



Aspen View
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Great Beginnings Program Handbook

2024-2025



Whispering Hills Great Beginnings

H.A. Kostash Great Beginnings

Boyle Great Beginnings

Thorhild Great Beginnings

Grassland Great Beginnings

Vilna Great Beginnings

Program Philosophy

The Great Beginnings Program is a play-based program which provides learners with a range of activities to explore and meet individual developmental needs through play and interaction with their environment. The Great Beginnings program will strive to meet the physical, social, intellectual, creative and emotional needs of the children in attendance as follows:



- Physical Needs
 - The program will allow for the development of fine, gross and perceptual motor skills, providing a variety of kinesthetic play opportunities.
- Social Needs
 - The program will allow for the development of positive interactions between peers and within groups. Children will be encouraged to learn cooperation, sharing and resolving differences through role modelling, games, stories and prosocial skill centres.
- Intellectual Needs
 - The program will encourage the development of thinking skills, verbal skills, listening skills and observational skills.
- Creative Needs
 - The program will allow for the development of creativity by allowing children to play imaginatively and encouraging them to use all of their senses in play and learning.
- Emotional Needs
 - This program will allow for the development of positive relationships, decision-making skills, expression of feelings and respecting the feelings of others. Zones of Regulation theory will be introduced to learners and parents as a common language for feelings and how they can be understood and regulated.

The Great Beginnings Program will:

- Provide a well-rounded program closely supervised by qualified instructors.
- Provide a diverse program that recognizes each child as a unique person with individual strengths.
- Show respect for others regardless of race, color, gender, religion or national origin.
- Encourage students to develop and provide service to the community that will enhance their quality of life.
- Meet a variety of individual and group needs.
- Provide an opportunity for parents to be involved in their child's early childhood education.
- Focus on the needs of students:
 - We will focus on the whole child in our curriculum; meeting their developmental goals and milestones through co-education learning and the play model in the curriculum. Anything that is not reached through the program will be flagged for adaptations and modifications with experienced, licensed staff such as an SLP or OT.



Curriculum Information

The Great Beginnings program will follow the *FLIGHT: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta*. This framework, completed in 2014, identifies the child as the *Mighty Learner* and calls on educators to notice and name the following learning dispositions:

- Playing, creating, inventing, imagining
- Seeking, asking, exploring with all or some of their senses
- Participating with others, observing what others are doing, or listening and sharing ideas and opinions
- Persisting with challenges and difficulties with ideas and with others (pg. 46-47).

“An early learning and child care curriculum framework is different from a traditional curriculum. In early childhood, curriculum is focused on broad holistic goals rather than specific outcomes for each subject area. Early learning and child care curriculum frameworks embrace children’s everyday experiences as the sources of curriculum meaning making. Early childhood educators use the goals in the curriculum framework to describe and interpret children’s everyday experiences. In early childhood, curriculum content is integrated, emerging from children’s fascination with the world. When educators notice children’s interest in exploring nature, people, places, and objects as well as print, stories, numbers, shapes, and patterns, and when they name the connections between these experiences and early literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, music, and art, they are co-constructing early learning curriculum with young children and making the curriculum visible to others” (p. 4).



General Information

- Children entering the Great Beginnings program must be three years of age and students must be toilet trained (exceptions may be made for children who meet the criteria for Program Unit Funding).
- All children's belongings should be labeled with their name.
- Children must bring an extra pair of shoes that will be used as "inside shoes". Non marking soles are required.
- Children must have appropriate outdoor weather clothing. There will be outside play times unless conditions are extremely adverse.
- Children should not arrive at Great Beginnings earlier than 10 minutes before class begins and should not be picked up later than 10 minutes after class.
- If the weather is extreme and buses are not running to the schools, there will be no Great Beginnings classes. Parents will be notified in all instances of class cancellation.
- The Great Beginnings program may visit locations in the community to explore the environment, experience the different spaces, and encourage students to seek and wonder about new places. These locations may include the public library, bakery, fire station, EMS, police station, etc. Community members may be invited into the classroom throughout the school year.



Parent Volunteers

- Parents are not expected to volunteer in the program. If they are interested in doing so, they must have their criminal record check with the vulnerable sector check on file at the school office. The following is a list of duties parents may engage in during program hours.
 - Arrive 15 minutes early.
 - Make sure your handbag, purse, etc. is out of reach of the children.
 - Familiarize yourself with the room, allergy list, and fire escape plan.
 - Help set-up centers.
 - Ask the instructor if there is anything specific you need to do.
 - Help set-up creative activity materials for the day. Allow each child to explore the materials independently. Children benefit from a creative experience without limits of expected outcomes.
 - Help with supervision keeping in mind the discipline policy and that each child is deserving of respect. Feel free to step in and correct any situation that requires intervention, however, discipline is the responsibility of the Great Beginnings staff.
 - Make sure no child leaves the classroom unsupervised.
 - Interact with the children by playing, reading to, and talking with them. Spend time with all the children and try to call them by name.
 - Encourage children to clean up after themselves and to be more independent by dressing themselves, printing their own name, etc.
 - Take time to help a child in need (ie. tying shoes), as you would want another parent to do for your child.
 - Clean up spills and messes as they occur, but please leave the main sweeping and mopping of floors until after class time. Supervise the children washing their hands before eating.
 - Clean tables with disinfectant before and after children eat.
 - Supervise children to the bathroom and help them, if necessary, with undressing and redressing, washing and wiping hands.
 - A parent helper is to accompany the group on all outings for walks, etc, as well as the washroom. Children may also need help to get their shoes, jackets, etc. on or off.

- When supervising outdoor play, one supervisor must always monitor the climbing/sliding equipment. The other supervisors shall position themselves so they can see the entire area where children are playing.
- In case of an accident requiring emergency care or an incident that requires the instructor's attention, you must supervise the class while the instructor deals with the child. In case of an emergency evacuation, follow the exit plan as posted in the classroom.
- After the children have left for the day, assist with general clean up.
- Absolutely NO smoking/vaping permitted at any time, including field trips.



Staffing Information

Staff Child Ratio

- The maximum ratio of the Great Beginnings class will not exceed 12:1 (12 children to 1 adult).

Staff Orientation

- Staff will have a yearly meeting to go over the program's administrative policies, procedures, and curricular expectations.
- Monthly and weekly meetings will be held with GB staff, to discuss any issues, IPP's and programming.

Staff and Volunteer Screenings

- All staff and volunteers will have their criminal records check, vulnerable sector and intervention record check completed in alignment with Aspen View's [Administrative Procedure 490](#).

Staffing Criteria, Roles and Responsibilities

- The Great Beginnings program will be overseen by a staff member with Child Care certification whose qualifications abide by the Alberta Child Care Licensing regulations.
 - Their responsibilities will include:
 - providing weekly program planning
 - developing daily program goals and objectives
 - updating registration and contact information of students
 - updating monthly attendance and filing into *documents binder* in the classroom
 - creating a monthly newsletter
 - reporting any incidents to the school administrator and working with the administrator to report to the licensing agency
 - supervising children during program hours
 - collaboration with other staff and the school's Inclusive Education Lead to ensure that the diverse needs of the learners are being addressed
 - organizing , developing and preparing materials for the GB program
 - monitoring the growth and development of the children
 - maintaining communication with families
 - maintaining daily records (attendance, medication, etc)



Administrative Policies and Procedures

Fees

- Parents/guardians must pay fees of \$12/day for each child registered. The registration fee can be paid in full or alternate arrangements can be made with the school.
- We request that once parents/guardians have made arrangements for a specific day(s) of attendance that those arrangements be adhered to for an entire semester.
- Parents/guardians will be charged for days that children are absent.
- Families will be provided with three reminders each semester to pay outstanding fees.
- Failure to pay your child's fees or make payment arrangements will result in removal from the Great Beginnings Program.
- Students will not be eligible for registration for the following school year in a Great Beginnings program if there are outstanding fees from the previous school year.
- Parents/guardians may be asked to be involved in fundraising activities. The school will inform the parent group of fundraising activities throughout the year.

Child Discipline Policy

- The Great Beginnings Program uses guidance strategies that are prevention oriented and facilitate desirable behavior. Clear, consistent limits will be set for desirable behavior, with simple and straightforward explanations. If the reasons for the limits are understood, children are more likely to abide by them. Limits will be set in a positive way, focusing on what to do, rather than what not to do; thus giving children guidance.
- Physical punishment, verbal or physical degradation or emotional deprivation is not allowed. Staff must not deny or threaten to deny a basic necessity such as a drink or bathroom break. We will not use any form of physical restraint, confinement or isolation as a form of punishment.
- Appropriate behavior will be acknowledged with words and gestures. Positive reinforcement builds self-confidence and encourages a repeat of desired behavior.
- Focusing on the behavior, rather than the child, in a negative situation prevents lowered self-esteem and hurt feelings. Acknowledging the desired

behavior after an incident will also reinforce the positive objective; for example, saying "Thank you for picking up the toy" when a child has done what was asked.

- Our intention is designed to provide supportive guidance rather than to be punitive.
- Children will be approached individually by name and their attention obtained. A reminder will be used to clarify and reinforce limits. Great Beginnings students can become easily distracted, so reminders will be given often.
- If the behavior continues, distraction, diversion or substitution may be appropriate and will give children an opportunity to choose, thus encouraging the desired behavior.
- Persistent refusal to abide by the rules may require that the child move with the instructor to a centre or space in the classroom that will allow them privacy to explore the feelings underlying the behaviour. Once the child has regulated, he or she will be commended and will resume activities under the caring eye of the instructor.
- If the incident involves more than one child, an opportunity will be provided for the children to restore relationships after the incident. The goal is to help children learn that making amends requires time and goodwill rather than revenge.
- We recognize each child is an individual and each situation is different; therefore, each shall be treated accordingly. All discipline will be reasonable within the circumstance.

Behaviour Management Policy

- In certain situations, and in cases where regular discipline procedures (see Child Discipline Policy) are not effective, the Behaviour Management Policy will be followed. To ensure that all children receive equal program time, any over disruptive behaviour will be addressed accordingly. This is a confidential process between the child, parents, instructor and principal.
- Parents may agree to a medical referral or behaviour assessment by a contract psychologist. An additional dedicated staff member may be hired to work directly with the student in the classroom allowing his or her learning to safely continue.
- Behavior issues and concerns will be documented and kept by the program staff.

Potential Health Risk

- Where a staff member or playschool facility has reason to believe that a child is suffering from a potential health risk to other children such as flu, coughing, fever or any other contagious infection or disease or shows signs of coming down with a potential health risk such as being flushed, sweaty, lethargic, pale, irritable or drowsy, the instructor will make every effort to contact a parent/guardian or emergency contact.
- The child's parent/guardian will then be asked to come and pick up the child from the premises immediately.
- All steps from the time the child is observed will be documented and signed off by the parent upon removing the child from the premises.
- The child will be kept at home until symptoms are no longer observed for at least 24 hours.

Supervised Care for Sick Children/Accident/Serious Illness Policy

- If a child becomes ill at Great Beginnings, staff will ensure that a space separate (with adult supervision) from the other children is provided along with a mat and blanket. The child will be made as comfortable as possible until the parent or guardian arrives to pick up the child.
- In case of serious illness, staff will contact the parent or emergency contact immediately and will follow their instructions for proceeding to the doctor.
- Documentation must include the name of the child, the date the child was observed to be ill, name of staff member who identified the child, time the parent/guardian was contacted, name of staff who contacted the parent, and time the child was removed from and returned to the program.
- In case of an accident, the child will be tended to by staff, and parents/guardians will be notified if necessary. Accidents will be recorded using the Aspen View e-form system. These recorded documents will be reviewed by administration.

Emergency Procedures Policy

- Great Beginnings staff will be briefed on emergency procedures by the principal. Staff will inform students of emergency procedures and they will practice these procedures randomly throughout the year. Parents will also be informed. All parents will be contacted regarding actual emergencies or drills.

Offsite Emergency and Evacuation Policy

Parents will be advised, in the form of a permission slip, of any walking field trips where students will be leaving the school. The permission slip will contain information regarding the activity, its location, and supervision arrangements. Parents must consent, in writing, to allow their child to attend. Parents must make alternate arrangements for any children not attending the offsite activity. In the event of an offsite activity or an emergency evacuation, staff must take an emergency binder containing records with them.

Incident Reporting Policy

- Licensed staff will be notified immediately in the event of an emergency evacuation, the program being closed due to an emergency, an intruder on the premises, a child being removed from the playschool without parent/guardian consent, an injury requiring medical attention, a lost child or a child left at school after operating hours, death, injury, allegation of abuse, error in the administration of medication or a young person involved in crime.
- Any statements regarding serious incidents will be reported to the principal as soon as possible, and must be documented using the Incident Report form on the government website.



Administration of Medication Policy

- In case of an emergency, medication for things such as asthma or allergies, the medication must be administered by staff.
- Medication may be administered at the school once the parent/guardians have completed the "Request for administration of medication release" form.
- All medication left at the school office, must be in the original labeled container clearly labeled with the child's name. The medication will only be administered per label instructions.
- Emergency Medications – i.e. epi-pen, insulin; will be stored in a location that will be inaccessible to the children. Any medication administered to a child will be documented to include the name of the medication, the time of administration, the amount administered and the initials of the person who administered the medication and acknowledged via signature by the parent.
- For less serious illnesses, any medications required must be administered by a parent/guardian before or after the GB class. In case the medication would have to be administered during the 3 hours of GB, the parent/guardian will be allowed to come in and administer the medication. If the child is on medication, this will be reported to GB staff in writing, and kept in the emergency records binder. Where medication must be administered to a child, the name of the medication, time of administration, the amount administered and the initials of the person who administered the medication will be recorded.

Health Care Policy

- Staff may provide or allow for the provision of health care to a child only if the written consent of the child's parent or guardian has been obtained.
- Staff and volunteers may provide health care that is first aid.
- In the case of an emergency, the principal or staff will act in the best interest of the student, with or without parental consent.

Smoking/Vaping Policy

- Smoking/vaping is not allowed on school property premises anywhere that the children are being supervised (i.e. playground, field trips).

Nutrition Policy

- A nutrition break will be given approximately 1 hour after Great Beginnings has begun.
- Parents are expected to provide their children with a healthy snack that is manageable in size. Please do not send lunches.

Administrative Records Policy

- Children attending Great Beginnings will have attendance taken daily.
- Records of staff attendance will be kept on site.
- Staff certification and current first aid must be in a visible area for parents to view.

Portable Records Policy

- The school will maintain, in a portable file, emergency information for each child. This will include the child's name, date of birth, and home address. It will also include the parent/guardian name, home address and telephone number; as well as the emergency contact's name, address and telephone number. All relevant health information must be included.
- The portable record should also contain local emergency numbers and the number for the poison control center. Portable records should remain with staff on each field trip and in the case of an emergency evacuation.

Non-Portable Records Policy

- The school will keep an up-to-date record for each child on the following:
 - Each child's name, date of birth and home address
 - A completed registration form
 - Parent's/guardian's name, home address and telephone number
 - Emergency contact's name, address, and telephone number
 - Child's health information, including allergies and immunizations, provided by parent/guardian
 - Information regarding health care provided to child while in school with the parent's/guardian's written consent
 - These records will remain on school premises



Emergency Evacuation Procedures

- Emergency evacuation procedures will be used in case of:
 - Fire
 - Chemical or hazardous materials accident inside the center
 - A health related emergency such as utility failure or sewage back up

Procedures:

1. Gather children
2. Staff take the required information and supplies
3. Evacuate the premise immediately via the nearest, closest, safe exit.
4. Last adult out, scans the room, closes and latches the door but does not lock it.
5. Take attendance in the assembly area outside the building.
6. Do not enter the building unless directed to by emergency personnel.

Supervision Policy

- The Great Beginnings staff responsibilities will include supervision of the children's play and behavior.
- Staff will ensure that the classroom and outdoor play areas are safe for the children at all times. If the area is deemed unsafe, the children are to be escorted to a safe location and the appropriate authorities notified by staff.
- Attendance will be taken before leaving for any class outings and again once arriving at the destination. The process will be repeated when the group is leaving the destination.

Policy Awareness

- An electronic or paper copy of this handbook will be shared with all families of Great Beginnings students.
- All policies in this booklet are to be read, and understood by parents/guardians.

Whispering Hills Great Beginnings	(780) 675 - 4546	https://whps.aspenview.org/
H.A.Kostash Great Beginnings	(780) 656 - 3820	https://hak.aspenview.org/
Boyle Great Beginnings	(780) 689 - 3647	https://boyle.aspenview.org/
Thorhild Great Beginnings	(780) 398 - 3610	https://tcs.aspenview.org/
Grassland Great Beginnings	(780) 525 - 3733	https://grass.aspenview.org/
Vilna Great Beginnings	(780) 636 - 3651	https://vilna.aspenview.org/

