



Precademy and
Great Start Readiness Program
Family Handbook
2022-2023



These materials were developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Education.

Welcome

Welcome to Precademy! Please read our visions and mission statement below, describing who we are!

Vision Statement:

Our vision is to create high-quality early childhood educational experiences for all our children. Through strong parent involvement, a nurturing environment, and diverse and varied materials, we envision our students to grow into independent, creative thinkers thriving in a global society.

Mission Statement:

By embracing innovation, we equip our preschoolers to become global leaders and thinkers through intentional teaching, environmental exploration, and in-depth “study-based” learning experiences. Our goal is to provide every preschooler with the best educational opportunities through our child-centered, hands-on curriculum set in a rich learning environment which is created through our families, community, and professional staff.

Great Start Readiness Program Philosophy:

We believe that young children learn to the best of their ability when given:

- A safe, healthy, nurturing environment
- Development of strong teacher-child relationships in which all are valued
- Many opportunities for play and learning through play experiences
- Families are involved and we work together to help your child
- The activities are geared toward your child’s current skills and interests

Our decisions are made from a child-centered focus which includes looking at the Early Childhood Standards of Quality, the curriculum, assessment information, feedback from parents and the diverse social, economic, cultural, and family needs that exist within the classroom.

Great Start Readiness Program

The GSRP is Michigan’s state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children who meet eligibility factors which may place them at risk of educational failure. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start. The programs receive funds from the Michigan Department of Education and every classroom is licensed by the Michigan Department of Human Services.

GSRP regulations require staff to make two home visits and two parent/guardian/staff conferences a year. Staff will review other program requirements during the registration process or at the first home visit. This visit typically takes place before your child's first day of school.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom, participate in a Parent Committee and attend other program events.

Precademy currently offers GSRP at the locations listed below:

Building name	Building Address	City	County	Phone
Innocademy-Homestead campus	8485 Homestead, Zeeland, MI 49464	Zeeland	Ottawa	616-748-5637

Inclusion

Precademy welcomes all children and is committed to providing developmentally appropriate early learning and development experiences that support the full access and participation of each child. We believe that each child is unique and work in partnership with families and other professionals involved with the child to provide the support every child needs to reach his/her full potential.

We believe that home and school together form a positive support system for the growing child. Parents are always kept informed of their child's progress. If a referral is needed for additional support, the family will be involved in contacting their local school district and creating a plan and setting specific goals for the child. Families will be kept involved if at any point the child is in need of receiving one-on-one support services, and classroom teachers will collaborate with support staff to create an inclusive and supportive environment.

Age Requirements and Eligibility

Children must be 4 by December 1 to enter the 4 day session. Children must be 3 by September 1 to enter the 2 day session. A child turning 3 between September 1 and December 1 may enter the program after they turn 3. Children turning 3 before September 1 will have first priority. Children enrolled must be potty trained and bathroom independent. If your child is receiving the GSRP scholarship, we will work with you and your child if your child is not fully potty trained and bathroom independent.

Staff

The staff of the GSRP is committed to providing a high-quality program for young children and their families. Classroom teachers hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development with a specialization in preschool teaching or a valid Michigan teaching certificate and an Early Childhood Education (ZA) or Early Childhood-General and Special Education (ZS) endorsement. Most classrooms will have one teacher and at least one associate teacher to ensure a staff ration of one adult to eight children. The classroom associate teacher holds a Child Development Credential (CDA) or an associate's degree in Child Development. In classrooms that have three adults, the third adult meets the

Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing, Development of Human Services licensing requirements as a “caregiver.”

Child Protection Policy

All staff are mandated by law to report any suspected case of child abuse, neglect, child sexual abuse or sexual exploitation to the Department of Human Services. Any reasonable suspicion will be reported including a child telling a staff member about abuse, witness the abuse, a parent’s statement of abuse, or any physical or behavioral signs of abuse. A copy of this law may be obtained from the program director.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Precademy does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, disability, color, religion, or national origin. No one will be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefit of or be subject to discrimination during any program or activity or in employment.

Confidentiality Policy

Precademy ensures that child and family records will not be disclosed without written consent of the parent or legal guardian, except as needed when child abuse and neglect is of concern. Confidential information is shared only with staff members who need the information to perform with jobs. Families have the right to examine their own records. We ask that when visiting a classroom or attending a field trip, parents do not share information about another child’s development or family.

Drug Free and Smoke Free Zones

The entire school campus is a drug free and smoke free zone. Please extinguish cigarettes and properly discard smoking products prior to entering the parking lot and building. This includes chewing tobacco. Help us stay a drug free and smoke free zone by informing anyone that will be escorting your child to and from school of our policy.

Curriculum and Assessment

Children are screened within the first thirty days using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. This provides information about a child’s physical development, language, and other skills and is used as a baseline to determine each individual child’s needs. Families are informed of any concerns the screening tool may show and parents/guardians will need to provide consent if the child requires further evaluation.

GSRP classrooms provide a safe, secure, and happy place for children to grow and learn. Through the use of the Creative Curriculum (CC) the State approved curriculum used in our classrooms, the Standards of Quality are met. The curriculum provides intentional instruction to meet each child’s needs through a play-based and developmentally appropriate philosophy; meaning attention is given to social-emotional, physical, literacy, math, language, and cognitive development, as well as science, technology, and the arts.

Teachers monitor children’s progress regularly through Teaching Strategies GOLD by collecting observation notes, photos, and work samples into an online portfolio.

Enrollment Policy

Enrollment of Students for GSRP will be based: Availability of an opening in the appropriate class. Families will then be enrolled based on meeting the income criteria which is determined by a family’s yearly income and number of family members living within the household. Once all income eligible students have been enrolled, students that meet additional eligibility factors may be enrolled. Over income families will be required to pay tuition based on an OAISD area-wide common sliding fee scale.

The Parent/Guardian must:

1. Meet the enrollment guidelines:
2. Return all completed forms which includes the following:
 - All families must complete an enrollment packer prior to the first day of attendance in GSRP. The packet includes an application, health requirements and emergency contact.
 - Families will need to provide proof of the child's age and immunization card along with other important enrollment requirements.
 - GSRP requires proof of family income for eligibility.

To Maintain enrollment in the program parents are asked to,

- Agree to keep the Child Emergency Information up to date, i.e., telephone numbers, workplace, address, emergency contact, etc.
- Support staff in maintaining a safe and enjoyable environment through a positive preventative discipline approach.
- Attend and participate in scheduled parent/guardian/teacher home visits and conferences.
- See that students are in school unless absence is necessary. Families are responsible for informing the teachers when a child is ill or absent for some important reason.
- Respond to requests for information or assistance needed to promote student success.

The child must turn four years old by December 1 st for the 2021-2022 school year.

Withdrawal Policy

Withdrawal: Parents/guardians should notify the classroom staff of the intent to withdraw their child from the program at least two weeks prior to the withdrawal date. Parents/guardians should leave a forwarding address or school contact if the child will be enrolled in another school program.

Program Attendance Policy

Regular attendance at school is important for kindergarten readiness and your child's attendance habits.

Students should be in school unless absence is necessary. Families are responsible for informing the teachers when a child is ill or absent for some important reason. If it is necessary for your child to be absent, please email your child's teacher (aimee.streur@innocademy.com) or send a message via Bloomz app on the morning of the absence to explain the reason and when you expect your child to return to school.

We are required to document absences in order to comply with regulations; so, if we don't hear from you after two days, we will attempt to contact you by a phone call or email asking about your child's absences. Preschoolers who are absent from class for 10 consecutive school days without school being notified, will be dropped from the program to make space available for a child on the waiting list.

Late Pick-up or Early Drop-off: When a parent/guardian or other designated adult is picking up or dropping off a child from school, it is important that they be on time. Teachers and other school personnel have other responsibilities before and after school and cannot be available to ensure your child's safety. We will make every effort to work with you regarding pick-up and drop-off issues, but it is program policy to contact the Police Department to determine the next course of action in the event the parent/guardian is unavailable.

Late drop-off: It is important to make sure your child is on time to school and ready to go. Being late can change your child's mood as well as missing out on learning. We open our doors 5 minutes early to ensure everyone has ample time to get dropped off, signed in and ready to start the day. Our day will start 5 minutes after school starts (8:35 or 12:35). If your child will be late, please inform the teacher via Bloomz message or e-mail. After that time it will be the parent/guardian's responsibility to bring your child to us if we are not in the classroom/courtyard. A note may be left to indicate where to find us.

Contact Information: If families move from one residence to another, change telephone numbers, or wish to add or delete an individual "Emergency Contact" person, it is the family's responsibility to notify the teacher immediately, so a parent/guardian may be reached in case of emergency or other communication need.

School Closing and Delays

Families will be contacted by the Precademy director via Bloomz, email or phone in the case of school closings or delays. Information on closings will also be sent to WZZM13. If Innocademy is closed Precademy will also be closed. If there is a 2 hour delay there will be no AM session.

Weather Policy

GSRP classrooms will follow the building weather policy. Please send your child to school with the appropriate outdoor clothing (coats, hat, mittens, snow pants, boots, etc.) . Your child will be going outside in light rain, snow, sleet, and wind so please plan accordingly. We will be spending at least 50% of our day outside.

The State of Michigan “Family Independence Agency” states that:

-Playing outdoors in cold weather does not cause illness in children. Colds, flu, and illness are caused by viruses and bacteria. Children confined in warm, stuffy rooms with several other children have greater exposure to germs causing sickness.

-Frequent exposure to fresh air, exercise and sunshine increases a child’s general fitness and resistance to infections.

-During active play outdoors, the viruses and bacteria are dispersed into a larger, more mobile air space decreasing the risk of spreading to others.

-Physical activity increases the air exchange in children’s lungs and improves blood flow through the body giving germs shorter contact with respiratory surfaces.

Physical Activity

GSRP guidelines require children to be engaged in a minimum of thirty minutes of outdoor play where they can be active and physical. This includes but is not limited to running, jumping, climbing, etc. The outdoor environment is an extension of the classroom and provides students with many opportunities to explore and continue to build social skills. Research states, “Good physical health and well-being, and a safe environment contribute to improved learning. Gross motor development enhances body awareness, understanding of spatial relationships, and cognitive growth.” (Michigan Department of Education).

Should I Keep My Child Home Today?

To ensure a positive, healthy school experience for children, the preschool will initiate the following policy regarding illness: Parents/guardians will be asked to come and take home any child arriving at school with signs/symptoms of being ill or who become ill at school. The school staff has the authority to exclude children from the preschool for illness or other health-related problems. All children in attendance will be expected to participate in all parts of the daily schedule, including outdoor play.

Your child should stay home when he/she has;

-Temperature above normal

-Earache

Excessive runny nose

Nausea or watery eyes

-Diarrhea

- Chills or Fever
- Coughing
- Skin Rash
- Sore throat
- Head lice

It is the parent's responsibility to notify the teachers when their child will be absent from school. Please call your child's teacher as soon as you know your child will be absent. Staff will follow the same policy regarding illness.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of Innocademy that we do not administer medications unless needed for safety (allergy-related) or behavioral purposes. In these instances, please speak with your child's classroom teacher for further instructions including completion of a Medication Form and instructions for storage and administration.

Allergy or Asthma

If your child has any known allergies or asthma, a medical condition form MUST be completed by the parent/guardian and your medical provider listing known allergies, reactions, and treatment plan.

Injuries or Safety Issues

Parents MUST inform the program staff of any health or safety needs of the child that the program may be required to address. If your child has had an injury or illness that may prevent activity, please call the school.

If your child is injured while in our care, parents/guardians will be notified by either a note home or a phone call home. If the injury is more than a minor issue the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately. If parents/guardians are not available, another adult listed on the child's emergency information form will be contacted.

Program staff are trained in First AID and CPR and will secure medical and/or emergency surgical treatment for your child in possible emergency situations.

Licensing Reports

All child care centers must maintain a licensing notebook which includes all licensing reports, special investigation reports and all related Corrective action Plans (CAP). The notebook must include all reports issued and CAPs developed on and after May 27, 2010 until the license is closed.

-This center maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans.

- The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours.
- Licensing inspections and special investigation reports from the past two years are available on the Bureau of Child and Adult Licensing website at: www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

Program Measurement

Ottawa Area Intermediate School District and Precademy are required to work with the Michigan Department of Education to measure the effects of the state-wide preschool program Great Start Readiness Program. Information is sometimes collected about staff, enrolled children, and their families. Program staff or a representative from MDE might:

- Ask parents questions about their child and family.
- Observe children in the classroom.
- Measure what children know about letters, words, and numbers.
- Ask teachers how children are learning and growing.

Information from you and about your child will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child could be identified. It is protected by law.

Questions? Contact: mde-gsrp@michigan.gov or 517-373-8483 or MDE, Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services, 608 W. Allegan, PO Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909

Safety Drills

Our program is required to practice safety drills several times a year for fire evacuation, tornado safety and any other threat that may occur. In the event of an emergency or evacuation, staff will notify you via a Bloomz Alert or a call/text to another adult on your child's emergency contact form as to when and where to pick up your child once the authorities have given the all clear. In the case of a power outage or no heat we will continue our day as normal until we feel it is not safe for the children to be in the building. We will follow the rest of Innocademy with whatever decision is made.

Breakfast, Lunch, and Snack

Mealtimes are learning experiences where children are encouraged to try new foods and engage in conversations about different foods, where they grow, or how they are made. Children are encouraged to participate in mealtime activities that may include setting the table, preparing food, serving themselves, and cleaning up. Teachers will serve each child a snack, encouraging them to try foods.

Precademy offers one snack for each half day class. For GSRP students, we also offer free lunch (in between morning and afternoon sessions) in the Innocademy cafeteria. Due to food allergies children may not bring food from home into the class. Please make sure your child has had a healthy meal before

they arrive. If your child has a food allergy or needs food accommodations, we will work with the family to ensure your child's needs are met.

Hand Washing

Hand Washing is probably the most critical element in reducing the spread of germs. Children should learn about hand washing early in life to help them develop healthy habits. Children will be required to wash their hands before eating, after using the restroom, when returning from outdoors and other times as determined necessary by the staff. We ask that you encourage and reinforce this behavior to keep everyone as healthy as possible. Staff also follow this policy and wash their hands before food preparation. Hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol may be used when using soap and water is not available. Please inform staff if you do not want your child using hand sanitizer.

Appropriate Clothing for Preschool

Preschool clothing should be comfortable and washable so that it does not interfere with any activities. Tennis shoes are suggested for all children to wear indoors. Tennis shoes, rain boots, or snow boots are encouraged for outside time. Your child may be asked not to wear specific shoes if they interfere with activities. Please remember your child's clothing will be exposed to paint, mud, water, sand, and markers. It is important that you put your child's name on all his or her belongings. Many children have similar clothing, and it is sometimes impossible to identify ownership without a name. We cannot be responsible for lost items that are without a name label. Children participate in outdoor time every day except in heavy rain or extremely cold weather. Please dress your child accordingly. Warm mittens, coats, hats, rain boots and snow boots are necessary every day once cold weather begins! Being overdressed is always better than being underdressed. We can always take layers off.

It is suggested that each child bring a large bag or backpack to class every day to carry home their artwork, papers, and notes from the teacher. Accidents can happen; it is a good idea that an extra change of clothes be sent and kept in your child's cubby. We have a limited supply of clothing for emergency use. If your child should come home wearing an item provided by his/her teacher, please wash and return it to school promptly.

Toys from Home

Please leave all toys at home. Toys brought from home can easily get misplaced or even broken. We prefer that your child enjoy them at home or bring them only on special sharing days.

Birthday Treats

We are not allowing children to bring in birthday treats (food or non-food items) to pass out to friends on their birthday. If you still want to bring in something for your child's birthday, a great gift is a book from your student that can be displayed on our bookshelf for years to come.

Discipline Policy

We have positive expectations for the children who are in our care. We concentrate on the behavior we want and model what is needed to build positive relationships between adults and children as well as among children. Teachers provide ongoing support as children learn social and problem-solving skills. Program staff is not allowed to use any form of punishment (i.e., spanking, threatening, humiliating, withholding of basic needs including food and outdoor play, or isolation from the group). Children are not excluded or expelled because of the need for additional behavioral or medical support. We work together with the family and other support staff to help the child in any way possible.

Choices: Throughout the school day, children are recognized and encouraged to make choices. Choices within limits allow a child to feel empowered and feel part of a decision-making process. The more choices a child has, the more likely he or she will cooperate with adults.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict can occur when a child is trying to assert control over a situation. When children are experiencing a conflict, the teacher will approach the children calmly and acknowledge feelings ("you are feeling really angry"). Next the teacher will gather information from the children and find out why there is a conflict (what happened?). The teacher will help each child use empowering words and problem-solving strategies to resolve the conflict ("Ask your friend, 'Can I use this truck?' Tell your friend, 'I am using this truck right now. I'll give it to you when I am done.'") As children learn and practice using problem solving words and strategies, they often begin to use these without adult intervention as the year goes on.

Redirection: When a conflict has been resolved, the child/children will be redirected with new choices (example: "Would you like to play in the sand or with play dough?")

Natural consequences: Sometimes children make choices that have consequences. Children who experience logical, natural consequences learn that they have control in situations. Consequences are met with calmness and empathy for the child. (Example: "This is sad. Remember I asked you not to throw sand? Throwing sand hurts his/her eyes. What can you do to help?")

Even Preschoolers can be Bullies:

Even preschool aged children can display behaviors that bully. Saying things like "You can't play with us" or pulling a learning toy away from another child is a form of bullying. Whispering secrets and excluding someone is a form of bullying. Making faces or sticking out your tongue at someone is a form of bullying.

GSRP staff will promote an environment in which all children will play and work together. We are always all welcome. We share and take turns. We will use kind words towards our classmates and staff.

Parents can help stop bullying by observing children while they play. If children are showing signs of bullying behaviors, parents can help to explain how friends feel sad or hurt when we are not sharing or using kind words toward each other.

Grievance Policy

Our goal is to provide excellence and quality of care for each child. If at any time a parent has a concern, or a grievance, inform your child's teacher of your concern or grievance and allow a follow up from the teacher. If you are still not satisfied with the outcome you may contact the director who will work with the teacher and parent to have a positive outcome. If you still feel a positive outcome is not being made the final step is to contact the ISD.

Family Involvement

The family involvement component of the GSRP is based on the belief that the best environment for children exists where there is close family-school interaction. We hope you plan to visit soon and would love to have you! Other areas of involvement may be to join one or more of our parent committees. Information on when each group meets will be provided at the beginning of the school year. Families also participate in two home visits during the year, allowing teachers, children, and families to develop a warm and trusting relationship. Conferences are another time for families and teachers to come together to discuss the child's accomplishments and to answer any developmental questions a family might have. The conference includes information from our assessment tool to show where your child is developmentally as well as ideas for you to assist in your child's development in the home.

The Great Start Parent Coalition

The Ottawa County Parent Coalition is an open group of parents of children prenatal to 12 years old who meet to connect with each other, share and find out about community resources and learn about parenting and how to make families stronger, aiming at educating the community on these topics. This group supports the work of the Great Start Collaborative by being part of several countywide committees, providing the parents' voice to discussions concerning families and early childhood.

Advisory Committee

This group of parents meet with GSRP teachers and administrative staff and is designed to discuss and seek parent input on topics such as; curriculum, nutrition and other health related topics, kindergarten transitioning, program goals, and program evaluation.

School Readiness Advisory Committee

Parents are also invited to serve on the area-wide GSRP School Readiness Advisory Committee which meets at the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District twice a year. This committee is made up of representatives from parents, GSRP teaching staff, GSRP administrators, and community agency representatives from the Department of Human Services, Community Health Services, Head Start, and other early childhood programs.

Field Trips

One to two field trips are generally taken during the school year. In the event a classroom does take a field trip, families will receive notice in writing prior to the event. Trips may include visiting local businesses or community parks and some are done within walking distance to your child's school. Parents/guardians may attend as long as they meet the classroom volunteer requirements. Please note these requirements may involve paperwork which may take time to process so plan ahead!

Transportation

Precademy does not provide transportation to school. We ask that you make arrangements to have your child dropped off and picked up after class is over.

Child Release Policy

Because of our concern for the safety of our students these guidelines will be followed.

-No Child will be released to a person other than a parent or guardian during school hours without the prior permission of parent or guardian as provided on Emergency Contact information.

-If a parent/guardian desires that his/her child be released to another person not indicated on the Emergency Contact information, the following must be received in writing: 1. The name of the person to whom the child is to be released; 2. The time of the release and the length of time for which the child is to be released

-Exceptions will be made only in times of emergency. The program director or designee will make the determination of whether an emergency exists.

-The person whom the child is to be released will be required to sign a log indicating the time and purpose of the release. If the person is not known/recognized by the staff person, photo identification will be required. If the principal or designee has any doubts about the documentation presented, a decision to not release will be made.

-No preschool child will be permitted to walk home alone. The parent/guardian or authorized adult must pick the child up from school.

-With regards to divorced or separated parents:

-A birth parent without custody may have access to his/her child to have the child released to him/her.

-Where applicable, parents with custody should inform the school of custody arrangements and, if necessary, provide a court order which will be kept on file in the school office. Without this court order, the school cannot legally prevent the non-custodial birth parent from taking the child from school.

Required Documents

The following Documents must be completed and submitted before acceptance into the great start readiness program:

- _____ Completed Child Information Card
- _____ Immunization Record
- _____ Completed Physical
- _____ Copy of Birth Certificate/Government Document
- _____ Income Verification
- _____ Proof of Residency
- _____ Individualized Education Plan-IEP
- _____ Homeless Documentation

The Great Start Readiness Program

Your Child's School Building and Phone Numbers

My Child's Teacher:

Aimee Streur

aimee.streur@innocademy.com

616-710-1893

Phone number to call if I wish to reach the front desk: **616-748-5637**

Phone number to call if I wish to reach the classroom: **616-710-1893**

Permission to photograph/videotape

I give permission for my child to be included in photographs and video while participating in any programs and field trips.

____yes ____no

I give permission for photographs of my child to be posted in the classroom, or within other program displays.

____yes ____no

I give permission for photographs and videos of my child to be used on the district and/or OAISD website including Facebook or other social media platforms.

____yes ____no

I give permission for videos of my child to be shown to other program staff/parents.

____yes ____no

Child's Name (printed)

Parent/guardian Name (printed)

Parent/guardian Name (signature)

Family Handbook Received

I received a copy of the Great Start Readiness Program Family Handbook.

I understand that this Handbook provides me with information I will need while my child is enrolled in the Program.

I understand that I am to read the Handbook to be sure I have all necessary information.

I understand that I may, at any time throughout the school year, ask Program staff to explain any information that I feel needs more clarification.

I have read the above statements and acknowledge receipt of the Parent Handbook.

Child's name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date: _____

