



OPEN AIR PRESCHOOL



Parent Handbook

2022-2023

Mr. Shawn Burkinshaw - Elementary Principal

Ms. Karen Ens - Preschool Supervisor

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Website: www.meiskools.com



Dear Preschool Parents,

Welcome to the MEI Preschool!

We are excited that you have chosen to entrust your children to us as a part of our preschool program. It is a great privilege and responsibility to be a part of training and guiding your preschooler and we look forward to partnering with you as families during this exciting time. We recognize that as parents, you are the first and primary educators of your children and we value a strong partnership with our parent community.

Our goal is to provide both a nurturing and engaging environment that will offer your child the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of learning activities over the course of the year. Providing opportunities for growth in your child's social, emotional, and spiritual development will be just as important to us as will be developing their knowledge and skills for academic growth this year and in years to come.

At MEI, we believe that incorporating a Christian worldview into everything we do is central to our mission and we embrace the fact that we can educate your child and create an environment that is honoring and pleasing to God.

I know that our preschool teaching staff will love your child and will do everything they can to make this a very positive year for your child and family!

Thank-you again for the privilege of working with your child this year!

Shawn Burkinshaw

MEI Elementary Principal



Mission Statement

The mission of the Mennonite Educational Institute, in harmony and co-operation with the home and our supporting churches, is to prepare young people to strive for excellence in all things so they can contribute positively to God's Kingdom and society as faithful disciples of Christ.

Program Philosophy and Curriculum

MEI Open Air Preschool provides an outdoor learning environment that allows each child to grow in understanding and respect for Christ and His creation. Our curriculum is deeply rooted in the knowledge that children learn best through hands-on experiences. We offer a nature immersion program using regular and repeated access to our private property where children use the environment and objects found in nature to explore the world around them through an emergent curriculum and an inquiry based learning style. The child-centred curriculum empowers children and provides them with the opportunity to connect with their environment in a Christ-centred way through His creation. The experiences provided allow children the freedom to gain confidence while facing new and developmentally appropriate challenges.



Where We Learn

Our program is run primarily on MEI's property that is located on the south side of Downes Road directly across from MEI Elementary. It is a 20-acre piece of land consisting of field, bush, a creek, forest and rolling hills. We use this amazing property as a venue for our classroom.

What We Learn

The activities and experiences we encounter can change every class time. Depending on the season, weather patterns, events that have happened since our last visit to the property (ie: a fallen tree, animal footprints) and above all; the interests of the group, will all determine the focus for part or all of the class time. Some of our outdoor activities typically include storytelling, hiking, bird watching, navigation, mud and water play, shelter building, searching for and tracking animals and their habitats and quiet observation times. Each day we will have an opening and closing circle time that incorporates songs, stories, specific topics and devotions.

*"The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith."
1 Timothy 1:5*



Teaching Staff

MEI Open Air Preschool staff are all licensed Early Childhood Educators and/or Assistants and each hold either a current First Aid certificate. Our program operates at a 1:7 teacher to child ratio.

Practicum students from local colleges/universities may participate from time to time in the program as part of their professional training.

The Fraser Valley Child Development Centre may provide one-to-one support for children in the preschool who require additional support.



Class Times/Fees/Financial Policies

4 Year Old Open Air (2 days)	Tuesday & Thursday	12:15-2:45	\$2075/yr	\$210/mo*
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MEI Open Air Preschool will follow the MEI Elementary School schedule in regards to Christmas break, Spring break, Statutory Holidays and Pro-D days.

Collection of registration and tuition fees are handled by the Elementary School Administration office. Fees will not be adjusted for a child's illness or vacation time since the preschool holds the child's space for him/her. One month's written notice or one month's tuition is required before withdrawing your child from preschool.

Registration Requirements

In order for your child to be registered for MEI Open Air preschool, they must be toilet trained as well as be turning four years old that calendar year.

The following items are required as part of the registration process:

- Registration fee of \$50
- A completed registration form
- Activity Fee of \$45
- A photocopy of your child's birth certificate and Care Card
- MEI Preschool Immunization Record form
- Emergency Disaster Plan
- A signed Parent Handbook Agreement Form
- A signed Acknowledgement of Risk Form
- A copy of any court-order pertaining to your child

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Withdrawals

One month's written notice or one month's tuition is required before withdrawing your child from preschool.

We reserve the right to withdraw a child from the program if we feel that the preschool is unable to meet his/her individual needs or if teacher's observations conclude that there is a lack of compatibility between the program and the child.

Washroom Facilities

We ask that children go to the washroom before arriving at MEI Open Air Preschool. If a child needs to use the washroom while at MEI Open Air Preschool, a teacher will take them to the nearest facility depending on where we are on the property. This could be our outhouse that is maintained regularly or one of the buildings on the MEI campus. If your child needs to go during class when we are not near a bathroom, they will be taught how to properly "go" outside. Solid waste will be dealt with in an environmentally friendly manner.





Supply List

What will your child need to bring?

- A backpack that your child can carry comfortably (preferably water resistant with a chest strap)
- A snack in a reusable container
- A whistle attached to your child's jacket (MEI Open Air will provide this)
- A water bottle
- A non- breakable cup for tea (MEI Open Air will provide one)
- Extra change of weather appropriate clothing (pants, shirt, socks, underwear, gloves)
- Optional: reusable hand warmers

What will your child need to wear?

When you are outdoors for any length of time, comfort is very important. Good clothing makes the difference between a child who is engaged with an activity and the environment and a child who is uncomfortable and unhappy.

When it's rainy, we recommend:

- Start with an inner layer of natural fabric such as wool. This will provide a warm, breathable layer.
- A middle layer of insulation made of wool or fleece
- An outer shell of waterproof clothing such as a rain jacket and rain pants.
- For the feet, we recommend neoprene boots (ie: Bogs, Kamiks). These types of boots really are worth the investment as they can be worn as a rain boot as well as a winter boot. Alternatively, your child can wear waterproof boots that are one size too large with two pairs of socks.
- Top off with a warm, waterproof hat.



When it's cold, please add:

- Warm and waterproof mittens (preferably not gloves) that slip on and off easily
- Long underwear
- An extra pair of warm mittens and warm socks in your child's bag
- Extra Clothing



When it's warm and sunny:

- apply sunscreen to your child upon arrival
- wear a hat
- closed toed shoes (please no sandals)
- light weight jacket
- extra water

Guidelines for Student's Personal Items

Please label all clothing and personal items including lunch kits and water bottles. We ask that students leave personal toys at home as they may get lost or broken at preschool.

Attendance, Arrival and Pick Up

If your child is going to be absent or late, please call the MEI Elementary (604) 859-3700 to notify us. This will allow us to begin the day knowing how many children to expect. It is important that children are dropped off and picked up on time. If you know you will be late to drop off or pick up your children, please call the Elementary office.

Pick up and drop off will take place at the south side of the gravel parking lot located on Downes Rd across from the Elementary school.

- Children are to arrive dressed and ready to explore.
- Children will only be allowed to leave the property with parents, guardians or persons specified on the registration form or whom has written permission from a parent.
- Please keep the authorized person list, on your child's registration, up to date.
- If your child will be picked up by someone other than yourself, please inform teachers ahead of time.
- Authorized people must be 18 years of age or older and present photo ID.
- Children must remain with their teacher until parents or authorized persons pick them up and sign them out.
- In the event that a parent or authorized person arrives to pick up a child and that person is deemed to be incapable of providing safe care (appears intoxicated) , then the preschool will assist in making alternate arrangements.
- In the case of a family separation, in order for a child to continue to attend preschool, a custody agreement must be supplied to the preschool to be kept on file.
- If a parent does not arrive to pick up the child, the supervisor will:



- Contact both parents work numbers, home numbers and all emergency contact people listed
- Continue to call for two hours at which time The Ministry of Children and Families will be contacted.

A Typical Afternoon at MEI Open Air Preschool

Every afternoon can unfold differently at Open Air Preschool. Depending on weather, the children present, the interests and adaptability of the group that day can all be factors in determining what will take place that afternoon. Here is a sample of a day in Open Air Preschool.

- Sign in/check that children are dressed appropriately for the day
- Welcome Circle and talk about plans for day
- Walk to site chosen for the day. Site assessment done and boundaries given.
- Clean hands, have snack
- Exploratory activity based on the interests of the group and whether we have something to continue exploring from a previous class.
- Hike back to pick up area
- Circle time, tea time, sit spot
- Good bye song, sign out and pick up



Parents as Partners

We value the contribution of students' parents at our school. We would like you as parents to feel actively involved in your child's education, so we welcome your participation. Let your child's teacher know if you'd like to volunteer on a particular day or if you have an interesting outdoor skill set that you'd be willing to share with the class. Volunteers will be required to complete a criminal records check as well as a MEI volunteer code of ethics. Volunteers are not counted in our teacher to child ratio.



Parent Communication

Newsletters - A weekly newsletter will be emailed at the end of each week. This newsletter will keep you informed of upcoming events such as themes, special events, holidays and a recap of the previous week.

Social Media - For ongoing glimpses into life at MEI and other pertinent information consider following these Instagram accounts:

- meipreschool
- meielemprincipal
- HeadofSchools
- meielempac

Sign in/sign out sheet

The teacher will sign your child in and out of class once they have made contact with the authorized individual. Please also inform the teacher of any pick up changes or days your child will be away.

How to contact us during class

If you need to get in touch with us during class time, please call the elementary school office (604) 859-3700. The administration team will be able to reach us.

Field Trips

There will be field trips during the school year to help enhance our nature based curriculum that are covered by the activity fee. Parents will be notified via email as the events approach. We require that parents accompany their child on field trips or find someone who can take their place.

Photos

Throughout the year, photos will be taken and used on our private Instagram account. If you do not wish to have your child's photo to be used for this purpose, please indicate your preference on the registration form.

Snacks and Nutrition

Please send your child to preschool with a **healthy** snack that is ready to eat and a water bottle. Please make sure your child's name is clearly labeled on their lunch bag. From time to time, we like to cook over the fire. We typically will let you know in advance if this is something we are planning to do. Our preschool is **NUT FREE**.



Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are a special time to celebrate. We take this time to pray specifically for your child and give them a small, special surprise. We will celebrate summer birthdays in June. If you plan on handing out party invitations at preschool, please make sure that ALL children are invited, otherwise please make alternate arrangements to give out invitations. We can provide a list of class names however, contact information will be kept confidential. Due to the amount of allergies and food sensitivities, we do not permit treats brought from home to be handed out for birthdays.



MEI Open Air Health and Safety Policies and Procedures

The safety policies and procedures are designed to keep the children and teachers safe while allowing them the freedom to explore and interact with the environment around them.

Safety Philosophy

One of the roles of the teacher is to ensure that all safety measures are in place and are followed daily. The teachers strive to create an environment that is as safe as possible by being proactive and by using logical guidelines that the children can remember. Safety principles include:

- Constantly assess risk as conditions change
- Set up a safe space with boundaries and safety guidelines for the children
- Observe the children's interactions with each other and with nature.
- Shadow/spot children during more challenging physical activity.
- Gently guide the children to safer activities if required.

If the teacher feels that the children's play is becoming dangerous, we will redirect the children and remind them about being safe outdoors.

Head Counting

Teachers are responsible for head counting during class. Counting heads takes place every 10 minutes when the group is in one area. Each time the group transitions from one place to another, children are counted again.

Emergency Response Drills

Once a month we will perform a fire drill with the Open Air Preschool class. Staff will provide instructions and practice safety procedures and evacuation in the event of an emergency or crisis. Several times throughout the year we will also practice keeping safe in the event of an earthquake. Near the end of the year we will participate in an evacuation to a safe spot, being the Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room.

Injury

If your child sustains a minor injury while in our care, we will provide First Aid treatment. We will report the incident to you upon arrival and depending upon the treatment required, a



minor incident form may require your signature. In the case of an injury requiring medical or dental attention, the child's parents/guardians will be notified immediately. If we are unable to contact a parent, your alternate contact person and /or family physician will be called. If it has been deemed that emergency transport is necessary, the preschool will contact emergency services. A staff member will accompany your child to the nearest emergency facility. Any expenses incurred in this situation will be the parent/guardian's responsibility.



Inclement Weather and School Closure

We will be outside rain or shine. During the wetter months, we will be practicing our shelter building using tarps and trees. Usually children that are dressed well are happy to play outdoors no matter what the weather. However, on occasion, the weather may become too hazardous for children to be playing outdoors. If the property is deemed too risky due to high winds, heavy rains, thunderstorms, or icy conditions, we will adjust our class location to the indoor preschool portable.

Change of Location Before or During Class

If we change locations during class due to inclement weather, we will head indoors to the MEI Preschool portable located behind the elementary school. Parents will be notified by email/phone if there will be a different drop off or pick up location.

Closure of School

The Preschool will be closed on all statutory holidays and will follow the Elementary School schedule in regards to Christmas break, Spring break, Statutory Holidays and Pro-D days. If MEI Schools closes due to inclement weather, MEI Open Air Preschool will be closed as well. In this case, an announcement will be made as early as 6:30 AM on these radio stations: PRAISE 106.5 (FM), Star 98.3 (FM), or CKNW 980 (AM). An announcement will also be posted on the main page of the MEI website. <http://www.meischools.com>, Instagram and Facebook.

Important Phone Numbers in the event of Emergencies and Disasters:

In the event of a disaster - tune into the local radio stations CKNW (AM 980)/ Star FM (98.3) or PRAISE FM (106.5) for the "City Public Information Line" or the "Emergency Call Centre" in order to access the "Emergency Social Services Reception Centre".

OUT OF PROVINCE EMERGENCY CONTACT: In the event that local telephone lines are not in operation, we will contact ACSI Western Canada with any information that will assist MEI Preschool families with enquiries having to do with our evacuation site and the wellbeing of their children.

Phone: (403) 948-2332 Fax: (403) 948-2395

Health and Illness

We encourage regular attendance at preschool except when your child has symptoms present that may pose a health risk for other students or staff. Please make sure you routinely check to see how your child is feeling and do not send them to school if they are not feeling well.

If your child is not well or displays any of the following symptoms they may not attend preschool and must remain at home. If these symptoms are observed at preschool, we will contact you to arrange for pick up. If you are working and not able to pick up your child please ensure that you are able to make alternative arrangements for someone else to pick up your child from preschool.

Children will be sent home and should remain at home if any of the following symptoms are present (*students must stay home until he/she has been symptom free for 24 hours and can attend school without symptom reducing medication – such as Tylenol*):

- Fever above 37 C



- Persistent cough
- Body aches
- Sore throat
- Runny nose (that is yellow/green)
- Sneezing
- Nausea/upset tummy
- Vomiting
- Rashes or spots of any kind
- Discharge from or redness/itching of eyes (possible pink eye)

In some cases these symptoms may have a simple explanation such as the presence of seasonal allergies. If there are circumstances we should be aware of, please contact the preschool so that we can be assured that your child's symptoms do not pose a risk to other students.

In all cases, preschool teachers reserve the right to make a final determination of whether your child is able to attend preschool. These decisions will be made first and foremost in the interests of protecting the health of other students and staff. Thank-you for understanding if we ask your child to stay at home for what may seem like mild symptoms.



Allergies

If your child has severe allergic reactions it is important that you inform the preschool staff. If your child requires treatment, such as an EpiPen, in case of a reaction (such as a bee sting, peanut allergy) be sure that the supervisor/teacher is aware of it and that there is a kit on hand at all times. Parents will also need to sign a "Permission to Submit Medication" form. To safeguard children at risk, we have designated our preschool as a **"NUT FREE ZONE"**. We ask for your cooperation in ensuring any food items sent with your child are "nut free".

Medications

No medications whatsoever will be administered by any school staff member, prescription or over-the-counter. An exception will be given for medication that is needed in a life-threatening situation (ie: puffer, epi-pen). In the event that our staff are required to administer medication during class time, a "Permission to submit Medication" form must be completed.



Guidance/ Discipline (as stated by the Community Care Facility Act)

Sometimes children will have interactions between them that are challenging for both the children involved and for the adults around them. If conflict resolution seems necessary, an adult will step in to mediate. Methods used by teachers will focus on gentle guidance.

Prevention Strategies:

- Establish clear, consistent and simple limits
- Offer straight forward explanations for limits
- State limits in a positive way, rather than in a negative way
- Focus on the behavior, rather than on the child
- State what is expected, rather than pose questions
- Allow time for children to respond to expectations
- Reinforce appropriate behavior, with both words and gestures
- Ignore minor incidents
- Encourage children to use you as a resource
- Scan

Guidance Strategies:

- Gain a child's attention in a respectful way
- Use proximity and touch
- Remind
- Acknowledge feelings before setting limits
- Distract or divert when appropriate
- Model problem-solving skills
- Offer appropriate choices
- Use natural and logical consequences
- Redirect
- Limit the use of equipment
- Time away
- Holding Techniques
- Provide opportunities for children to make amends



Unacceptable practices: (Section 27 of the Community Care Facility Act, Child Care (BC Reg 319/89)

- Shoving, hitting, shaking, spanking or any other form of corporal punishment.
- Harsh, belittling or degrading treatment, whether verbal, emotional or physical, that would humiliate the child or undermine the child's self-respect.
- As a form of punishment, confined, physically restrained or kept, without adult supervision, apart from other children.
- As a form of punishment, deprived of meals, snacks, rest or necessary use of a toilet.

Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect (As stated by the Community Care Facility Act)

If a staff member has reason to suspect abuse or neglect of a child has occurred outside of our care, this will be reported to the school principal and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. It is our legal responsibility to report suspicions/disclosures to the appropriate parties, not to determine if abuse has occurred. Our primary concern is for the health, safety and well-being of the children in our care.



Elementary School Calendar of Events 2022-2023

2022

September	5	Monday	Labour Day
	7	Wednesday	Preschool First Day
	29	Thursday	Pro. D. Day – No School
	30	Friday	Truth and Reconciliation Day – No School
October	10	Monday	Thanksgiving Day - No school
	21	Friday	Pro. D. Day – No School
	28	Friday	No School
November	10	Thursday	Non-instructional day – No School
	11	Friday	Remembrance Day holiday - No school
December	16	Friday	Last Day of Classes

2023

January	3	Tuesday	School Reopens, first day back from Christmas Holidays
	27	Friday	Non-Instructional Day
February	17	Friday	Pro. D. Day – No School
	20	Monday	Family Day – No School
March	10	Friday	Last Day of Classes before Spring Break
	27	Monday	School Re-opens after Holidays
April	7	Friday	Good Friday – No School
	10	Monday	Easter Monday – No School
	28	Friday	Pro. D. Day – No School
May	22	Monday	Victoria Day - No School
	23	Tuesday	Pro. D. Day – No School
June	20	Tuesday	Last Day of classes for Preschool



Open Air Preschool

Parent Handbook Agreement Form

Please sign and return this form to MEI Open Air Preschool on the first day of school

****Note: The handbook is subject to change as it is constantly under review.***

Child's Name _____

I, _____, have read and understand the policies outlined in the MEI Open Air Preschool Parent Handbook. By signing this document, I hereby agree to abide by the contents of this handbook.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date: _____



Open Air Preschool

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISK

I understand that MEI Open Air Preschool believes that adventure nature play is important to children's learning and development both physically, mentally and spiritually. (including but not limited to: running, jumping, fort building, tree climbing, puddle jumping, tool use and creek play).

I also understand that MEI Open Air Educators will regularly complete risk/benefit assessments to differentiate between hazards and risks in comparison to the benefit of the experience or activity and what safety measures may need to be put into place to manage adventure play.

I am aware that adventure nature play involves risks, dangers and hazards. (Included but not limited to: loss of balance, difficulty or inability to control one's speed/direction, variation or steepness in terrain, mechanical failure of equipment, variation or changes in the playing surface, changing weather conditions, encounters with domestic or wild animals, collision with other children or forest items, failing to play safely or within the limitations of one's own abilities, and general risks involved in day to day adventure nature play.

I am allowing my child to participate voluntarily and agree that the risks inherent have been made clear to me. Additionally, my child does not have any conditions that will increase their likelihood of experiencing injuries while engaging in this activity.

I understand that my child will be expected to make every effort to obey safety precautions as demonstrated and explained verbally to my child during lessons and safety drills.

I am aware of the risks, dangers and hazards associated with adventure nature play as described above and I accept and fully assume all such risks, dangers and hazards and the possibility of personal injury, death, property damage or loss resulting therefrom.

Signed on behalf of my child, _____ (child name)

Parent signature

Date