



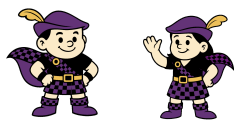
Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center

Preschool Handbook

2025-2026

Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center
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Caledonia, MI 49316
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Mission Statement

The Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center is devoted to young children and their families. Partnering with the community, we will provide quality early childhood programs that enhance the experiences of each child for a bright and healthy future.

Our Philosophy

At Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center, we believe that early childhood is a time of exploration, discovery, and joyful learning. Our preschool program is grounded in the understanding that children learn best through play, hands-on experiences, and nurturing relationships.

We are committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment where every child is valued as a unique individual. Through developmentally appropriate practices, we support the growth of the whole child—socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

Our dedicated educators foster curiosity, independence, and a love of learning by encouraging children to ask questions, solve problems, and work together. We celebrate each child's strengths and strive to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

We also recognize the important role of families as our partners in education. At DLECC, we build strong connections between home and school through open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect.

Together, we prepare our youngest learners for a smooth and confident transition into kindergarten and beyond.

Integrated Preschool Classrooms

Caledonia Community Schools proudly offers integrated preschool classrooms for 3- and 4-year-old children. These classrooms bring together typically developing children and children with developmental delays or disabilities, creating a rich and inclusive environment where every child can learn, grow, and thrive.

In an integrated setting, children have the opportunity to interact with peers of varying abilities. All children bring their own strengths to the classroom, and every child has the chance to be a role model in different areas of development. Through

shared experiences in play and learning, children begin to recognize their similarities and develop a deeper appreciation for individual differences.

Our classrooms follow a flexible yet consistent daily routine, offering activities designed to support language and listening skills, gross and fine motor development, and imaginative or dramatic play. Children also enjoy music, sensory experiences, and a wide variety of hands-on, developmentally appropriate materials and learning opportunities.

This inclusive model not only nurtures academic and developmental growth—it also builds empathy, friendship, and a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

The Curriculum

At Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center, we believe that children learn best through play, hands-on experiences, meaningful interactions, and exploration of the world around them. Our curriculum is thoughtfully designed to engage children in active learning and to encourage curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving.

The daily schedule provides a balance of active and quiet play, with opportunities for children to work independently, in pairs, and in small groups. Teachers guide and support children as they explore their environment, interact with peers, and develop new skills.

Through careful observation, teachers learn about each child's interests, strengths, and developmental needs. This allows us to tailor and enrich learning experiences that meet children where they are and help them grow in all areas—socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.

Our goal is to create a joyful, engaging, and responsive learning environment where every child feels confident, capable, and valued.

Daily Activities

Our daily sessions follow a consistent and comforting routine that helps children feel secure and confident in their environment. Each day typically includes a blend of **circle time, stations, choice play, and outdoor or gym time**, offering a balance of active and quiet learning experiences.

Children participate in a wide variety of engaging activities such as creative art, block play, books, games, puzzles, and hands-on projects—both individually and in groups. Our team of teachers, assistants, and specialists work together to support each

child's development across all areas of early learning: **cognitive, social-emotional, language, motor skills, play, and self-help.**

Circle Time

Circle time is when the class gathers to begin their day as a community. During this time, children are introduced to or review the daily schedule, calendar, songs, and classroom themes. Circle time encourages participation, listening, respectful turn-taking, and the development of language and communication skills. It also fosters a strong sense of belonging, helps children express their thoughts and feelings, and promotes mutual respect for others' ideas and perspectives. We recognize that communication is a key life skill, and our goal is to nurture it through supportive, patient, and meaningful interactions.

Stations

Station time is when children work in small groups on theme-based activities that connect to early literacy, math, fine and gross motor development, and language skills. Children are encouraged to work both independently and cooperatively, developing confidence and perseverance. This time also allows teachers to observe and support individual progress and provide targeted instruction based on each child's needs and interests.

Choice Time

Choice time allows children to explore a variety of play-based learning centers at their own pace. Whether building with blocks, dressing up in dramatic play, creating with art materials, or engaging in sensory experiences, children practice important skills such as focus, cooperation, imagination, and self-direction. Through play, children make sense of the world around them, try out new ideas, and develop independence and confidence.

Our goal each day is to create a joyful and engaging learning environment that nurtures the whole child and supports growth in every developmental domain.

Special Days & Events

We love to celebrate at DLECC! Our classrooms hold seasonal parties, including celebrations for **Halloween** and **Christmas**. Throughout the year, we also host special events to honor the important adults in our students' lives, along with center-wide celebrations like our **Literacy Festival**.

Field Trips

Field trips are exciting opportunities for students to explore new places and apply classroom learning to the real world. Trips are carefully planned to align with

classroom goals and enhance the curriculum. Parents will receive detailed information via email before each trip.

Please note:

- Parents are required to **transport their child to and from** the field trip destination.
- Parents must **remain with their child** for the entire duration of the trip.
- Field trips are designed to be shared experiences between parents and children.

Program Overview

DLECC offers preschool classes that meet **2 or 3 times per week**, depending on your child's age and selected session.

- **Three-year-old** classes: maximum of 12 students
- **Four-year-old** classes: maximum of 16 students

Each classroom is led by a certified **Early Childhood and/or Special Education Teacher**, along with a **Teaching Assistant**.

Additional staff may include: Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and/or Social Workers

A full list of class options is available on our website.

Enrollment Requirements

To enroll:

- Children must meet age requirements by **September 1st** of the school year.
- All children must be **fully potty trained**.
- Prior to the first day, the following must be submitted:
 - Completed **Emergency Contact Form**

- **Health Appraisal** signed by a parent/guardian and healthcare provider
- **Immunization Records**, as required by the Michigan Department of Health

Parent Involvement

We value our partnership with families! Ongoing communication is supported through the **Brightwheel app**, where you can receive updates, send messages, and stay connected to your child's day.

- **Parent/Teacher Conferences** are held in the **fall and spring** to discuss your child's progress.
- Field trips require **parent participation** and supervision.

If you have any questions or wish to schedule a visit, please contact your child's teacher.

Visitors

To ensure safety:

- All visitors must check in at the **front office** with a **valid photo ID**.
- Visitors with appointments or volunteering must **sign in** and wear a **visitor badge**.
- Volunteers are required to complete a **background check** (available from the preschool secretary).

As a volunteer, confidentiality is essential. All information or situations witnessed in the classroom must remain private to protect our students and families. If you need to deliver a message or item during the school day, please bring it to the front office; we'll make sure it gets to your child with minimal classroom disruption.

Arrival & Dismissal

Each day, families must **check children in and out using the Brightwheel app**. This system ensures accurate attendance and supports emergency safety protocols.

- To report an absence, call **891.6220** or note it in **Brightwheel**.
- Late arrivals should **check in at the front desk** before going to class.
- For early pick-up, please inform both the **teacher and the office** in advance with details.

We ask that all conversations during drop-off and pick-up be kept **brief**, so staff can focus on safely transitioning students. For more in-depth communication, please use **written notes or email**.

Important Note on Late Pick-Ups:

Late pick-up should be an exception, not a routine. Staff schedules align with classroom hours, and delays can impact their responsibilities outside of school. It can also cause distress for children left waiting. Please be punctual.

Authorized Pick-Up Procedures

Only individuals listed on your child's **Authorized Pick-Up list in Brightwheel** may pick up your child. If someone else is picking up your child:

- Update Brightwheel with their name and issue a code
- They must be **18 years or older** and show **photo ID**

No child will be released without proper authorization.

If legal documentation limits a parent's access, a **court order** must be on file at the center, and that parent's name should appear on the emergency form with restrictions noted.

Clothing Guidelines

Preschool can get messy—in the best way! Please dress your child in **comfortable play clothes** that can get dirty with paint, glue, and outdoor fun.

- Send a **seasonally appropriate change of clothes** in your child's backpack
- Label all clothing and personal items with your child's name
- Choose **closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes** for safety during active play

- Ensure **winter boots** are easy for your child to put on independently

Encouraging independence is a key part of our program. Please send a **backpack your child can manage** that's clearly labeled with their name. It will be used to carry extra clothes, artwork, and important notes from school.

Snack Time

Snack time is a social and language-rich part of our daily routine. Children enjoy a **healthy snack** while practicing communication, turn-taking, and table manners.

- Parents may be asked to contribute snacks; your child's teacher will provide more details in the **class welcome letter**.
- **Food allergies** are taken seriously. Parents of children with allergies must provide a supply of **safe, clearly labeled treats**.
- Please talk to your child about not sharing food at school.
- We follow strict hygiene practices, including **handwashing** and **table cleaning** before and after snack time.

Note:

DLECC is occasionally used by outside groups after hours.

Tuition & Payments

A non-refundable enrollment fee is due at registration:

- \$75 for one new student
- \$100 for two new students
- \$25 for returning students

Tuition can be paid in full at the beginning of each semester or through an installment plan. If tuition is paid in full for the year using cash, check, or money order, the enrollment fee is waived.

Accepted payment methods include:

- Cash
- Check
- Money order
- PayPal

Tuition is the sole source of income for our preschool program. Prompt payment is essential. DLECC reserves the right to discontinue enrollment if an account becomes 30 days past due.

Withdrawals

Parents may withdraw their child at any time. We ask for advance notice when possible. Please note: Tuition will not be refunded for voluntary withdrawals.

School Closings & Delays

Some non-instructional days (e.g., holidays, professional development) are built into the preschool calendar and will not be made up.

DLECC follows Caledonia Community Schools for inclement weather decisions:

- If Caledonia Schools are closed, DLECC is also closed.
- If there is a 2-hour delay, a.m. preschool is canceled, but p.m. preschool will run as scheduled.
- For extended or full-day preschool, a 2-hour delay means the session starts at 11:00 a.m. and ends at the regular dismissal time.
- If schools close early, DLECC will also dismiss early, and families will be notified.

Closings and delays are announced on local radio and TV stations. If weather worsens during the day and you'd like to pick up your child early, you are welcome to do so—please check out at the front office.

Emergency Procedures

In emergencies, we prioritize safety and communication. Parents must sign out at the office—do not go directly to classrooms.

Please keep all contact information on file (home, work, cell, emergency contacts) up to date, as accurate information is crucial during emergencies.

Tornado & Fire Safety:

- Tornado Watch: Students continue activities under staff supervision.
- Tornado Warning: Children move to a safe location until the all-clear is given.
- Fire: Evacuation procedures are followed; students relocate to a safe, designated area until re-entry is approved.

Health & Illness Policy

The goal of our health policy is to protect every child's well-being while at school. A health appraisal (completed by both parent and healthcare provider) and immunization records are required before attendance. These must be dated within 12 months of the start date.

If your child receives additional immunizations during the school year, please provide updated records.

Illness Guidelines: Keep Your Child Home If They Have:

- Fever: Must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication
- Vomiting/Diarrhea: Stay home for 24 hours after symptoms resolve
- Cold symptoms (new within 24–48 hours): Cough, watery eyes, heavy discharge
- Strep throat: Return 24 hours after starting antibiotics
- Pink Eye: Return 24 hours after treatment begins
- Head lice: May return after treatment; please notify the school

- Rash: Must be cleared by a doctor if cause is unknown
- Persistent cough or yellow/green nasal discharge with fever

Even with mild symptoms, if your child is unable to fully participate in daily activities, please keep them home. If a child becomes ill during the day, you will be contacted to pick them up. The expectation is that a child will be picked up within 30 minutes of office contact. Children who become ill will rest in the office until that time.

Staff members also follow illness guidelines and will not work if contagious or running a fever. Substitutes will be provided when necessary.

Injuries

- Minor injuries (bumps, bruises, scrapes): First aid will be provided, and you will be notified.
- Major injuries: In life-threatening situations, 9-1-1 will be called. Parents will be contacted immediately. If unreachable, we will call the emergency contacts listed. An accident report will be provided.

Medication Policy

Both prescription and non-prescription medications require a signed Medication Authorization Form, available in the office.

- Prescription medication must be in a labeled pharmacy container with dosage and child's name.
- Non-prescription medication must be in its original packaging with directions.
- Parents must provide a labeled dispenser.
- At least one dose of medication must be given at home before sending to school.

Behavior & Discipline Policy

Duncan Lake is United in Caring, Kindness, and Safety.

Caledonia Community Schools is a proud user of Capturing Kids' Hearts. We use positive behavior supports and developmentally appropriate strategies to promote self-control and cooperation:

- Environmental Support: Classroom setup prevents many behavioral issues.
- Redirection: Children are gently guided toward more positive activities.
- Language Coaching: Staff help children express their emotions and needs appropriately.

We do not use physical punishment, shaming, or withhold food or bathroom privileges.

Cultural Competence

At DLECC, we value and celebrate diversity. Cultural competence means recognizing the unique background of each student while embracing the qualities that unite our community. We strive to create a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment for all families.

Communication of Unusual Circumstances

If your family experiences a major change—such as illness, travel, a new caregiver, or a death in the family—please let us know. This helps us support your child with sensitivity and understanding.

Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting

All staff members are mandated reporters and are required by law to report any signs of abuse or neglect to the proper authorities, in accordance with district and state policy.

Hygiene & Safety Procedures

We follow universal precautions and OSHA guidelines when handling bodily fluids. Staff are trained in Bloodborne Pathogen protocols.

Handwashing

Handwashing is required throughout the day. Staff and children follow these best practices:

1. Use clean, running water and soap.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds.
3. Rinse thoroughly.
4. Dry with a single-use towel.

Note: Hand sanitizers, wipes, or basins are not acceptable substitutes for soap and water.

Cleaning & Sanitizing

Our classrooms are regularly sanitized using a 3-step method:

1. Wash surfaces with soap and warm water.
2. Rinse with clean water.
3. Sanitize with a disinfecting solution and allow to air dry.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

DEGAGE MINISTRIES OPEN DOOR

IN THE IMAGE

(616) 454-1661
456-6150
144 S. Division Ave.
Division
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
MI 49507

(616)

1823 S.

Grand Rapids,

THE SALVATION ARMY PARISH-ACCESS SIX

HOLY FAMILY

Booth Family Services
891-9259
(616) 459-9468
Ave., SE

(616)

9669 Kraft

Caledonia, MI 49316

MEL TROTTER MINISTRIES

(616) 454-8249
255 Commerce Ave., SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Kent County – accesskent.com

MI Child – www.michigan.gov/michild

Michigan Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222

Legal Assistance Center (616) 632-6014

MI Migrant Legal Assistance Project (616) 454-5055

West Michigan Legal Services (616) 774-0672

Pine Rest (616) 455-5000 or (616) 455-9200

Western MI University – Center for Counseling (616) 771-4171

YWCA Domestic Violence Services (616) 459-4652

MI BRIDGES (888) 642-7434 – State Emergency Relief (SER)

<https://www.mibridges.michigan.gov>

MI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES – <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs>

UNITED WAY 2-1-1: phone, dial 211. Emergency assistance or information from nonprofit human service agencies.