



Birchwood School of Hawken

Dear Preschool Families,

We are very excited to begin the new school year! Our preschool teaching team has evolved, and I am eager to share the changes with you.

New-to-Birchwood Teachers

Please join me in welcoming Mrs. Sally Ann Higginbotham and Ms. Jessica Hotz to our preschool teaching team. Both teachers come to us with several decades of preschool teaching experience.

Mrs. Higginbotham knows Birchwood well because the eighth graders from Birchwood School of Hawken regularly served the preschoolers she taught just down the street on Puritas Avenue. In addition to a degree in early childhood education, she holds a master's degree in reading instruction, and Mrs. Higginbotham is excited to add her expertise to the enthusiastic preschool learning community.

The Sprouts will be happy to hear that Ms. Hotz will return, as she was a regular student teacher with Mrs. Shumway last year for six months. Although she has a great deal of preschool experience, Ms. Hotz recently became licensed in contemporary preschool philosophies. Based on her contributions last year and her diverse experience, we are thrilled she will contribute to our team.

Team Changes

In order to continue growing and strengthening the whole, the preschool teaching team decided to adjust the teaching assignments. Mrs. Brady will lead the incoming Seedlings class with Miss Becky's support. Mrs. Shumway will lead the incoming Sprouts class with support from Mrs. Higginbotham. Mrs. Hotz will join the team at lunch in order to broaden the educational possibilities for both classrooms. Mrs. Hotz will then transition to our Early Childhood After School Care program as a bridge for the children who stay for a longer day. We look forward to the opportunities these new team arrangements might afford.

Here is Some Important Information Regarding the First Days of School:

Snack and Play, Tuesday, August 22 from 9:30-10:30 am

The preschool children are invited to join their teachers on Tuesday, August 22 from 9:30-10:30 am. At this *Snack and Play* event, your family will have the opportunity to spend time in the classroom and acquire information from the teacher relevant to your child's experience in preschool. Additionally, we hope this time will set your children at ease, allowing them to make connections with their peers, their teachers, and their classroom.

School Supplies:

Please remember to label all items. You may bring your child(ren)'s school supplies to the Snack and Play.

Parking:

Please enter by the W. 143rd Street gate and park in the back north Lot. If you have any other school related business that would keep you later than 11 am, please remove your vehicle at that time and park in the main lot.

What Will the First Day of School Look Like?

The first two days of school are Thursday, August 24 and Friday, August 25 arrival between 8-8:30 am, pick up at 11:15 am. (There will be no Before Care and After Care on these two days.) This first week we consider a transition and orientation because we find that many young students have difficulty adjusting to a full day at school. We support your parental instinct to gradually ease your child into the all-day schedule throughout the following two weeks, if necessary, as well. The first two weeks of preschool focus on getting to know each other and the routine of the school day.

What Should I Pack in His/Her Lunch Box?

The daily schedule for all preschool students includes a mid-morning snack time, lunch at 11:15 am, an age-appropriate afternoon rest time, and mid-afternoon snack (both snacks and lunch packed from home). Our Early Childhood classrooms are NUT FREE. Please plan accordingly as there are children with life-threatening allergies in these classrooms.

We are Here for You:

After your last goodbye to your child(ren) on their first day of school, you are invited for coffee, sweets, and camaraderie with fellow parents to savor this momentous occasion! We will have plenty of tissues.

A Message from Your Child(ren)'s Teachers:

Here at Birchwood, we pride ourselves on getting to know the whole child – what ignites and excites their minds. In order for our early childhood teachers to get to know your child more, please fill out the following survey:

[Preschool Survey](#)

Again, please feel free to reach out to me or your child's teacher regarding this information or any other matter. We highly value healthy and robust communication between home and school.

We look forward to our first day with great anticipation.

Together with you,

Dr. Christine Neider
Assistant Head of School
Director of Early Childhood Education