

SERENDIPITY PRE-KINDERGARTEN



A Wonderful Place for Children to Learn through Play!

HANDBOOK

2022-2023

Updated July 15, 2022

Serendipity Pre-Kindergarten

106 Elma Street, Okotoks, Alberta

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We are pleased you have chosen Serendipity Pre-Kindergarten for your child. This booklet contains information regarding our philosophy, policies and general information. You will find this information valuable throughout the year, so make sure you keep it for future reference. You may also find the information on our website www.serendipitypre-k.ca.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Serendipity Pre-Kindergarten program is based on 'learning through play' concept. For the child, play is their way of coping with life and learning fundamentals of living in a very complex, fast moving world. We try to provide an atmosphere where the child can move, at their own pace, and learn when they are ready to learn.

Serendipity believes in equal opportunity and participates with early intervention agencies and special needs children. All special needs children are fully integrated into our program with the assistance of an aide.

Children learn through a process of sensory information. They hear, feel, see, smell and taste. Therefore, in a creative play program, we emphasize activities that involve the senses as well as lots of movement. Play in a natural function and the learning it leads to is achieved by the well-accepted process of "doing" by a sequence of exploration, testing and reception.

The Pre-Kindergarten is a place for learning. We want to provide appropriate play experiences, which contribute to the overall growth and development of the child. Our creative play philosophy is based on the premise that the more our emotions are involved, the more sensory information we receive, the more easily learning takes place. That is why play is important and why we want to promote the principle of learning by doing, learning through play, and the right of a child to enjoy childhood.

OUR HISTORY

Serendipity Pre-Kindergarten has been serving the families of Okotoks since 1971. Our school was established by a group of parents that identified a need for a quality preschool choice in our community. Our not-for-profit Association continues in that spirit, operating through a volunteer Board of Directors filled from our parent membership.

MEET OUR TEACHING STAFF

ALESHA MANNING

Alesha's journey started with Serendipity back in 2014 when her son attended the school and fell in love with the philosophy of Learning through Play. She has a passion for working with children and has enjoyed her time with all age groups. Alesha ran a day home for 10 years before starting her career in education and intervention with the Foothills School Division as a PUF Education Assistant. In June 2018 she completed her Early Childhood Education level 1 certification and became Serendipity's summer school teacher. She now teaches 3 days per week.

DARCY CRIDDLE

Darcy holds a level 1 Early Childhood Educator and a Bachelor of Arts Degree with a major in Psychology from the University of Regina. Her youngest son attended Serendipity back in 2010 when her family moved from Calgary to Okotoks. Darcy has extensive experience working with persons with disabilities and for 3 years worked with Cause & Effect Foundation as and Child Development Facilitator. It brings her great joy working with preschool children and enjoys learning about their experiences and how they view the world.

LEANNE KOSTYK

LeAnne started with Serendipity in the fall of 2015 and holds a certificate in Early Childhood Development Level 1. When her twin daughters attended Serendipity, she loved volunteering in the classroom and decided to make a career change and begin working with young children. LeAnne is currently enrolled at Bow Valley College and is taking her Level 2 Early Child Development certificate, completing in the summer of 2022.

KRISTA SMETHURST

Krista's children also attended Serendipity and was asked to take on the role of Administrative Director in 2010. She also holds an Early Childhood Certificate in level 1. Krista's role is to ensure all the needs of the parents, teachers and Board of Directors are looked after each year. She makes sure all the behind scenes "To do's" are done so the teachers can focus their attention children in the class.

OUR PROGRAM

Please Note: This is a general outline of a day and can vary based on teacher, theme and other wonderful experiences. ** Some of the program will be utilized in our outdoor yard. Please make sure children come dressed appropriately for the weather each day.

ARRIVAL AND WELCOME

The teachers and other classmates greet the children as they arrive and enjoy some outdoor time. A time for socialization and exploration.

NAME/LETTER RECOGNITION AND PRACTICE

A variety of manipulative (table top), puzzles and age-appropriate activities.

CIRCLE TIME

A time to come together for sharing, discussion, songs, weather, calendar, finger plays and creative movement.

CENTER TIME

Children may choose from a variety of centers: sand and water, paint easel, art activities, home center, blocks, listening, reading, gross motor center (e.g. climber, balance beam).

SNACK TIME

Children will bring a nutritious snack from home in easy to open containers and a water bottle. Please mark all containers. Serendipity is a Nut FREE Zone. Other restrictions may occur if there is a classmate who would be harmed from exposure to the food. Birthdays are a celebration at Serendipity and the Birthday child can bring, cookies, cupcakes, rice Krispie squares for the class to enjoy. ** Due to Covid all items must come sealed in their original packaging.

CIRCLE TIME/STORY TIME

A time to encourage a love for books and reading, along with an enrichment of vocabulary and an exposure to a variety of language.

DEPARTURE/HOME TIME

SERENDIPITY DISCIPLINE POLICY

1. Each child will be respected as an individual. Each incident will be treated as an individual situation.
2. Consideration for the temperament and uniqueness of the child will determine the type of intervention.
3. Limits will be stated kindly but firmly.
4. The problem will be identified with the child and then choices will be used to help redirect the behavior to a more positive activity or action.
5. Positive reinforcement of an appropriate behavior is the main focus of our discipline policy.

As a license holder, Serendipity Pre-Kindergarten will not, with respect to a child in the program, inflict or cause to be inflicted any form of physical punishment, verbal or physical degradation or emotional deprivation; deny or threaten to deny any basic necessity or use or permit the use of any form or physical restraint, confinement or isolation.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN CLASS TIMES & FEES

FOUR Year Old Program (must be 4 years of age by December 31)

Monday Wednesday Friday	Morning	8:45am-11:45 (Lemurs)	\$226.60/mn
Monday Wednesday	Afternoon	12:15-2:45 pm (Meerkats)*	\$180.00/mn
Tuesday Thursday	Afternoon	11:45amm – 2:45pm (Bluebirds)*	\$200.00/mn

THREE Years Old Program (must be 3 years of age to start in the program)

Tuesday Thursday	Morning	8:45am – 11:15am (Chickadees)	\$185.40/mn
Monday Wednesday	Afternoon	12:30pm-3:00pm (Meerkats)*	\$180.00/mn

* This class is offered as a split class 3&4 years old.

All children entering the program must be toilet trained. Classes start promptly and the doors will be open at that time for greeting of the children by the teacher. Please be on time!

**** \$100.00 NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE IS REQUIRED**

**** \$10 School Supply is also collected at time of Registration**

1. Registration and school supply fees are due upon registration. Class Fees may be made in the form of postdated cheques, September through June on the 1st of each month, or a yearly lump sum payment in the form of one cheque. Please make a separate cheque for the registration & supply fee.
2. Cheques are made payable to: SERENDIPITY PRE-KINDERGARTEN
3. NSF cheques will be charged a fee of \$20.00
4. If a family is choosing to pay via etransfer or cash, please note first and last month class fees are due on or before September 1 (before the school year starts).
5. If any family is in arrears more than 15 days, membership privileges will be suspended until fees are paid and the child is reinstated.
6. We require **one calendar month's written notice**, if you will be withdrawing your child from the program. Please give the notice to your teacher or email to serendipityokotoks@gmail.com and they will forward it to the Administrative Director.
7. When a family registers two (2) or more children for the same school year only, a single registration fee will be charged.
8. There is no reduction in fees for holidays, sickness, or any other absences including school closures for emergencies at the discretion of the Board of Directors.
9. Should a child be temporarily withdrawn from the program through a teacher's or other recommendation, parent membership continues until the child is permanently withdrawn. There will be no refunds of fees for withdrawal of a child for periods of less than 4 weeks.

*****IN ORDER TO RESERVE AND SECURE YOUR CHILD'S SPOT IN THE PROGRAM, ALL FORMS, REGISTRATION & SUPPLY FEE MUST BE RECEIVED****

Every so often, parents are requested by their physician or outside agency to have our teachers complete an evaluation form or assessment of their child. This is considered extra work for our teachers, which is not deemed classroom time. As a result, there will be a \$30 fee assessed for this service. If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact the President of the Board of Directors.

CLASS SIZE

We also encourage our parents to participate, which improves our ratio. One of our objectives at Serendipity is to keep our adult to child ratio low enough to allow the teachers to meet the individual needs of each child. Ratio is 1:9 or better.

OTHER INFORMATION

VOLUNTEERS

From the Board of Directors to helping out as a guest speaker, it all makes our school a special place for our children to be. It gives them the true sense of community in a smaller atmosphere. To be involved contact the school's Administrative Director at (403) 852-0788 or email serendipityokotoks@gmail.com.

As a parent run preschool, it is important to have volunteers to help us with daily activities. Our most important commitments will be the casino which is held every 3 years and members of the Board. Other areas such as craft prep, playdoh making, monthly toy cleaning and more will also be items to help a hand. Sign up will happen in September. Thank you for making our school the best in Okotoks for over 40 years.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are a nonprofit society managed completely by a volunteer Board of Directors. This board is elected each year at registration. Being a board member is a one-year commitment. It entails a meeting once a month and occasionally involves subcommittees. All board members are involved in the following:

- Personnel decisions, including contracts and salaries
- Deciding which programs our children will participate in
- Fundraising
- Community involvement
- Budgeting and money management
- Future planning for the school

Please feel free to contact our board members regarding any questions or concerns you have regarding the school or the program through email at serendipityokotoks@gmail.com

Watch in the school calendar for meeting dates and times. You are welcomed and encouraged to attend the General Meetings. Your voice counts!!!

WHAT IS THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING?

Each year in October, we have an Annual General Meeting for all of the members of the organization. At this meeting, we get input from parents about what they would like to see in our programs and in our school. We review financial information and there is an opportunity for any questions you may have to be answered. We encourage everyone to attend.

FUNDRAISING

In order to keep our tuition down, and provide the programs that make our school so unique, we do fundraising. Our main fundraiser is the casino operated at Century Casino in Calgary. We usually do this once every three years and it requires 40 volunteers to which we must get through our membership. We also do 2-3 smaller fundraisers like Coco Brooks Pizza, Cookies and Cheesecakes, Christmas campaign or others of interest. We choose the smaller fundraisers through the Board and provide them to our parents as an opportunity to shop at home while benefiting our school. We do not ask that parents or children go door to door or purchase items if they do not require them. If you have any ideas or questions about fundraising, please direct them to the school's fundraising coordinator.

Things bought through fundraising in 2021-2022: New laptop for administrative work, fridge, toys for the classroom and outside areas.

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

At Serendipity, the safety of your child is of the utmost important to us. We ask all volunteers to get a criminal record check with vulnerability search done before being able to volunteer in the classroom. We provide you with a letter to provide the RCMP at a reduced cost. To request additional letters please contact the administrative director at serendipityokotoks@gmail.com.

All of our staff, child's aide workers and volunteers must have the criminal record checks done and submitted prior to being in the classroom.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS AND CLOSURES

Serendipity observes all statutory holidays and oversees most of the same school holidays as the Foothills School Division. Parents will be notified through our regular newsletters of days off and on the website.

Holidays include: Labour Day (September), Thanksgiving (October), Remembrance Day (November), Winter Holiday Break (December into January), New Years (January), Family Day Week (February), Easter (March or April), Good Friday, (March or April) & Memorial Day (May).

If the public schools are closed, we will be too. In the event of a closure, the voice message at the school will reflect this (403-852-0788). Otherwise, please use your own discretion.

COMMUNICATION

Parents are welcome to observe and participate in our program. Our teachers are available to discuss your questions and concerns with you at your request. If you would like to discuss anything with the teaching staff, make arrangements with them before or after class and they will either discuss it at that time, or make arrangements for a more convenient time when there are fewer interruptions for both parties. At present, we don't have any formal parent teacher interviews but they can be arranged on an individual basis should they be requested.

EXTRACURRIULAR

The decision of what extracurricular activities our classes will be participating in varies each year and is determined by staff and the Board of Directors. The "Field Trips" are subject to change each year and are based upon popular response in the past, popular requests and availability of the business/service, etc. If you have any suggestions, please do not hesitate to discuss with your teacher. Below is a list of some of the Field Trips Serendipity has participated in the past.

Swimming program with an instructor (Small Charge)
Skating (may have a small charge)
Creative dance
Chinook Honey Farms (may have a small charge)
Dental Office Visit
Search and Rescue
911

WHEN DOES THE SCHOOL YEAR START AND END?

The first week of school will be the week following Labor Day. On the first week of class, we have staggered entry. Half the class comes for the first hour, with their parent(s). For the second hour, the second half of the class comes with their parent(s). We will send you an information letter about 3 weeks before the beginning of school year to let you know the time for your child. Our last day of school will be the 3rd Friday in June. Please see the school calendar for exact dates.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING WITH ME TO SCHOOL?

A pair of indoor shoes (no slippers or marking soles will be allowed). A water bottle with your child's name on it, and a healthy snack – no nuts please. A school bag for artwork and information that needs to be sent home (please make sure your school bag is medium in size and will hold, shoes, snack, water bottle and art work.

SECURITY

For the safety of your child and that of our staff, the doors to the school will remain locked during class time.

CAN I BRING MY OTHER CHILDREN FOR MY CHILD'S SPECIAL DAY?

Due to fire and licensing regulations, the school cannot have other siblings in the classroom. If you would like to attend your child's special day, we encourage you to find alternate arrangements for younger children. If you are unable to attend, it is still your child's special day. You are welcome to switch with another parent.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS SICK OR CANNOT MAKE IT TO CLASS?

We really appreciate you letting us know when your child won't be in class. The phone number for the school is 403-852-0788. If there is no answer, please leave a message and it will be directed to the appropriate staff member.

It is really important that if your child is feeling unwell that they remain at home to feel better and return to class quicker. We have found parents whose children were a tad under the weather that stayed home an extra day actually improved our classroom attendance. We kindly ask if your child has a runny nose, fever, cough or is generally not being themselves that they stay home an extra day to feel better. This will allow them to return to school sooner and will keep our other students and teachers healthier all year long!

SOMEONE ELSE WILL BE PICKING MY CHILD UP AFTER SCHOOL.

Please notify the teacher if someone else will be picking up your child if you are unable to be there. We cannot release your child to someone without prior notification.

INDIVIDUAL AND CLASS PHOTOS

Individual & class photos are taken through Classic Imaging in the fall, usually in the beginning of October. We also offer grad photos at the end of the year for our graduating students.

SUBSIDY

The Government of Alberta is offering 2 subsidies for our preschool families.

The Affordability Grant is a monthly payment made to the preschool based on attendance in the program for your child's care. Each student registered will receive up to \$75 per month. Lowering your fees directly.

Child Care Subsidy is applied for by the family. If approved you will receive \$125 per month during your qualified period. Parents can check our website www.serendipityokotoks.com for the link to the subsidy program. You can also search child care subsidy Alberta or go to Alberta.ca for more information. Families who make under \$180,000 will qualify for subsidy. Once approved by the government, please forward the approval letter so we can make note of the coverage and your child's ID so we can report to Alberta Subsidy and receive the payment to cover your child's fees. The Government does not communicate with the Preschool. If we do not receive the letter, then you will be responsible for paying the class fee and will be reimbursed once subsidy is received less an admin fee.