for the children. Families may borrow these materials at any time by checking with the Director or staff.

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Transitions

Opportunity School makes every effort to make all transitions the children experience as smooth and non-threatening as possible.

New Students – Families that did not attend the registration open house are encouraged to set up an appointment with the Director for a tour of the school. Before the first day of school, teachers will schedule a school visit. This first meeting between child and teacher in the child's home environment is another step toward alleviating any fears or school anxiety the child might be feeling.

Returning Students – Most of the Opportunity School staff work part time. This means that the Tuesday/Thursday teachers may not teach on Monday/Wednesday/Friday. The Director accepts input from classroom teachers and parents before assigning classrooms to the children for the start of the new school year.

Kindergarten – The Director will inform families of dates for kindergarten registration in area schools. Information is provided to parents concerning kindergarten readiness and what they, as parents, should expect from their child's kindergarten classroom.

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Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

Opportunity School is designed to be inclusive of all children, including those with identified disabilities and special learning and developmental needs. Parents should make staff aware of any identified/diagnosed special needs of their child.

Any medical information regarding a child's special needs should be included on the confidential information enrollment form. This includes any allergies or special medications.

Health and Safety

Keeping Children Healthy

Keeping children in our program healthy by preventing the spread of contagious diseases and practicing safety procedures to prevent injuries to children is of primary importance to our staff. Parents also have a vested interest in following good health and safety practices. For all health and safety concerns, we follow IDEC guidelines.

Opportunity School staff members practice these preventative measures to avoid infectious diseases from spreading:

1. Frequent hand washing by staff and children, including upon arrival at school, after wiping a nose, after using the bathroom and before handling food.
2. Sanitizing toys with a sanitizing agent.

3. Conducting a visual health check of children upon arrival and throughout the day.
4. Informing parents if their child has been exposed to a contagious condition so they can be alert for symptoms. Information, including symptoms to watch for, will be distributed as needed.
5. Parents of students who chose to exempt their child from vaccinations due to religious reasons will be notified of any contagious vaccine-preventable disease that occurs within the program.

Parents can help prevent the spread of infection and disease by:

1. Keeping sick children home from school.
2. Promptly picking up sick children.
3. Consulting their physician about diagnosis and care of illness. Be sure to tell your physician that your child is in school and ask when it is safe for the child to return.

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Exclusion for Illness Policy

Parents are requested to keep their child home when ill. A child will be separated from the other children if the child does not appear well enough to participate in activities as usual or has any of the following symptoms.

Fever – sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earaches, irritability or confusion. Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100.4 F.
Diarrhea – runny, watery or bloody stools
Vomiting – 2 or more times in a 24-hour period
Body rash with fever
Sore throat with fever and swollen glands
Severe coughing – child gets red or blue in the face or makes high-pitched whooping sound after coughing
Eye discharge – thick mucus or pus draining from the eye or pink eye.
Yellowing skin or eyes
Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than can be provided in classroom setting

A child that comes to school with any of the above symptoms will be taken to the Director's office until a family member can be contacted to take the child home.

A child may return to school when there has been no fever for 24 hours, without medication, and symptoms are improving.

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Head Lice

Opportunity School policy provides that parents must immediately pick up any child found to have a nit or louse in his/her hair. The child will not be allowed to return to the center until treatment has begun and a staff member has rechecked the child's hair for nits/lice and found none.

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Health Records

Before attending Opportunity School, each parent must provide an up to date State of Illinois IDEC

health form: Certificate of Child Health Examination. This form will be provided to families at registration. Acceptance for children whose families choose not to vaccinate will be handled on a case by case by case basis.

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Administering Medication

It is the desire of Opportunity School that all children's medicines be administered at home. Under certain circumstances, school personnel, following the appropriate administrative guidelines, may administer medicine. Opportunity School retains the right to reject any request for the administration of medication at school.

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Special Training for Staff

Current Infant/Child CPR certification and Red Cross First Aid training is required for employees of Opportunity School.

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Emergency Illness and Injury

When parents enroll their child, they provide an emergency contact information form and a consent form for staff to administer first aid and get emergency services for their child.
In the event of an emergency, staff will:

1. Stay calm.
2. Check for life threatening situation (choking, severe bleeding or shock).
3. Call 911 or other appropriate emergency numbers if the child is seriously hurt.
4. Give first aid and CPR, as necessary.
5. Contact the parent/emergency contact.
6. Record all injuries on a Child Incident Report.

If the injury is <u>not</u> an emergency, staff members will:

1. Administer the required first aid.
2. Document the injury on the required form.
3. Inform the parent of the incident and what medical attention was given.
4. File the form in the Director's office.

At all times, Opportunity School will:

- Have emergency numbers posted by all phones in the building and in classrooms
- Keep parent consent forms for emergency treatment and numbers for emergency contacts on file
- Keep a fully stocked first aid kit in each classroom, the playroom and in the playground storage building

For the safety of your child, it is extremely important to keep emergency numbers current.

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Fire Safety

The Lead and Support Teachers will conduct fire drills monthly for each classroom. Various exit routes will be used so staff and children are familiar with them all. The elevator will never be used for a fire drill. Teachers will post conducted drill dates and the exits used in the classrooms. Emergency exit routes are posted in each classroom.

Fire extinguishers and alarm boxes are located on each floor and all teachers are knowledgeable as to their use. Fire exits and extinguishers will be kept clear at all times.

No cooking appliances will be used in the classroom. If necessary, such items and activities will be conducted using the church kitchen.

The following procedure will be followed in case of fire or emergency evacuation:

Teaching Staff:

- Will choose the safest and most accessible exit to leave the building, preferably the east stairwell (See Appendix A).
- Will guide children out and away from the building after conducting a head count to their designated "safe spot" on the playground. On exit, one staff member will lead the line of children and one staff member will be located at the end of the line.
    - Designated locations
        - Classroom B – (5 day) Tables located on the east end of the playground
        - Classroom G – (3/2 day) South end of the shed on the playground
        - Classroom H – (3/2 day) North tree by the garden path on the playground
        - Classroom E – (Explorers) East end of the fencing inside the playground (located closest to the YMCA parking lot)
- Will perform another head count once everyone is outside and a safe distance from the school.
- Will notify authorities immediately if someone is missing from the class.
- Will not leave their group of children throughout the duration of drill or emergency situation.

Volunteers and guests:

- Will follow the instructions of the teacher/administrator in the classroom that they are located in at the time of the emergency and will assist if necessary.

Director or designee:

- Will make sure all classrooms and bathrooms are empty starting with the top floor bathroom and moving to the lower level, ending in the playroom.
- Will be responsible for taking the office copy of emergency phone numbers for all the children.
- In the event the building cannot be reentered or extreme weather conditions, staff will follow the evacuation procedures and take the children to the safety of the

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807 LaSalle St.
Ottawa IL 61350

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Tornado Drills

The Director, with assistance of the lead and support teachers, will conduct tornado drills twice a year.

Teaching Staff:

- Will do a head count and guide children to the center hallway located in the basement.
- Will instruct children to kneel in front of the wall with their heads bent forward against the wall and arms around their heads. Children will stay in this position until an all-clear signal is given by the Director or special authorities.
- Will remain with their group of children throughout the duration of the drill.

Volunteers and guests:

- Will follow the instructions of the teacher/administrator in the classroom that they are located in at the time of the emergency and will assist if necessary.

Director or designee:

- Will be aware of weather conditions by tuning to local radio stations and receive emergency alerts via telephone by the Ottawa Emergency System.
- Will take proper precautions after ascertaining that all children and staff are in a safe position.

Hazardous Compounds

All cleaning compounds and other potentially hazardous materials are stored in the original containers with legible labels in an area that is inaccessible to children. Opportunity School keeps such compounds in a locked cabinet in the classroom.

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Playground Safety and Maintenance

The Director, or his/her designee, will check the playground on days it is to be used, for trash and safety hazards. Teachers will also do spot checks for equipment safety and condition when using the playground and report any hazards to the Director. Teachers will check for trash and empty the trash when needed.

The playground gates will be locked or latched while children are playing. The playground grass will be cut and fertilized when children are not present.
The Director will formally inspect playground equipment twice a year for safety.

First Presbyterian Church is sprayed monthly for pests, in areas of the building where children are not present. A list of pesticides sprayed is available in the Director's office.

Evaluations

A comprehensive evaluation plan is an essential component of Opportunity School's program. The purpose of the plan is to assess the school's operation and to evaluate the performance of the individuals within the program. Through careful observation, written documentation and sharing of information we can provide a healthy learning environment for each child. One of the most important uses of the information is in future planning. It is important to note that the evaluation of all aspects of the school relates directly to the philosophy, goals and mission of Opportunity School.

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Child Evaluation

The goals of Opportunity School's program reflect child development characteristics for children at different ages and stages. The system for evaluation of the child's growth and development is related to these stages and ages. The objective of the school's evaluation process is to identify each child's growth as he/she learns and develops through the learning activities in the program.

Children are evaluated in the areas of social/emotional development, physical development, cognitive development, and language development. Each day, teachers observe children in the classroom who are busy learning through play. Teachers are documenting and recording their observations. The teachers may use an informal system on clipboards or post-it notes. Later, the dated material is transferred to each child's collection of data.

Twice a year, in November and late April, Family/Teacher Conferences are scheduled for teachers to share the child's "Progress Report" with his/her family. Teachers solicit and incorporate families' knowledge about their child and include it in the portfolio. When a child leaves the center, we offer the contents of the file to parents and the school keeps copies of all the data.
Teachers and/or parents may schedule additional conferences at any time.

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Program Evaluation

Families complete an annual program evaluation in the spring. Information is then used to evaluate the program's effectiveness in meeting the needs of the children and families.

Staff members also evaluate the program's effectiveness in meeting the needs of the children and their families at the staff meeting following the spring Family/Teacher Conferences.

Building and Grounds

Parking

Parking is available in the front of the building or in the parking lot behind the church. Please remember that parking in front of the building is limited to 2 hours. The meter attendant makes frequent trips down

the street to check on cars parked past the time limit. The city parking lot behind the church has no time limit.

Please remember that car engines should be turned off (this includes buses) in the parking lots and children should not be left alone in the car. Due to extreme heat or cold, it is permissible for cars to idle to maintain the interior or engine temperatures.

An elevator is located inside the east entrance. Handicap accessible restrooms are available on all three floors. Baby changing stations are located in the men's and women's restrooms on the bottom floor.

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Safety Procedures

Doors will be locked during school hours. Visitors or late families may call the school office at 815-433-2731 to be let in. At arrival and dismissal times, doors are monitored by staff. All staff have a cell phone available for quick communication, if needed.

Director's Office

The office of the Director is located on the 2nd floor of the church building.

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Classrooms

There are 4 classrooms, 2 on the first floor and 2 on the second floor. Class sessions are offered in the morning or afternoon.

Revised May 2026