
General Introduction

Welcome to Cookie Jar Preschool. We are a licensed, non-profit, parent run co-operative preschool providing services to 3- and 4-year-olds in our community. This handbook has been prepared to give you information about our philosophies, policies, and program operation.

Our teachers Sam Wheeler, Jodie Severson and Kirstin Ball offer a stimulating and inviting program for Preschool students. Kirstin is currently a Level 1 ECE (Early Childhood Education), has her EA certificate and is pursuing her ECE Diploma at Red Deer College. She has worked closely with students with disabilities and has extensive experience and knowledge and training in ASD. Jodie is a level 2 ECE and has experience working with children with disabilities. Sam is level 1 with only her practicum to complete her level 2.

The team-teaching approach allows the teachers to work together to create a positive learning environment. During morning circle letter concepts, numbers, colors and shapes are learned as a group. Our "learn through play" program allows opportunity for children to develop their social and emotional skills, and cognitive development through their environment while being supported by their teachers. These concepts ("Letter B", "Number 8", "Color Red") are practiced through child-led play with students through dramatic play centers, crafts, stories, songs, etc. Throughout their day, students will take part in a gross motor activity program in our Creative Movement Room. This gives the teachers the opportunity to split the class into smaller groups to support their motor development through games, songs, obstacle courses and risky play.

Weather permitting, the children may go outside to explore the outdoor environment through various outdoor activities (sandboxes, paint, outdoor toys etc.). The deck provides a great extension to the classroom on warm days.

The goal of our program is to allow each child to develop socially, physically, emotionally, creatively, and intellectually at their own developmental level. We also endeavor to provide a secure, affectionate, and enthusiastic environment that promotes learning while building everyone's individual self-esteem and social skills. While realizing that preschool children learn at their own rate, a thematic approach is used to plan the program. A monthly newsletter will keep you updated about themes, concepts, and field trips each month. We also have a website full of great information and the current newsletter is also available to reference. Parents are asked to download the Remind App in order to receive updates from teachers and the Board.

Class Schedule 2026/2027

We operate on the same holiday schedule as the Wild Rose School Division. A list of holidays will be provided in September. Parents are encouraged to print the WRSD schedule for reference of days off. Our first day of preschool classes will be **Tuesday, September 8, 2026**.

Please feel free to join us for an Open House on **August 24, 2026 from 3pm-6pm**, where your child can meet the teachers, see our classroom and tour the school.

Initial Contact Numbers

Teachers

Samantha Wheeler 403-846-8937
Kirstin Ball 403-844-9267
Jodie Severson 403-701-5634

Cookie Jar Preschool

403-845-7600
(Messages checked regularly)

Elections for the 2026/2027 Executive Board will be held at the **Annual General Meeting held on Monday, May 4, 2026, at 6:30 PM at Cookie Jar Preschool**. All parents are encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting to ensure the success of the program. *The executive board positions must be filled at this time, or the program cannot run the following year.* The Board meets each month, and each position is responsible for various duties throughout the year.

A phone list of the newly elected 2026/2027 Board will be circulated in September 2026. Please feel free to contact a Board member with any questions that may arise. Our volunteer Board members will do their utmost to provide additional information through newsletters, notes home, whiteboard, etc. General meetings are held twice a year. Since Cookie Jar Preschool is a volunteer, parent-run organization, many decisions cannot be made without an adequate number of parents present. Please attend the general meetings and help make this program successful. **We rely on and welcome, parent input.**

Fees

Registration Fee

A registration fee of **\$60.00** is due at the time of registration. This fee is non-refundable.

Volunteer Bond

Volunteering some of your time to Cookie Jar Preschool helps to ensure a successful program but is not mandatory. We understand that with hectic schedules volunteering is not always an option.

A volunteer cheque of \$200.00 is required at the time of registration. This can also be paid by cash, or EMT and **will be reimbursed in June 2027** at the end of the school year. This money will be held and returned to parents if they participate in the ongoing duties of running the Cookie Jar Preschool program. This includes, but is not limited to, attending work bees, volunteering time with scheduled fundraising events, holding a position on the executive board, or donating skills and services to various operations at Cookie Jar Preschool. **Please Note: Participating as a Parent Helper in the classroom, will NOT be used towards your volunteer hours. To have the Volunteer Bond reimbursed, a minimum contribution of 5 hours volunteer time is the guideline used.**

Tuition Fees

Tuition fees for the 2026/2027 school year are kept at a minimum due to our fundraising efforts along with government funding.

Full tuition fees are due **at the time of registration**. However, you have three payment options available – payment by month, by semester or yearly.

PLEASE NOTE: After **30 days of participation** in class, we cannot move your child to another class without a request to change. If there is a request for class change, it is subject to board and teacher approval. To be registered in our 4-year program, your child's birthday **MUST fall before December 2026**. Exceptions will be considered with board and teacher approval.

Cookie Jar Preschool accepts and prefers Email Money Transfers for Tuition. You may forward funds to Cookiejarpreschool@gmail.com. **Please include the child's name and class for reference.**

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| 1 DAY PER WEEK • 3-YEAR-OLDS: MONDAY OR WEDNESDAY | \$0/MONTH \$0/SEMESTER \$0/YEAR |
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|---|---|
| 2 DAYS PER WEEK • 3 YEAR OLDS MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY • 4-YEAR-OLDS: TUES AND THURS | \$40/MONTH \$160/SEMESTER (SEPT-DEC) \$200/SEMESTER (JAN-MAY) \$360/YEAR |
| | |

- There will be a cash \$25.00 administrative charge on all N.S.F cheques.

Semester 1 runs from September to the end of December (4 months). Semester 2 runs from January to May (5 months). Therefore, if a student enrolls in January, tuition is adjusted accordingly. Statutory holidays and school closures due to inclement weather are beyond our control and, therefore, **these days will not be made up and no reimbursements will be offered.**

- **There will be no refunds on tuition, however if your child is sick for more than two weeks please contact a board member to discuss tuition.**
- If you would like to make changes to your child's class schedule, such as unenrollment, please fill out the form attached in the registration package. **Please note that if this form is not submitted by the first of the month, tuition will not be reimbursed.**
- The Alberta Government offers partial to full subsidies to parents with children in an approved preschool program, such as Cookie Jar Preschool. Visit www.alberta.ca/child-care-subsidy.aspx or call 1-877-644-9992 to determine if you qualify. Please note, families applying for subsidy will still be expected to pay their fees until Subsidy is received by Cookie Jar Preschool. Once subsidy payments have been made to the Cookie Jar Preschool, the remainder of your payments will be returned/reimbursed.
- **Do I qualify for subsidy?** Many families do not realize that they may qualify for a full or partial subsidy.
- You may qualify if:
 - Your total family income is less than \$180,000 per year for children 0 to kindergarten age (for those children who are in kindergarten and attending childcare during regular school hours).
 - You may also benefit from reduced fees through an affordability grant provided directly to childcare operators. The combined benefits of affordability grants and subsidies should be considered when estimating your new costs.
- We encourage all families to visit the website or call to determine if you qualify!
- Cookie Jar Preschool is also able to offer a Tuition Assistance Program for families in need. There is a limited number of funds available for this program, so families will have to submit a formal application. Families are asked to investigate the possibility of qualifying for the Alberta Government Subsidy Program before applying for the Cookie Jar Preschool Tuition Assistance Program. Contact the Cookie Jar Preschool Registrar

for more information. The application is available in the registration package, at Cookie Jar Preschool and from the Registrar. All applications will remain confidential.

There will be many opportunities throughout the year to volunteer your time, skills, and/or services. If you have any ideas about other ways you can help, please contact a Cookie Jar Board member or the teachers to discuss them. If parents decline to participate in these ways, their cheque will be considered a personal donation to Cookie Jar Preschool. **If you have financial concerns regarding the February 1, 2027, deposit please contact the Cookie Jar Preschool Board President ASAP, and they will be able to accommodate you with volunteer hours before that date.**

Parent Involvement

Fundraising

Fundraising is a necessary part of this volunteer, parent-run co-operative program. The Cookie Jar Preschool cannot operate on tuition fees alone. Parents are encouraged to participate in one of our planned fundraising events such as working a shift at the casino fundraiser, book orders, or participating in our bottle drive, etc. Please note that if you are not interested in participating in the fundraising opportunities presented, we do accept donations and are always open to new fundraising ideas.

Please note, Cookie Jar Preschool has an ongoing bottle-drive to support the program. If you are interested in donating bottles, contact the Cookie Jar Preschool teachers or the Fundraising Committee.

Parent Notice Boards and Newsletters

Please check the notice boards at the main entrance and white door regularly for our upcoming events and other important messages. It is updated weekly.

General messages (and extra newsletters) appear on the side walls above the coat cubbies. Newsletters and other information are sent home once a month and/or as needed (i.e., event deadline reminders, Scholastic book order forms, etc.). These are placed above your child's coat cubby. Please make it a habit to ensure these notices arrive home with your child and take the time to read and note the information within. You will not be contacted at home unless there is a last-minute program change.

Parent Participation Duties

Due to our team-teaching approach, we always have two teachers in the classrooms and as such parents are not required to be a classroom helper for licensing purposes. However, we enthusiastically encourage you to participate as a parent helper. Your child and the Cookie Jar Preschool program benefit greatly by having you in the classroom. **Every Parent Helper at Cookie Jar Preschool is required to submit a current Criminal Record Check to school before entering the classroom to work with the students.** Criminal Record Checks are to be completed every 3 years unless there is a break in attendance. The Criminal Record Check letter is in the registration package. Please take the letter to the R.C.M.P. Detachment to obtain your Criminal Record Check. We ask that you please bring the Criminal Record Check on your child's first day of school. If you prefer, you can bring in the original Criminal Record Check and we can photocopy it.

A parent helper schedule will be posted on the parent notice board. Should you be able to volunteer on the same day that your child is special helper, GREAT. If not, no worries. Hopefully another parent will fill that spot. We encourage as much parental involvement as possible – if you want to volunteer frequently, YAY. Thank you. If you are unable, that's okay too.

On your helper day, please arrive 5 minutes prior to class and inform the teachers of your presence. The teachers will familiarize you with the jobs you can help with during class time such as mixing paint or playing a game, etc. Please take note of the fire escape procedures.

School Routines

Arrival/Departure

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|---------------------|--------------------|
| Tuesday/Thursday AM | 9:00 AM– 12:00 PM |
| Monday/Wednesday AM | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM |

Upon bringing your child into school, **please sign in the child on the sign-in sheet**. Also provide an emergency phone number for that day. Note on the sheet if someone other than yourself will be picking up your child. If this person is not listed on your registration form as someone who is allowed to pick up your child, please provide a written consent note for the teachers to release your child into their care. Make sure that the teachers have acknowledged your child's presence before you leave. You are always welcome to stay with your child until they feel ready for you to leave. **When picking up your child, sign your child out and once again make sure that the teacher acknowledges your child's departure.** Due to licensing regulations, we cannot allow any children into the class prior to 8:55 AM. The teachers will keep the classroom doors closed until these times.

Clothing

Fire regulations dictate that all children must have shoes on at all times. During wet and winter weather, please make sure that your child has indoor and outdoor footwear, as well as outdoor clothing for outdoor activities. Children should dress in play clothing for preschool, as they may hesitate to participate in activities (painting etc.) if they are dressed in their best. **All children must be toilet-trained before admission into the program due to licensing** and should bring a spare set of clothes in case of accidents.

Snacks

Provincial licensing regulations require that snacks are available to children who need/request them. Please send a juice or milk box and/or a basic, ready-to-eat **healthy** snack (fruit, raisins, crackers and cheese, drinkable yogurt, etc.) each school day; in total, **two food groups** must be covered. Please package the snack in a **labeled** container (plastic baggie, brown bag, Tupperware or reusable lunch kit). The snack will be made available to your child upon request, if they are too busy playing and do not stop to eat their snack, they will not be directed to do so. There will be a designated center at which the students will sit and eat. You will be notified if a student in your child's class has any food allergies – indicated allergens cannot be sent. Any day that a snack will be provided for the entire class (i.e., special holiday parties, a student's birthday etc.), every effort will be made to communicate this in advance.

Field Trips

The children will have the opportunity to attend field trips throughout the school year to places around the community. Parents are asked to pick up and drop off students at the field trip location. Snacks will be provided during field trips. Parents and/or siblings will only be allowed to attend if there is space available at the field trip location. If parent volunteers are required a signup sheet will be posted prior to the field trip. There may be some overlap with the Monday and Wednesday morning field trips and parties (i.e., Christmas, Halloween etc.) because not all students attend both days.

Policies and Procedures

Health Policy

For the well-being of the children and staff, any child attending Cookie Jar Preschool must be well enough to participate in all school activities including outdoor play. The teachers will ask parents to immediately remove any child who is strongly suspected of having a fever (higher than 38 Degrees Celsius), diarrhea, vomiting, unexpected rash, cough, or a communicable disease (i.e., Fifth Disease, Pink Eye, Measles, Chicken Pox, etc.). Children can return to the program after providing Cookie Jar Preschool with a doctor's note.

If any child may require medication during classroom hours or in the event of an emergency, the parent must complete an Individual Medication Record and notify the teachers of any special requirements or if the condition of the child changes.

In the event of an incident or accident, the teachers must complete an Incident/Accident Report and provide a copy to the Board and the affected children's parents.

Absenteeism

If for any reason your child is going to be absent, please call Cookie Jar Preschool at 403-845-7600, or utilize the Remind App to inform the teachers or send a note in advance. This will avoid delays in activities or outings.

Inclement Weather Policy

Due to inclement weather, the school may close. The school will be closed when the temperature reaches -35 degrees Celsius or lower **with or without a wind-chill factor**, and at the discretion of the board president & vice president.

****If inclement weather or any other circumstances force a closure, you will be notified via the Remind App, and it will be posted to Facebook. ****

Withdrawal Procedures

We often have waiting lists for children who would like to join the Cookie Jar Preschool program. If you intend to withdraw your child from the program, please submit written notification one month in advance. This will allow us sufficient time to fill the vacancy. Tuition fees apply during this period, regardless of the child's attendance. Any remaining tuition fees will be refunded to you.

Report Cards and Parent-Teacher Interviews

Cookie Jar Preschool is considered a preschool. It is not deemed necessary to hand out formal report cards at this level or have formal parent-teacher interviews. If you have any concerns

about your child, or want an update on your child's progress, you are encouraged to speak with the teachers. Please phone 403-845-7600 or make an appointment with the teachers at the school.

Student's Age Requirement

Due to licensing restrictions, Cookie Jar Preschool is unable to accept students until they are three (3) years of age. It is possible to guarantee a spot in the program for your child; however, this requires you pay full tuition. Your child may begin attending classes in the week that s/he turns three. Late registrations are sometimes possible – contact the registrar listed to have your name and child's birth date recorded. In the event a spot remains or becomes open in the appropriate class, you will be contacted at that time. To be registered in our 4-year program, your child's birthday **MUST** fall before December 2026. Exceptions will be considered with board and teacher approval.

Toys/Show and Tell

Please discourage your child from bringing toys to class as we cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items. Children may bring a toy or an object that they would like to share with the class during their time as special helper.

Problem Solving Procedures

If you are experiencing a problem, have a concern or a suggestion about the program or your child's involvement in it, please first contact the child's teachers directly. Our teachers are approachable and open to discussions regarding the Cookie Jar Preschool program. If you do not feel this approach is successful dealing with the issue at hand, the matter can then be brought to the attention of the Board for discussion and/or mediation. The Board is always open to solution-focused discussions with regards to maintaining and improving the Cookie Jar Preschool program. Board member names and contact information is posted in the coat room and is included in monthly newsletters. If, after Board involvement, you feel the issue is still not satisfactorily resolved, the next step would be to contact Alberta Children's Services at 403-341-8642.

Inclusive Programming for Special Needs Students

Cookie Jar Preschool welcomes all students to the program. The teachers are committed to inclusion and will endeavor to integrate any special needs student. Cookie Jar Preschool is committed to providing adequate support and will work with families to ensure their child is able to attend.

Positive Child Guidance Policy

Cookie Jar Preschool Association does not support corporal punishment and uses a positive child guidance approach.

This consists of 5 steps:

1. Describe the scene.
2. Calm who needs calming
3. Leads each child to describe the conflict, often starting with the younger child
4. Solves the problem with the children, not for them.
5. Follows up with one or both children by having a guidance talk

Our goal at Cookie Jar Preschool is to guide the children toward healthy emotional and social skills.

Working with the children so they feel they are worthy individuals who belong in the class and can solve their problems and learning from their mistakes while encouraging the children in developing their individual strengths and skills. Discuss what the needs &/or interests of the children are and offer them activities/toys based on that knowledge.

Teaching children to learn to put strong emotions into non-hurtful words to gain vocabulary and communication skills that serve them well for their entire lives.

Create an encouraging classroom so students see guidance at work, children and adults together learn the vital lesson that everyone is a worthy individual, belongs in the group, and can participate in solving problems.

If a behavior raises safety concerns (i.e., pushing or hitting), the above steps will be followed to immediately address the situation in a constructive and positive manner. Incidents of this nature will be reported to the parent, and they will be asked to collaborate with the teachers to create a timely and proactive plan to manage the student's behavior. The teachers will notify the parents of all the students involved in the event. The child in question will be observed for a month, and then the family will then be approached for the child to do an assessment. Depending on the severity of need the child may or may not be allowed to return to the class until an educational aid is in place.

Should you at any time have questions or concerns regarding classroom discipline, please speak to one of the teachers or the Cookie Jar Preschool Board President.

We look forward to working with you and your child!