



**Crocker Highlands  
Kindergarten Handbook  
2014- 2015**

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# WELCOME!

Dear Kindergarten Families,

Welcome to Kindergarten! We are thrilled to have your child joining our school. This is a very exciting time in your child's development, and adjusting to kindergarten is a big deal for kids. We urge you to read this handbook carefully so both you and your child feel ready for the year. In addition, there is a more comprehensive Parent Handbook available on our school's website ([www.crockerschool.org](http://www.crockerschool.org)).

We collaborate frequently as a team, providing many shared experiences for our students. All of us are committed to creating positive classroom communities and rich learning environments. In addition to fun literacy and mathematics activities, your child can look forward to a hands-on science program, weekly art, Spanish, motor skills, library time, vocal music, computers in the second half of the year, field trips and assemblies. We also have P.E. as a whole grade level every Friday afternoon, as well as some special kindergarten events such as the Kindergarten Breakfast in December.

We are looking forward to getting to know your family in the course of the year and hope that your child's kindergarten experience will be WONDERFUL!

Sincerely,

Carla Gayden, Teacher  
Anna Henry, Teacher  
Molly Shannon, Teacher  
Jocelyn Kelleher, Principal

## **A Parable for Kindergarten:**

### Thoughts at the Bottom of a Beanstalk

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Jack who was about to climb his very first beanstalk. He had a fresh haircut and a brand new book bag.

Even though his friends in the neighborhood had climbed this same beanstalk almost every day last year, this was Jack's first day and he was a little nervous. So was his mother.

Early in the morning, she brought him to the foot of the beanstalk. She talked encouragingly to Jack about all the fun he would have that day and how nice his giant would be. She reassured him that she would be back to pick him up at the end of the day.

For a moment they stood together, silently holding hands, gazing up at the beanstalk. To Jack, it seemed much bigger than it had when his mother had pointed it out on the way to the store last week. His mother thought it looked big, too. She swallowed. Maybe she should have waited another year for this.

Jack's mother straightened his shirt one last time, patted his shoulder and smiled down at him. She promised to stay and wave while he started climbing. Jack didn't say a word.

He walked forward, grabbed a low-growing stem and slowly pulled himself up to the first leaf. He balanced there for a moment and then climbed more eagerly to the second leaf, then to the third, and soon he had vanished into a high tangle of leaves and stems with never a backward glance at his mother.

She stood alone at the bottom of the beanstalk, gazing up at the spot where Jack had disappeared. There was no rustle, no movement, no sound to indicate that he was anywhere inside.

"Sometimes," she thought, "it's harder to be the one who waves good-bye than it is to be the one who climbs the beanstalk."

She wondered how Jack would do. Would he miss her? How would he behave? Did his giant understand that little boys sometimes acted silly when they felt unsure?

She fought down an urge to spring up the stalk after Jack and maybe duck behind a bean to take a peek at how he was doing. "I'd better not. What if he sees me?" She knew Jack was really old enough to handle this on his own. She reminded herself that, after all, this was thought to be an excellent beanstalk and that everyone said his giant was not only kind but had outstanding qualifications.

"It's not so much that I'm worried about him," she thought, rubbing the back of her neck. "It's just that he's growing up and I'm going to miss him."

Jack's mother turned to leave. "Jack's going to have lots of bigger beanstalks to climb in his life," she told herself. "Today's the day he starts practicing for them. And today's the day I start practicing something too: cheering him on and waving good-bye."

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# Understanding and Supporting Your Kindergartener

## Parent Involvement:

We strongly encourage parents and guardians to participate in their children's education. In fact, the research clearly shows that when parents are involved in education, children are more likely to experience academic success and have high self-esteem. Your participation can take a number of forms, from reading daily with your child to volunteering in the classroom each week. At Back-to-School Night on September 10, 2014, you will have the opportunity to sign up to volunteer with your child's teacher.

## A Few Words About Academic Development:

Every child is on his or her own unique, developmental timetable. As educators, we want our students to maximize their potential and be challenged at school, so we try to meet each child's individual needs academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. We call this "differentiating." Most of our day includes structured activities that help students work towards achieving the new Common Core State Standards.

Another important way to meet students' needs is to schedule some less structured time in the day for children to work independently on things they unconsciously need to learn. For example, the child who needs to sort out the difference between fact and fantasy may gravitate towards the dressing up corner or the action figures. Children who are in a sensitive period for one to one matching will spontaneously play with the dominoes, lotto games, number matching games, or cards. Children who are in what Erikson terms their "industry" stage will probably want to build with blocks, create books, build with Legos, or make models, etc.

Writing and reading are taught simultaneously because writing helps many children reinforce left to right scanning, and helps reinforce the phonics rules they need to decode words. At first, writing will just be lines and curves, and we start this on the first day of school. Later, as they learn letter sounds and formation, their writing will evolve and improve.

### Ideas for Supporting Your Child's Literacy Skills:

- **Help your child to use pencils at home and to hold them properly** (a three-finger grasp). Poor finger grips can be a major cause of reluctance to write as the child's hand can tire more easily.
- **Provide skinny markers** as well as fat markers. The skinny markers will help refine the three finger grasp.
- **Colored pencils** are even better than felt tip pens because they require the child to use more strength to make a mark on the paper, and this ultimately helps strengthen their fingers.
- **Focus more on letter sounds** than letter names at the beginning of kindergarten.
- **Model how to write** slowly, neatly and with the correct letter formation.
- **Model the standard use of capital and lower case letters.** Books are rarely written in all caps, so it's good to get them used to seeing both upper and lower case letters.
- **Encourage your child to spell by themselves as much as possible.** If your child does not know how to spell a word - encourage him or her to at least identify and write the first and last sound in the word, and use a magic line. We call this "inventive spelling."

Example: "I am happy." might be written by a child as:

"I h \_\_\_\_\_e." or "I m hape."

**After the child writes, you should write the words correctly under their writing.** As you do, please model how you work out how to spell a word using *sounds*, not letter names.



- **Ask your child to read to you for 10 minutes each day.** If your child is not reading words yet, make sure you ask him or her to “read” the pictures. You will be surprised at how much children can infer about a story by using this strategy. Using picture clues for decoding is extremely important. Once your child has taken a picture walk, and told you what they think the story is about, then it is your turn to read the story aloud. As you read, stop occasionally to invite your child to make connections to their own personal experiences, or ask them a question about the story.
- **Take your child to the library regularly,** and let him or her choose some books to read to you, and some stories for you to read aloud.
- **Do not let your child “skip” pages in their homework journal.** Remember we are trying to teach directionality and order!

#### **Ideas for Supporting Mathematics Skills:**

- **Give your child a wall calendar.** Keep track of important events on it. He or she will soon be saying things like, “It’s only 10 days until my birthday!” This will support their learning of the months of the year, days of the week, seasons, numbers and counting.
- **Teach about volume and capacity through cooking and at bath time.** Point out the marks on the side of a measuring cup, get him or her to pour mixtures from one sized container to another, roll and cut out cookies, etc. Provide lots of different sized containers in the bathtub. This “hands-on” math experience helps develop the concept of conservation of liquids, as well as a basic understanding of volume and capacity.
- **Give your child a small allowance.** There is nothing like having your own money to teach you the value of it.
- **Buy toys that encourage patterning (e.g. beads), or working with shapes (e.g. tangrams).** Legos and other model-making materials are great for developing logical thinking and problem solving, and they help children understand why it is important to follow picture directions accurately.

## General Tips for Supporting Young Children

- **Recognize positive behaviors:** Praise students for their ethical choices, for making an effort, and for reaching their goals.
- **Accept shortcomings:** Communicate to your child that mistakes and failures are learning opportunities.
- **Avoid comparing your child to others,** both privately and publicly. Each child is unique, develops at his or her own pace and has both wonderful gifts and areas for growth.
- **Select computer and video games thoughtfully.** Choose programs or websites that encourage problem solving and/or teach skills. We recommend limiting screen time so that students have plenty of time to explore the world and spend time with their friends and families.
- **Play with your children as much as possible** - indoors and outdoors. This will provide many opportunities to communicate your values, reinforce skills taught at school, solve challenges together, and more.
- **Create order at home.** Children of this age crave the security of regular routine and "orderliness." Keep writing and art supplies in one place, and toys and books fairly organized, so your child does not get frustrated when trying to find things. (Leave time for tidying-up and getting ready for school before going to bed; you will be too rushed in the morning!)
- **Give your child household responsibilities,** and hold him/her accountable for completing them on a regular basis.

### **A Few Words About Physical Development:**

Five and six -year-olds are active little people who develop at many different rates. They need to practice running, jumping, skipping, hopping on one leg, etc. Interestingly, research indicates a correlation between skipping and a child's reading readiness.

For some children, the development of fine motor skills is much slower than their gross motor skills, and sometimes their brain is simply ahead of their physical co-ordination. Please be assured that if we are concerned about any aspect of your child's physical development, the teacher will contact you.

### **Tips for Developing Gross Motor Skills:**

- Take them to a playground or gym which has swings, slides, bars, ropes etc. Give them plenty of time to play.
- Give them a jump rope for skipping rope or jumping over.
- Teach your child how to sweep and use a dustpan. This also helps children develop their need for what Montessori calls, "a sense of order."
- Play catch and shoot baskets.

### **Tips for Developing Fine Motor Skills:**

- Encourage your child to use cookie cutters.
- Ask your child to use tweezers to transfer beads or marbles into different piles or into little cups. This is good for the three-finger grasp required for handling a pencil, as well as for the important concept of transference.
- Have paper, scissors, pencils, thin markers and glue for art and writing.
- If your child is having significant trouble in this area, please talk to one of us. We can share additional tips from our occupational therapist.
- Practice tying shoes.

## Discipline and Character Development:

An important part of the kindergarten experience is learning to work in a group setting and understanding that each child is responsible for his or her own behavior. They learn that sometimes, we make poor choices that lead to consequences we don't enjoy. But we also remind children that everyone makes mistakes. You can help us by reinforcing these ideas at home. If your child does get in to trouble with the teacher, ask what (s)he learned from the experience. Then remind your child that everyone has a bad day sometimes, and they will probably have a good day tomorrow.

We like it if the children see the parents who are working in the classroom supporting and encouraging good work and positive behavior. We also appreciate it when parents do some gentle "re-directing" when necessary. We expect the children to treat ALL parents with respect, and we expect them to co-operate with all adults.

At Crocker we work hard to help children develop independence and a sense of personal responsibility. This can be very hard for kindergarteners who are used to adults doing a great deal for them. To this end, we do our best to provide clear oral instructions and use visual aids. When students are unclear after the teacher finishes giving directions, we encourage them to ask classmates for help. We also expect students to help clean up after themselves, turn in their homework folders, etc.

Throughout the year, we emphasize different character traits that we regard as essential for social success. These are: respect, cooperation, self-discipline, acceptance, compassion, responsibility, perseverance and friendship. You will hear more about this as the year progresses.

## Food and Drink at School

### Water Bottles

Please send your child to school with a refillable, sports type water bottle with a top that closes securely and easily. We will keep it in the classroom.

### Morning Snacks

For the first three days only, the teachers will provide snacks. Likely foods include apple slices, carrots, pretzels and graham crackers. If your child has any food allergies, please let one of the teachers or the principal know on the first day and send an alternate snack for him or her. Beginning on the fourth day, we ask that children come to school with their own snacks.

### School Lunches

For students who qualify, free and reduced school lunches are available. The application for free and reduced lunches will be available in August at <https://mealapps.ousd.k12.ca.us/>. Other students may purchase lunches for \$2.25. Please either send exact change or a check to cover multiple lunches. Hot lunches come from a central OUSD location, and a menu is posted each month outside the school office. The menu can also be found at <http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/Page/10300>. Sometimes there is a salad bar available, and milk is available for purchase each day for \$.40.

### Lunches from Home

To support our efforts at being environmentally responsible, please use a clearly labeled reusable lunch box. We also encourage reusable food containers instead of plastic bags. Please note that we are not able to heat up children's food. Finally, students need to be able to access as much of their lunch as possible without requiring an adult's assistance (i.e. orange slices instead of a whole orange, food containers they can open easily, etc.). Examples of difficult packages for younger children include Capri Sun, Lunchables, fruit cups, yogurt in squeeze packaging.

### Volunteering at Lunchtime

There will be a parent who coordinates lunchtime volunteers. All are welcome!

## **School Routines**

### **Mornings on the Playground**

Playground supervision begins at 8:30 each day. We encourage families to arrive at school earlier if adults are able to stay and supervise their children. It's a nice way for kids and adults to catch up with their friends and for kids to run around a bit before getting settled in their classrooms.

### **Drop-off Procedures**

Kindergarten teachers meet their classes in designated spots on the playground at 8:35 AM each day. They walk in a line to their classrooms with the teacher. Please do not bring your child directly to the classroom in the morning unless you are late and have already checked in at the office.

### **Pick-up Procedures**

Teachers bring their classes to the playground at 2.45 PM every day except on Wednesdays when they are dismissed at 1:30pm. At dismissal time, teachers match each student either with the grownup that is bringing him/her home, or with the designated after school provider. If no adult arrives for a child within 5-10 minutes of dismissal time, the teacher brings the student to the office and calls an adult. Students remain in the office until their grown up arrives. We do not allow kindergarten students to walk outside unattended and never allow them to walk on sidewalks without an adult.

### **Teachers' Prep Time from 8:10 - 8:35 AM**

Please respect this as an important time for the teacher to get ready for the day. Do not come into the classroom to "talk" to the teachers at this time, unless you have an appointment.

### **Being On Time**

Please plan to be on campus by 8:30 each morning. Tardiness is disruptive to the class and uncomfortable for your child. If you do arrive late, you must go to the office to get a late slip. After five tardies, you will receive a warning notice from the school district.

### **Absences**

According to California law, illness, medical appointments, hospitalization, a death in the family, visits with immediate family members who are active duty military and independent study are the only reasons absences are excused. Please refer to the Parent Handbook for more information about attendance policies.

### **Medical Appointments**

It's best to schedule appointments after school. However, if you must bring your child to an appointment during the school day, please notify your child's teacher in advance. During the appointment, ask for a verification slip from the doctor's office and bring it with you when you return to school.

If your appointment starts at 9:30 or later, please bring your child to school for the first part of the morning, then pick him or her up for the appointment afterwards. This will avoid concerns about truancy on the part of the school district.

If you are picking up the child during the school day, please come to the office first to get the proper form.

When you return to school, always check in at our office before sending your child back to class.

### **Lost and Found**

Items left on the playground go to the Lost and Found, located near the bathrooms closest to the playground. Labeling your child's clothes and other belongings helps, but most items languish in the Lost and Found for weeks. We therefore recommend checking the Lost and Found on a semi-regular basis.

### **Bathroom Use**

We send children to the bathroom if they need to go during class time, but we encourage all of them to use the bathroom during recesses and lunch. If we have just come in from recess we will try to make them wait unless it is clear that an accident is about to happen. Children have to go with a partner.

## **Backpack and Clothing Guidelines**

### **“Accidents”**

It is very important that your child can use the bathroom independently. However, it is normal for children this age to have “accidents.” Therefore, we require each kindergartener to keep a complete change of clothes in a labeled Ziploc-style bag.

### **Clothing & Shoes**

In the interest of safety, please make sure your child is appropriately dressed for lots of activity and potentially messy projects. We encourage wearing shorts under skirts or dresses and avoiding slip-on shoes, flip flops and boots. If your child wears rain boots to school, please also send along a change of shoes. Also, if your child cannot tie their own shoelaces yet - please choose a Velcro style sneaker instead. Tying children’s shoes is a terrible time waster for the teachers!

### **Backpacks**

Please send your child to school **every day** with a backpack or tote bag with a zipper. It needs to be large enough to hold the homework file, library book, lunch box, and a sweater or jacket. PLEASE PUT YOUR CHILD’S INITIALS ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE BACKPACK, so we can identify it. We do not recommend that you write full names on the outside of the back pack.

## **Special Objects and Sports Equipment from Home**

### **Sports Equipment**

Students may NOT bring their own equipment for recess. The PTA generously purchases plenty of equipment for us, and this policy prevents toy envy, helps us to encourage sharing, and allows us to manage the safety of the items brought onto the playground.

### **Toys and Other Special Objects**

Students should NOT bring toys or special objects from home. They have a way of getting lost or broken or causing conflict at school.



# Homework

## Recommended Homework Supplies

- Thin felt tip pens
- Fat felt tipped pens
- Colored pencils
- Glue sticks
- Good scissors
- Black sharpie pens
- Regular and fat #2 pencils with an eraser on the end
- Counters for the math homework

## Homework Schedule

Homework will be distributed on Mondays and due on Fridays. Teachers post the assignments on Edmodo, and you will get access information from the teacher at Back-to-School Night.

## Homework Contents

There is a daily reading requirement, completion of a reading log each week, and other activities that either reinforce or extend classroom learning.

## Homework Support

Your child will need your support in completing assignments and reminding him or her to put their folder into the backpack each Thursday evening. By getting your child into the habit of being responsible for their own work, you will be helping them develop critical organizational skills and study habits.

## Homework/Communication Folders

We will provide these. It is an easy way for us to communicate whenever necessary. When the folder comes home on Mondays, please empty it. Go over the work with your child, read any correspondence from the teacher, then please return this to school on Friday with the homework.

## Homework Completion

We are trying to teach students responsibility and routine. Please do your best to see that your child completes all of the assignments, which should not take more than 15 minutes per day (this does not include your daily reading time). **If your child has made a concerted effort to do the work but is having difficulty with it please let us know.**

### **Extra Learning at Home**

If you want to create more learning opportunities for your kindergartener beyond the school day, we encourage you to avoid worksheets and workbooks. Instead, suggest more writing in the homework journal, following a recipe, building, reading a nature magazine, making a poster or playing games. The Crocker virtual library is another resource available to you from home.

## **Special Activities**

### **Field Trips (approximately 5 per year)**

The kindergarten classes take all of the same field trips, and they go on the same days if possible. The places we go vary according to the children's interest and the projects we are doing. We cancel field trips if we feel we do not have enough parent chaperones to ensure the safety of the students. If we feel a child does not have enough self-control to manage the excitement of a field trip, we will require that a parent or guardian comes on the trip with him or her, or we make arrangements for the child to spend the day in another classroom.

### **Star of the Week**

Each week, one child of the class gets to be the "THE STAR!" It is a nice way to make everyone feel special. This person gets to hold the door for the other children, be the line leader for the week, and gets to share a special poster they have made. This poster should have your child's name on it, plus some pictures of the family, things he or she likes to do, eat, play etc. Please help your child to make it colorful and special. The "Star" may also bring in something small every day to share, but he or she needs to be able to tell us about the item. Please sign up for your child's turn at Back-to-School Night.

### **Birthdays**

Each teacher handles birthdays slightly differently, but we do allow families to bring a special treat on or near the child's birthday. We encourage lower sugar options (i.e. muffins over cupcakes, small cupcakes instead of huge ones). Your child's teacher will provide more specific information about this to you.

## Parent/Guardian Volunteers

### We Love Your Help!

We love working with you and we both appreciate and rely upon your help. Moreover, the children love it when "their grownups" help at school. If you can, try to volunteer at least once during the year either in the classroom or on a field trip. At Back-to-School Night, your child's teacher will explain how and when she needs volunteers, and you'll be able to sign up. You will need to have a clear, up-to-date TB test on file in the office before you will be allowed to volunteer. The PTA tries to bring someone to campus to conduct the screenings each September; you may also go to your own doctor for this.

### Weekly Commitment for Classroom Volunteering

If you want to work in the classroom, the kindergarten teachers ask that you be prepared to make a commitment to come in EVERY week at the same time, so we can plan our lessons accordingly. Of course, there may be an occasional time when something gets in the way of you participating, and this is fine. Please just let us know in advance if possible. (You are welcome and encouraged to arrange a "job share" with your spouse or a friend if this works better for you.)

### Frequency of Volunteering

Please remember, in the interest of developing independence in your child, you should not sign up for more than one period of classroom time per week. It is very important that your child learns to separate from you, and you from him or her! **In the event that your child does not respond well to seeing you working with other children in the classroom, we reserve the right to change your volunteer arrangements with us.**

### Sign in at the Office First

All visitors and volunteers must sign in at the office and get a badge before going to classrooms. Although it might be quicker to reach your child's classroom through another entrance, please always enter the school via the office. We know you will appreciate our efforts to maintain a safe environment for your children. Please remember, while we may recognize you immediately, other teachers and children may not. **We are mandated to question and report anyone not wearing a badge on campus. Thank you so much for your support here:**

### **Sample Volunteer Opportunities:**

- Supporting work centers in literacy, math or science
- Helping out in the library
- Reading with individuals or small groups of students
- Preparing homework/communication folders
- Compiling Scholastic book orders
- Coordinating field trip chaperones/drivers
- Overseeing the class's auction project
- Taking and distributing photos of class events

### **Room Parent/Guardian**

This important volunteer serves as a liaison between the school and families.

Typical duties include:

- Emailing parents as necessary
- Collecting voluntary donations of \$50 from each family for classroom supplies, field trips, celebrations, etc.
- Recruiting volunteers for special projects
- Organizing celebrations such as the Hallowe'en Carnival, 100<sup>th</sup> Day of School Celebration, Valentine's Day, and end-of-the year events

## **Still Have Questions?**

### **People Who Can Help**

#### Kindergarten Teachers:

Carla Gayden

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#### Principal:

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(510) 451-5900

#### Administrative Assistant:

Victoria Sanders

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(510) 451-5900

#### PTA Co-Presidents:

Lesley Podesta & Danielle Vidal

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