



# Lead Preschool Teacher Handoff Manual

Two & Three Year Old Classroom  
Operational Guide

Alyson S Murphy

Lead Preschool Teacher, 2024 – 2026

*“Train up a child in the way he should go:  
and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

— Proverbs 22:6



*For every teacher who walks into a room full of  
toddlers  
and chooses to stay.*

And for the children, who never made it easy  
but always made it worth it.



## Acknowledgments

### Miss Jane

Miss Jane had been lead teacher for my classroom more than once over the years, and when she chose to step back from that role, she stayed on as my assistant. She was instrumental in helping me understand how everything worked, what was expected of me, and what I might not have realized I needed to do. She kept the classroom in shape, kept the routines running, and made sure every child was happy, content, and working toward their milestones. It was both of us working toward that, together, and the ride was smoother because she was there.

### Brittany McGuire & Candi Deluca, Directors

I was incredibly blessed to be given the responsibility to lead the toddler class, and to be trusted with it for as long as I was. There were hurdles. There always are. But they were nothing but helpful, and they had the interests of the children and of me at heart. Being given this opportunity in the first place was an honor and a responsibility I do not take lightly.

## Stacy Chamura, Assistant Preschool Director

Stacy was the day-to-day coordinator, the person you touched base with when you had a question. She could usually answer it, and if she could not, she would get you what you needed as soon as she possibly could. She helped me handle situations I had never faced before. When a toddler projectile-vomited all over me, she did not have to help with that, but she went out of her way to. When I was confused about the assessments and did not know how to fill them out properly, she walked me through it. She kept the pre-K side running smoothly so the directors could handle the prep side without having to rush back and forth. I owe her a great deal.



## To Whoever Comes Next

If you are reading this, you have inherited something wonderful: a room full of two and three year olds who will test every boundary you set, steal every last cracker off your plate, and then, without warning, wrap their arms around your legs as though you were the only safe thing in the universe.

This manual is not meant to be exhaustive. It is meant to be honest. I have tried to write down the things I wish someone had told me on day one, the systems that actually work, and the judgment calls that no curriculum guide can make for you.

Some of this will feel obvious. Some of it will only make sense after your first week. All of it was learned the hard way, which, in a room full of toddlers, is the only way anything gets learned at all.

The children are remarkable. The work is real. And when you do not know what to do next: ask God for help, for without Him you can do nothing. Ask God, and the rest will follow.

[John 6:45](#), [John 15:5](#), [Acts 9:6](#), [James 1:5](#) (KJV)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyson Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.



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## CHAPTER ONE

# The Daily Rhythm

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The toddler room runs on predictability. These children are still assembling their understanding of how the world is sequenced, and a consistent rhythm is the scaffolding they build that understanding on.

### Morning Free Play

Let them play. From arrival onward, the children have free play until the energy in the room tells you it is time to move on. This is a generous window and it is intentional. They need time to settle in, separate from their parents, and find their bearings. Parkview will send a schedule at the beginning of the school year to give you time to plan.

### Visual Schedule

There is a visual schedule posted on the wall. It is your best friend. Point to it. Reference it. When a child asks what is happening next, walk them to the schedule and show them. They will begin to do this on their own.

## Circle Time & Morning Songs

I personally do circle time and morning songs after recess, not first thing in the morning. By then, the children have burned off the initial energy and are more willing to sit, listen, and participate. Use the carpet area or gather them at the cafeteria table.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Transitions

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The quality of your transitions will determine the quality of your day. A rough transition at 9 AM will ripple through every activity that follows. A smooth one costs you ninety seconds of patience and saves you an hour of chaos.

### The Five-and-One Method

Give a five-minute warning, then a one-minute warning before any change. This is non-negotiable. Two and three year olds cannot switch gears without notice. They are not being difficult. They are being two.

### Cleanup Song

"Hey Siri, play cleanup song." The children know this phrase. Some of them will say it before you do. Once the song plays, cleanup is underway. This is a trained cue and it works. Keep using it.

### Snack Time

After potty time and cleanup, transition into snack. Call the children over one at a time and seat them at the small tables. One of the teachers opens their snack from home or serves a school snack on a napkin with their cup. Let them eat at their own pace. Once everyone has finished, transition into lining up.

### Lining Up

After snack, children are called one at a time. When their name is called, they push in their chair (this teaches them to leave a space as they found it), throw away their trash, grab their cup, and line up against the wall. They wait there until everyone is ready. Then the group moves into the cafeteria and lines up along the wall by the outside door, in case other classes are moving through. Once everyone is accounted for and the classroom is clear, children are called by name to go outside, placing their cups on the outside table on the way out.

### Going Outside

Line up along the cafeteria wall first. When the path is clear, move outside. To call them back in, say "Go get your cups." They know this means grab their water cup and line up at the door.

## Lunchtime Routine

After outside time, the children come in for potty before lunch. Once everyone is done, have them sit down against a wall. This is a settling period: read a book together, watch a short episode of something like *Kipper* or *Angelina Ballerina*. They need to be sitting and not handling toys or books, because the next step is hand washing.

Cycle the children through hand washing one or two at a time, then have them line up on the wall. Call them by name into the cafeteria to sit down for lunch. One teacher stays in the cafeteria to supervise eating, make sure no one is choking or playing with their food. The other teacher goes into the classroom to set out mats, lay out blankets, turn off the lights, and start the nap time music.

As children finish eating, the cafeteria teacher sends them one at a time to wash their hands and go lie down. If you have a child who you know will not lie down quietly and will instead run around or bother children who are trying to sleep, keep that child until last.

## Nap Time Routine

The classroom teacher gets children settled: shoes off, blankets on, last-minute potty trips. If more than one energetic child is still buzzing, keep one or two in the cafeteria while the classroom settles. The cafeteria cleanup can wait. Getting children to sleep cannot.

The first teacher to take their lunch break does not leave until the remaining teacher is in a manageable position. That means only one child who needs patting is still awake, and no rowdy pair is going to force the remaining teacher to call you back from break.

If a child wakes up and does not want to go back to sleep, try to resettle them. If they will not sleep, they can look at a book quietly on their mat. The goal is to get them to a point where they can stay on their mat, quiet and still, even if they are not sleeping.

**Tip:** There is no formal line leader or line order at this time. You will quickly learn which children should not stand next to each other. If a child leaves the line before their name is called, they go back and wait until last.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Classroom Environment

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The rooms at Parkview are long. This is a feature you will learn to work around rather than with. The geometry of the space will drive many of your arrangement decisions.

### Intentional Arrangement

Split the play area into two zones to give children more room. Use play furniture as dividers. Place larger toys on the bottom shelves and smaller items with more pieces up high, so the children reach for the simpler options first and come to you when they want the rest.

### Learning Centers

Use the classroom tables for small center work: tabletop toys, fine motor activities, puzzles. For messier activities (painting, gluing, cutting with scissors), use the cafeteria table where cleanup is simpler and space is less constrained.

### Center Rotation

Rotate the fine motor toys and tabletop activities regularly. You will learn which ones the children ignore and which are the favorites. Bring the favorites out more often, but space them apart so the novelty holds.

### **Loose Parts**

Store small pieces in 4x9 or 5x9 lidded containers from Walmart or Dollar Tree. Gallon ziplock bags work for blocks. Keep these organized and out of unsupervised reach.

### **Book Nook**

There is a small magazine-style rack with books. Children may pull books and take them to the carpet to read. Encourage this. It is one of the few genuinely quiet activities they will initiate on their own.

### **Invitations to Play**

Tell them: "We get to pick out a couple of things, but we are not making a big mess." They know which toys they can access freely and which require a teacher to retrieve. Maintain this distinction.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Instruction & Curriculum

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Parkview uses the Abeka curriculum. At the start of each school year, you should receive the curriculum book, the arts and crafts book, the number coloring books, and the Bible books. These define the mandated work. If you do not receive them, ask Stacy.

### Weekly Rhythm

- Two number coloring pages per week
- One craft per week (minimum)
- Bible lessons as scheduled in the curriculum

Some crafts in the book will be beyond what your children can handle. Use your judgment. If a craft is too complex, adapt it or substitute something achievable. The point is participation, not perfection.

### Small Group vs. Whole Group

Whole group instruction happens in the cafeteria. Small group work, especially worksheets and anything requiring active participation, stays in the classroom with you leading. While you work with a small group, the remaining children use the toys available in the play area or rotate through tabletop activities.

### Milestones & Standards

Your assessment sheets are the compass. They list what the children should be working toward between ages two and three. Review them regularly. They align with state standards and will tell you where each child stands and what to focus on next.

**Tip:** With children this young, you are encouraged to build learning into play and conversation, not just worksheets. If a child is struggling with shapes, work shapes into snack time, outdoor play, and free time. The curriculum is a guide, not a cage.

### Example Lesson Plan

Below is one week from my classroom to show you what a typical plan looks like. Yours will be different, but the structure holds.

### Monday

**Circle Time:** Days of the Week, Months of the Year, Alphabet, Count to Ten

**Reading Center:** Bouncy Critter Craft, Rice Sensory Play

**Math Center:** Button Bear Number 6

**Song of the Day:** Do You Know the Apple Man?

**Bible:** Esther • **Story Time:** Bear Says Thanks

### Tuesday

**Circle Time:** Days of the Week, Months of the Year, Alphabet, Count to Ten

**Reading Center:** Brown Tree Coloring Sheet, Stand-up Turkey Craft

**Math Center:** E Coloring Sheet, Sticker Sheet

**Song of the Day:** Rolling Pumpkins

**Bible:** Esther • **Story Time:** Sleep Tight Farm

### Wednesday

**Circle Time:** Days of the Week, Months of the Year, Alphabet, Count to Ten

**Reading Center:** Forest Critter Craft, Shape of Oval Worksheet

**Math Center:** Apple Coloring Sheet, Free Play

**Song of the Day:** Apple Tree Song

**Bible:** Esther • **Story Time:** The Busy Little Squirrel

## Thursday

**Circle Time:** Days of the Week, Months of the Year, Alphabet, Count to Ten

**Reading Center:** Gemstone Sorting

**Math Center:** Button Bear Number 4, Bible Coloring Sheet

**Song of the Day:** 10 Red Apples

**Bible:** Esther • **Story Time:** In November

## Friday

**Circle Time:** Days of the Week, Months of the Year, Alphabet, Count to Ten

**Reading Center:** Apple Glue Page, Free Play

**Math Center:** Oval Worksheet

**Song of the Day:** Down by the Orchard

**Bible:** Esther • **Story Time:** Full of Fall

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Rest & Quiet Time

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Rest time is sacred. It is the hinge point of the day. Get it right, and you have a manageable afternoon. Get it wrong, and every child in the room will make sure you know about it.

### The Current State of Affairs

Most of the children are now able to lie down and fall asleep on their own. There are still at least two who need to be patted to sleep. This will change as the roster changes.

### The Lunchroom Strategy

Do not send all the children into the classroom at once. The first teacher to take their lunch break does not leave until the teacher remaining in the classroom is in a manageable position: only one child who needs patting is still awake, and no rowdy pair is going to force the remaining teacher to call you back. This prevents a scenario where one teacher is running between two needy sleepers on opposite ends of the room with no backup.

## Rowdy Children

If more than one energetic child is still buzzing after lunch, keep one or two of them in the cafeteria while the classroom teacher gets the rest settled. Shoes off, blankets on, last-minute potty trips handled. The cafeteria cleanup can wait. Getting six children asleep cannot.

**Key principle:** If you know two specific children will wake each other up, put them on opposite ends of the room. You will learn these pairings quickly.

## Safe Sleep Guidelines

- Mats placed at least two feet from other children
- Two feet from any entry point
- Shoes and socks off if the child prefers
- Faces uncovered at all times
- Do not block exits or pathways with furniture
- Use movable items to block sightlines between restless sleepers, but never in a way that creates a hazard

## CHAPTER SIX

# Behavioral & Social-Emotional

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Here is the single most important sentence in this manual: if you are calm, the classroom is calm. If you are happy, the classroom is happy. If you are frustrated and the children are already frustrated, it will spiral. Take a breath. These are children. They are learning how to be people. They are stubborn as anything, but there will be moments when the only reasonable response is to laugh, because they have been magnificently silly.

### Proactive vs. Reactive

**Proactive:** You plan the year's focus areas in advance. "This semester, we are working on colors, shapes, and numbers."

**Reactive:** You observe a pattern and adjust. "Half the class is grabbing toys from each other. We need to build sharing and manners into every activity this month."

### Window of Tolerance

Every child has a different threshold. Some are easygoing and rarely need correction. Others will test every boundary you set, every single day, to see if it still holds. When they find that it does, they will test it again tomorrow. This is not defiance. It is development.

### **Positive Reinforcement**

- Stickers (reliable, effective, universal currency)
- Verbal praise (specific is better than general: "You shared the blocks with Lily" beats "Good job")
- Extra time with a favorite activity
- Access to a special toy

### **De-escalation**

You will develop an instinct for each child. Some calm down once you talk to them. Some need to cry it out before they can hear you. Some will scream louder the moment you open your mouth after they seem to have calmed down. There is no universal method. There is only observation and patience.

**When you need a reset:** If a child is being a stubborn turkey and you know that giving affection will reinforce negative behavior, go hug a different child. There are more than enough children in the room to get as many hugs as you need all day long.

## Natural vs. Logical Consequences

**Natural:** "You threw your fruit loops on the floor. They are dirty now. You have a banana and crackers left. Those are your options."

**Logical:** "You tried to hit Jimmy with the dinosaur after I told you to stop. The dinosaur is going away for the rest of playtime."

## Sensory Breaks

Sometimes you need to turn off the lights, open the windows, and let sunlight and fresh air do the work. Sometimes the answer is simply: everyone goes outside. If half the room is in everyone else's face, split them. Half outside, half inside.

The children will not thank you in words, but their attitudes will improve. They will feel better after getting a break from each other, from the classroom, and from whatever tension was building. You will feel the shift.

A dance break works too. If the children have a lot of energy and just want to wiggle and move, put on some music and let them dance it out. It costs you three minutes and buys you thirty.

### **Behavioral Incident Reports**

These are separate from injury/accident reports. Use them when a behavior pattern becomes disruptive or harmful: repeated biting, hitting, or persistent defiance that affects the class. The parent signs the report. If you have already spoken to the parent face-to-face and the behavior continues, start documenting. This paper trail is what Stacy and the directors need to take next steps.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Family Communication

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You will learn, with considerable speed, which parents want a summary and which parents want a transcript. Both are valid. Neither is optional.

### The Daily Observation Log

This is your primary communication tool. Every day, for every child, you record:

- How much they ate at AM snack, lunch, and PM snack
- How long they slept (or whether they just rested)
- Diaper/pull-up changes and bathroom visits
- Whether they need diapers, wipes, or other supplies
- Notes on the day

### The Parents You Will Meet

Some parents will read "had a good day" and be satisfied. Others want to know exactly how many bites of applesauce their child ate and in what order. Some will give specific instructions: "He eats the eggs before the banana." You can encourage the child to follow that order, but use discernment. The child needs to eat.

### **When the Log Is Not Enough**

You will discover that certain parents do not read the observation log. You will write "please bring pull-ups" for two days running and nothing will arrive. At that point, you need a face-to-face conversation at pickup. Some things only land when spoken aloud.

### **Difficult Conversations**

Minor behavioral issues ("your child is hitting other children and finding it funny") are yours to raise directly with the parent, face to face, at pickup. If the behavior escalates beyond what a conversation can address, bring it to Stacy. She, Brittany, or Candy will sit down with the parent. But the first conversation is yours.

**Tip:** There are no formal parent–teacher conferences. Communication is ongoing, daily, and woven into pickup and drop–off. Stacy handles school–wide emails and notifications to parents.

## Separation Anxiety

The more hugs a parent gives at the door, the longer it takes the child to settle. Encourage parents, as gently as you can, to drop and go. If a parent lingers at the door watching, the child will spot them and the cycle restarts. Distract the child with a toy, an activity, or a friend. The quicker the goodbye, the quicker the recovery.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Health, Safety & Compliance

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## Allergies

Stacy will inform you of any allergies in your classroom. In severe cases (peanut allergies, for example), a notice goes home to all parents asking them not to pack that allergen. If an allergic reaction occurs:

1. If you have another staff member with you, get the child to Stacy's office immediately
2. If you are alone, call another teacher into the room first, then take the child upstairs
3. Do not leave other children unattended under any circumstances

## Illness

The fever threshold for sending a child home is over 101°F. The working thermometer is upstairs. (A second one is needed.) Stacy handles parent notification and pickup for illness. Your job is to identify and report. She makes the call.

## Injuries

Small scrapes get a Band-Aid. Bumps get an ice pack. Both are in the kitchen, next to the incident log. For anything beyond that (a fall down steps, a collision with a post, a nosebleed from an impact), notify Stacy and she contacts the parent.

**Accident reports:** If you saw what happened, you write it up. Do not hand the report to the end-of-day teacher to complete. They were not there. They will not be able to tell the parent what actually occurred. Fill it out yourself and brief the closing teacher verbally.

## Fire Drills

You will be notified the morning of or the day before. Procedure: line up, walk outside, stand along the fence in a line. Stacy will come out and count teachers and children. Wait for the alarm to stop, then return inside. There is no stranger/intruder drill protocol at this time.

## Supervision Ratio

For two year olds: one teacher to eleven children. Never leave children unattended. If another teacher asks for help and you are alone with your class, either bring your children to their room or tell them you cannot leave. The ratio is not a guideline. It is the law.

## CHAPTER NINE

# Pickup & Custody

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### Sign-In / Sign-Out

The sign-in log is at the front door, in Miss Cindy's classroom area. At the end of the day, the sign-out log moves to whoever is on porch duty, in the baby room, or on the playground. If that is you, every child leaving must be signed out. No exceptions.

### Authorized Pickup

The authorized list is on the sign-out log and on My School Works. Most days it will be the same people. When someone new is picking up, the parent will notify you. Check ID for first-time pickups.

### Custody Situations

Stacy will tell you if there are custody restrictions. Pay attention. Know who is allowed and who is not. Make sure every teacher who might be involved in dismissal knows the restrictions.

If an approved parent picks up and the other parent arrives later confused, you did the right thing. Direct them to contact the other parent, and let Stacy know if there is a scheduling dispute to sort out.

**This matters:** If a parent tells you the dad is not allowed to pick up, or the aunt is not allowed, communicate that to every person who might hand off that child. The porch teacher, the playground teacher, anyone.

## CHAPTER TEN

# Supplies & End of Day

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## Classroom Inventory

Keep track of your consumables. When something is running low, make a list and give it to Stacy. This includes:

- Tissue paper and toilet paper
- Paper towels for the dispenser
- Napkins
- Spoons and small cups
- Hand soap
- Sanitizing spray
- Curriculum supplies (construction paper, glue, etc.)

If you know you need something for an upcoming activity, request it early. Do not wait until the morning of.

## End of Day Checklist

- Floor swept
- Surfaces cleared and wiped
- Toys sprayed with sanitizing spray
- Toys put away (if you did not get to cleaning some, set them aside visibly)
- Chairs put away
- No food left out
- Floor clear of all items (janitorial staff will mop at end of day)
- Toilet scrubbed (daily)
- Nap mats disinfected (once per week)

**Tip:** The cafeteria cleanup after lunch can wait until more children are asleep. Getting the classroom settled for rest is always the priority. The sticky tables are not going anywhere.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Assessment & Development

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### Monthly Assessments

The school requires monthly assessments for each child. Mark them in pencil (in case they need to be erased and updated). Do not mark more than one or two improvements per month. The assessments span ages two through five, so the children need room to show growth each semester.

### Behavioral Observation

Separate from the daily parent log, keep notes on developmental concerns. These are your working notes for patterns you are tracking:

- "This child is behind on vocabulary. We are working on speech during one-on-one time."
- "This child recognizes colors but struggles with shapes. Incorporating shapes into play."
- "This child will not sit for instruction. Tried play-based, conversation-based, and peer modeling. Escalating to Stacy."

To clarify those terms: **play-based** means incorporating the lesson into toys and activities. If the class is learning rectangles and a child will not sit for the worksheet, try rectangle blocks, shape hunts, or shape matching games.

**Conversation-based** means sitting with an eager child and talking about rectangles while the reluctant child is nearby, hoping the overheard conversation sparks interest. **Peer modeling** is similar: letting the child observe other children engaging with the material, demonstrating what participation looks like. If none of these approaches work and the child remains disruptive, refusing to calm down even when removed from the room by another teacher, escalate to Stacy for advice and possible parent involvement.

## Differentiated Instruction

Not every child is in the same place. If one child needs speech work, sit with them. If another is ahead on numbers but behind on social skills, adjust. The assessment sheets will show you where each child is. Your job is to close the gaps you can and flag the ones you cannot.

### **Developmental Red Flags**

The assessments will reveal children who are behind. Look up age-appropriate milestones. If something concerns you, note it, bring it to Stacy, and let her coordinate with the family. You are a mandated reporter. You know what that means.

### **Family Context**

As you get to know the families, behavior will start to make sense. A child who is acting out may have a complicated home situation. A child whose parents never bring supplies may not be ignoring the log. Understanding the family does not change the standard, but it changes your approach.

**Portfolio work:** Currently, completed work goes home at the end of each week. Building individual portfolios would be a valuable addition, but it is not yet established. Consider it a worthy project for your tenure.



## Alyson S Murphy

Lead Preschool Teacher • Parkview Pre-K & Prep Academy • 2024 – 2026

Alyson S Murphy served as Lead Preschool Teacher at Parkview Pre-K & Prep Academy in Avon Park, Florida, where she led the two and three year old classroom. Her experience spans infants through teens, with specializations in early childhood education, ABA therapy, infant care, special needs support, and dyslexia screening.

Prior to Parkview, Alyson taught 18-to-24-month-olds at Primrose School of Kingwood at Oakhurst in Texas, served as a substitute art teacher for teenagers at Scholars Connection in Houston, volunteered for four years with educational activities at Lake Houston Wilderness Park, and taught summer art camp for the Highlands County Art League in Florida. She was classically educated through the Ambleside Online curriculum before graduating with honors from The Scholars Connection, where she was elected Student Council President two consecutive years.

She holds certifications in CPR/AED/First Aid (AHA Heartsaver), dyslexia awareness and screening, early childhood reading foundations, food handling (ANSI accredited), Florida DCF Child Care Training, Florida Safe Families, Red Cross water safety, and infant and child emergency response. She is currently pursuing her Registered Behavior Technician credential. She is also a companion caregiver in elder care.



## A Pen Paper Wow Publication

*Throughout every age, people have used the instruments of their time to build, to teach, and to pass along what they have learned. The pen, the press, the typewriter, the word processor: each is only as useful as the knowledge, discipline, and care of the person holding it. The finest tools in the world will produce nothing of value in careless hands. But when experience, wisdom, and genuine concern for the work are brought to bear, even the simplest instruments can produce something worth keeping. Every work is intended to impress. In a word, to simply help.*

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First Edition, 2026

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Published by Pen Paper Wow  
penpaperwow.com

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