Transitions

First Two Weeks
The first days of school can be challenging as new places, new faces and new routines are learned. Please be patient and allow for extra time and emotion.

Exiting First Graders
University Primary School staff work to be in touch with administrators of area gifted and talented programs. Information on available second grade programs is shared with parents as we obtain it. Parents should, however, directly contact those programs of interest to them so that deadlines or application procedures are known.

Welcome
This student handbook has been compiled by the staff and friends of University Primary School to assist students and their families. Please keep this handbook as a reference because many often-asked questions are addressed in these pages.

Mission Statement
The mission of UPS is to provide a site for the College of Education to demonstrate, observe, study and teach best practices in early childhood and gifted education. In this way, UPS is a site for research and teacher education while at the same time providing a service to the community, especially to families with young children.
Social and Emotional Growth
Teachers take a proactive role in creating a classroom community that is open, honest, and accepting. To this end, discipline is designed around teachers structuring appropriate choices, students learning how to solve their own problems, and students sharing in the responsibility of developing a caring classroom community. Teachers encourage self-control and strive to develop both intellectual and emotional self-confidence.

Numeration and Problem Solving Skills
Math is taught with an investigative approach, with focus on relating math to real-life situations using manipulatives and other concrete materials. Teachers facilitate learning in the following areas at the child’s individual readiness level: conceptual skill, numeration, computation, measurement, problem solving, and geometry. Many of the students’ projects will reflect integration of these mathematical skills.

Language Arts
This program emphasizes a whole language approach where children learn to read by reading and to write by writing. Students are actively involved in both processes throughout the day. Importance is placed on the “making sense” process. They learn within whole context rather than parts. Early literacy involves three reading cue systems: contextual, grammatical, and phonetic. Teachers create a literacy rich environment and model meaningful reading and writing.

Arts and Aesthetics
The arts are integral to children’s learning. Teachers guide students toward meaningful experiences in the arts with examples, materials, and cultural artifacts. Teachers promote sensitivity to and an appreciation of the environment.
**Best Practices**

As a teacher training and research site, University Primary School aims to model best practices, based on research and on accepted learning theories in early childhood gifted education. Best practices for children at this age include a child-sensitive, individually focused curriculum with many opportunities for students to choose and develop their own learning activities. Children will be working individually or in small informal groups most of the time with the teachers often taking the role of guides or facilitators of learning. Teachers assess and address the strengths of each child and build on these strengths for future learning experiences.

**Activity Time and Project Work**

Activity Time and Project Work is highly valued in our curriculum. Activity time allows students to make choices about their own learning and provides important school time to work in their interest areas. During this time period, teachers facilitate students’ learning by building upon their ideas. Projects present learning to children in real-life contexts and integrate the acquisition and application of basic skill through inquiry modes of learning. Activity Time and Project Work strive to foster “the love of learning” and provide an opportunity for teachers to engage in the learning process with their students.

**Absences**

Please report absences between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. by calling 333-3996 and leaving a message with the school secretary. It is helpful to know if your child is not attending that day or will be late.

**After-School Care**

There are a number of after-school programs available in the Champaign-Urbana area, including day care, park activity programs and a variety of lessons. The Child Care Resource Service at 333-3252 keeps a partial list of programs and care providers. Other parents may also make useful recommendations.

**Carpools**

When your child is enrolled, you may sign a release authorizing the sharing of your name, address and phone number to other parents of students in your child’s class. A class list of those signing the release will then be made and distributed prior to the academic year. You can use this class list to arrange carpooling. Also, the University Primary Support Group works to put parents in touch with other parents.

**Celebrations**

We celebrate our diversity by encouraging children to share their family traditions with the class. Please speak to the classroom teachers about the celebrations or traditions that you would like to share. We also enjoy celebrating birthdays in the classrooms with a special snack from home. Parents are very welcome to join in the fun! If your child is planning a birthday party and inviting some but not all children in the class, please do not distribute the invitations in school cubbies. In the past, some families have donated a book to the classroom in honor of the child’s birthday. If you are interested in this, see one of the teachers for a book wish list.
Clothing
These are “hands-on” classrooms! **Please do not send children in good clothes that could be ruined by paint spills or stains.** We discourage children from wearing jewelry or watches to school. These items often break or are misplaced in the classroom. Children will be going outside each day to play. For snowy days, children will need to wear snow pants, boots, hats, mittens, and, of course, a coat. Please clearly mark names in clothing and shoes, as many items look very similar. If your child does not wear snow pants, please send an extra pair of pants so that your child will have dry pants to wear in the classroom. Wet boots can be messy, so please also have slippers or other shoes for the child to change into after recess. Please keep a seasonal set of extra clothes for your child at school for emergencies. Helpful Hint: Try to buy clothing that your child can manipulate (i.e., unzip, unbutton, etc.).

Communication with Families
At University Primary School, we have many informal and formal means of communicating with parents. Parents have brief daily contacts with their child’s teachers at drop off and pick up times. Weekly newsletters are sent home in each classroom. Twice a year parent conferences are scheduled. When questions, issues, or concerns arise, every attempt is made to address them in an immediate and timely manner. Parents who have a concern that cannot be addressed through the informal means of communication should make an appointment to discuss the concern with the head teacher. If the issue is not resolved at the classroom level, either the head teacher or the parents may request a meeting with the director. If the issue is not resolved, then concerns may be taken to the head of the Department of Special Education. Issues which are still not resolved at the departmental level are taken to the dean of the College of Education.

Philosophies of Curriculum and instruction

Philosophy
The philosophy of University Primary School is that young children are best served by teaching and curriculum practices that strengthen and support their intellectual growth and development, initiate them into basic skills, challenge them to increase their proficiency in academic tasks as well as intellectual processes, and, at the same time, foster the development of their social competence.

Unique Features of University Primary School Curriculum
The University Primary School Curriculum represents an eclectic approach to early childhood gifted education programming. A blend of student-initiated, teacher-guided, and teacher-directed activities present students with opportunities to pursue their own interest areas and progress at their individual level of instruction. Creativity, problem solving, and self-directed learning are common threads woven through all areas of the curriculum. Students become actively involved in the inquiry process through projects.
Conferences
Parent/Teacher conferences are held in November and April or May. During the conference, you will be shown samples of your child’s class work from his or her portfolio and the teacher will discuss with you your child’s progress. If you have concerns about your child, at any time, please call your child’s teacher to arrange an appointment. Many concerns are handled best when addressed early.

Emergency Forms
It is imperative that you provide us with a completed INFORMATION CARD and EMERGENCY MEDICAL RELEASE CARD on or before the first day of class. We must know how to contact you or others in case of an emergency. The information card also authorizes others to pick up your child from school. Please add to the authorized list of names throughout the year as your child makes new friends. Please be sure to complete both sides of the card. The Emergency Medical Release Card authorized emergency treatment at your preferred hospital if you cannot be reached. PLEASE UPDATE THIS INFORMATION IF YOU MOVE OR CHANGE WORK NUMBERS.

Encouraging Independence and Confidence
Encourage your child to take on the tasks of arriving and departing. Hanging up a coat, emptying a cubby, collecting a lunch box or carrying a book bag are tasks your child can master! You may want to lend a hand on those days that you really must rush, but your child’s independence and confidence will grow if you can refrain from doing all these tasks for your child.
Field Trips
The project-approach to our curriculum involves students doing their own field work. Therefore several field trips will be a part of each classroom curriculum. We often depend on parents to help transport our students. Parent drivers will need to complete an Insurance Information form before transporting children. Teachers cannot make last minute field trip changes. Therefore, if you volunteer to drive, please understand the importance of that commitment. Children must be placed in the back seat in a seatbelt. Parents of children under four years of age and under 40 pounds need to provide a car seat for field trips.

Financial Assistance
There is a limited set of funds available each year for applicants seeking financial assistance for our program. Interested families should complete a Tuition and Fee Waiver Form during the application process.

Health Forms
Health forms must be updated and on file on the first day of school. All kindergarteners are required to have a health examination before they enter kindergarten. All other health forms are generally up to date for two years. Please review your medical records with your doctor to ensure that all immunizations are up to date.

Illness/Wellness Policy
Children should be well (free of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea) for 24 hours before returning to school. Parents are asked to report contagious diseases (e.g., chicken pox, strep throat, or head lice) to the school secretary so that a notice can be sent home to students in the same class as a precaution to alert other families for symptoms. Please remember that your child needs plenty of sleep and a good breakfast before school each day.

School Year Calendar
The school year calendar is adapted from the Champaign Unit Four public school schedule. The University Primary School spring break will coincide with the University of Illinois spring break.

Toys From Home
We discourage bringing toys from home because these cherished items often get lost or broken. We do not have a typical “Show and Tell” time in our program. During the large group meeting, children demonstrate and talk about things they have created at school. Encourage your child to make something rather than bring a toy from home. Self-made items from home may be brought to school. When a child does bring a toy to school, she or he will be asked to put the toy in a student cubby.

Tuition
Payments are due on or before the first day of each month and may be placed in the locked tuition box located in your child’s classroom. Please make checks out to the University of Illinois. A late fee will be assessed after the 10th day of the month.
**Room Parents and Other Volunteer Opportunities**

We LOVE to have parent volunteers at University Primary School. Early in the school year you will be asked to complete a parent survey to identify when and where you would like to help. Please let your child’s teacher know about activities, hobbies, traditions or other areas where you can share or augment the program. Teachers will schedule and coordinate volunteer times. Teachers may also ask for a room parent, which is a contact person that assists with organizing field trip drivers, assisting with classroom celebrations or helping with other events.

**School Closings**

When the Champaign Public Schools close due to inclement weather (snow or ice storm), University Primary School will also close. School closing information is broadcast on most television and radio stations.

**School Hours**

The preschool classroom will run daily from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The Kindergarten/First Grade classroom will run from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Please be prompt as the first hour of the day is Activity Time for the children. This is an important and exciting learning time and children will get the greatest benefit from it if they arrive on time. **Please do not drop off children prior to 8:30 a.m. as the staff will be setting up for the day’s program and will not be available for child supervision. Visitors or volunteers staying in the school for more than 10 minutes must sign in the visitor’s log. This is a state fire code regulation.**

**Lunches**

Children in the K/1 class should bring a sack lunch each day. **We do not have facilities for either heating or cooling foods. Also, due to the possibility of food allergies, students are not permitted to trade lunch items with other students.** Helpful Hint: Test home and purchased containers or wraps for user-friendly openings!

**Material Fees**

Material fees must be paid each semester. The payment for second semester is due the first day of school in January.

**Medications**

Please talk with your physician about scheduling medication to avoid school hours whenever possible. If this is not possible, you will need to fill out a **SCHOOL MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM** (obtained from the school secretary) and have your physician sign the form. You will need to provide a form for each medication to be given. The medication must be in an original container, labeled by a pharmacy. The label must show the name of the child, the dosage, the schedule of administration, what the prescription contains, the date of purchase and the doctor’s name. All prescription medicine to be administered by school staff should be taken to the school office at the beginning of each school day by an adult.

**Please DO NOT ask staff members to give over-the-counter medications “as needed”.**
Parking – Children’s Research Center

With the cooperation of the Division of Campus Parking & Transportation, a “drop off zone” in Lot E30 on the southeast side of the Children’s Research Center has been developed to provide a safe area to load and unload children. Establishing a designated area to drop off our children eliminates the potential for conflict between safe drop off zones and emergency vehicle access in the circle drive on the west side of the center.

Please note, the spaces in the drop off zone are not intended for longer term parking. If you need to park for more than a few minutes, meters are available for your use on Gerty Drive.

Pet Policy

Both of the classrooms have some pets in them as a way for children to learn about animal habitats and caring for animals. The pets add a great deal to the nurturing environment of the classroom and make many children feel more “at home.” The teachers are very careful to consider any student’s allergies before taking in a pet, and are extremely conscious about the safety of having pets in the classroom. Please check with your child’s teachers before bringing a pet from home to be near any of the children. Some students are afraid of dogs, cats, or even hamsters if they are unannounced strangers in the environment. Also, for the safety of children, please refrain from bringing pets to school when picking up your child. This is often a hectic time for the children and the teachers. Pets are not always predictable!

Research

University Primary School is a school that encourages educational research. Researchers may occasionally want to photograph or videotape students as they are working and learning. It is helpful to these researchers if parents sign and return photo/video release forms. Parents are always informed of research projects and are given the opportunity to have the child participate or to decline participation.