**Colbert County – Colbert Academy for Preschool Students Program**

The Colbert County CAPS (Colbert Academy for Preschool Students) Program is an inclusive preschool program for 3- and 4-year olds with and without disabilities housed at Leighton Elementary School in Colbert County. This is an innovative program that is offered for preschoolers who reside in Colbert County. Our mission is to provide a developmentally appropriate preschool program for all children. The program is based on the philosophy of Developmentally Appropriate Practice, which means that emphasis is on learning through a play-based, child-initiated approach. Instruction for each child is age appropriate as well as individually appropriate. The focus is to teach children how to learn rather than what to learn in order to facilitate their development and transition to Kindergarten.

The daily class will consist of approximately 22-24 students with approximately 10-12 children who are typically developing and approximately 10-12 children with special needs. Including children with and without disabilities is a fundamental component of the CAPS philosophy. Children with disabilities benefit from appropriate interactions and observations of same-age peers. At the same time, children without disabilities learn about disabilities at a young age before they form misconceptions. The class is staffed with one certified special education teacher, one certified early childhood teacher and two paraprofessionals. All employees are employed by the Colbert County Board of Education.

**Enrollment**

Children with special needs who meet the state requirement for eligibility and need a full range of services as determined by the IEP team are eligible to attend on their 3rd birthday. They many continue to receive preschool services until they are eligible for Kindergarten (turn 5 on or before September 1st). No child will remain in the CAPS program after reaching the age of eligibility for Kindergarten unless the IEP team determines this is appropriate.

Children without special needs must be a resident of Colbert County or be a child of an employee of the Colbert County School System. Children without special needs must turn 3 on or before September 1st to be eligible to start at the beginning of the school year. Children without special needs who turn 3 later in the school year may be considered for enrollment after their 3rd birthday if there is an opening. In this situation, the staff will evaluate the appropriateness of the late enrollment on an individual basis. Children without special needs must reapply on an annual basis for continued enrollment (first priority is given to returning students for openings, **but a current application must be completed**).

**Application Process**

Children with special needs go through the special education referral process. Children may be referred at any time during the year. Children with special needs who are eligible will continue to receive services until they are eligible for Kindergarten (turn 5 on or before September 1).

Typically developing children without special needs may begin applying during open enrollment, which begins May 1 or the first working day thereafter. Applications can be obtained at the Colbert County Board of Education, 425 Highway 72 West, Tuscumbia, Alabama. Openings will be determined by random drawing on June 1 or the first working day thereafter. Applications will be accepted during the month of May.

Incomplete applications will not be accepted. To be considered “COMPLETE”, an application must include the following:

1. The original immunization record from the Health Department

2. Copy of child’s Social Security card

3. Copy of child’s Birth Certificate

4. Proof of Residence (example – current electric bill or water bill)

**Individualized Education Plan (IEPs)**

Children who qualify for special education services will have IEPs. All IEPs are in effect for a maximum of one year. Each CAPS teacher has a transition meeting during the spring of each year to explain the transition process to the parents of four-year olds. Four-year old children with special needs will visit Kindergarten classrooms to prepare for the transition to Kindergarten.

**School Year**

CAPS will follow the Colbert County School Calendar. Preschool hours vary for children with IEPs depending on needed services. Instruction hours are from 7:45 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Parents are not to bring children without special needs before the designated time. If you arrive after 8:00 a.m. then you **MUST** check your child in at the Main Office. Also, if you pick your child up after 2:45 p.m., then you **MUST** pick them up at the Main Office

**Meals**

Lunch and breakfast may be purchased at the school or may be brought from home. Free and reduced meals are available by application for those who meet the financial requirements. Forms are available on which to apply. Ask any staff member to assist you in acquiring the form.

**Curriculum**

The Colbert County CAPS program uses Developmentally Appropriate Practice to encourage development of skills in the following areas:

* Play Behavior
* Listening
* Speaking
* Pre-writing
* Manners
* Eating and drinking skills
* Self help
* Personal hygiene
* Pre-literacy
* Problem solving
* Gross motor skills
* Thinking skills
* Fine motor/Visual discrimination skills
* Safety

**Guidance/Behavior Management**

Teachers incorporate positive behavior development techniques to promote self-control, appropriate behavior and most importantly good self-concept. The teachers use approaches based on the assumption that behavior is meaningful and displays a communicative intent. The staff attempts to identify the communicative intentions underlying the behavior and in turn, helps the child learn more acceptable ways of communication. The following steps may be taken by the staff to assist the child in developing positive behavior:

1. If the behavior will stop on its own and no one is harmed:

It is not necessary to intervene on every undesirable behavior, especially if it is a one time or infrequent occurrence. Use the least amount of intervention necessary to enable the child to function and learn within the classroom environment. Often the natural consequences of the negative reactions of other children will be all that is necessary to shift things in a more positive direction. Staff may ignore/remove attention from inappropriate behavior.

2. If the behavior continues or someone is getting hurt:

Remove events, situations, objects or individuals that may be facilitating the behavior. Move closer to the child who is engaged in the behavior rather than verbally calling attention to the behavior. Touch the student gently to redirect attention or stop a disruptive movement. Use relaxation techniques such as moving the child to an area in the classroom for gaining composure and assisting the student in calming down. Communicate positively to the child what he/she should be doing rather than using the words “don’t” or “stop”. You might say “chairs are for sitting” or “you may look at your book while sitting in your chair or choose an activity from the shelf.” Time-out within the classroom and withholding privileges and/or activities may be used.

3. If the behavior becomes a regular occurrence:

Many behaviors of children that are viewed as inappropriate are due to lack of more appropriate functional skills, an absence of meaningful activities, or too much time in which the child is not occupied. Rather than attempting to address all the child’s behaviors that are considered problematic, it is important to prioritize behaviors and identify missing skills that enable the child to participate within the classroom. A decision making process is helpful in accomplishing this important task. This first step is to determine what functions the specific behavior seems to serve for the child. Data can be collected when the behavior of concern is occurring. Finally, family input will be obtained to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan.

4. If measures set forth under paragraphs 1., 2. and 3. above are not successful in curtailing more serious misbehaviors (hitting, biting, etc.), staff may recommend the withdrawal, suspension or expulsion of the child from the CAPS program.

**Health**

The program staff will make every effort to protect the health and safety of all children. Cooperation of parents is essential in this effort. A child must be free from fever, diarrhea, or vomiting for **72 hours** before they may return to school. Parents should keep their child at home when any of the following symptoms occur:

* Fever of 100 degrees or greater
* Diarrhea
* Vomiting
* Severe cold
* Severe headache
* Rash with fever or behavior change
* Eye discharge
* Mouth sores with drooling

**Medical Emergencies**

In the event that a child becomes ill or suffers an accident while he/she is at school, the child’s parents will be notified. If the accident or illness requires medical attention, the child’s parents will be called immediately. If the parents cannot be reached, the child’s physician will be contacted. In an extreme emergency, paramedics will be called and the child will be transported to the hospital when appropriate. A staff member will stay with the child until his/her parents are located.

**Supplies Needed**

There is a $50.00 classroom fee that covers all school supplies and class t-shirt. Students will need extra clothes (pants/shorts/shirt/underwear) in case of accidents. If your child requires diapers and wipes then you will need to provide those also. The teacher will let you know when you need to bring more of these items.

**Starting School**

Non-typical students will start on the first scheduled day of school each year based on their Individualized Education Plan. Typical students will be divided into two groups by the teacher. Group one will attend on days 1 and 3 and group two will attend on days 2 and 4. Day 5 all students will report.

**Parent Trainings**

There are 4 parent trainings this year that cover a variety of topics from Back to School information to Safety. Please try your best to be present at these trainings. All trainings except the Back to School will be in the afternoon from 12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Students are only required to attend on these days from 7:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. If at all possible please have an alternative place for your student. If you cannot find an alternative place then the class paraprofessionals will be available to watch the students.

Parent Training Dates/Times and Topics

* Back to School August 6, 2021 9:00 a.m.
* Parent/Teacher Communication August 27, 2021 12:00 p.m.
* Being Independent January 14, 2022 12:00 p.m.
* Safety March 18, 2022 12:00 p.m.