



STARS PRESCHOOL

Morrison Elementary Preschool
Troy, Mt

MORRISON ELEMENTARY PRESCHOOL

Demographics, Staff, Community

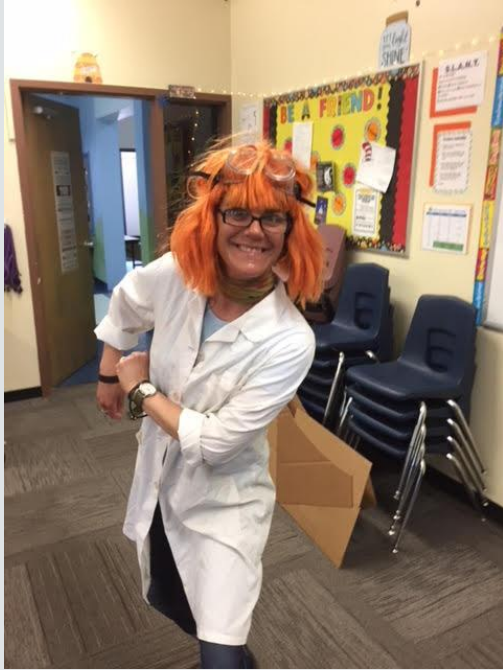


Demographics

Troy, Montana is a beautiful little town, nestled in the Cabinet Mountains, with a population of 890 people. Residents and visitors enjoy exploring the Kootenai River, Ross Creek Cedars, Bull Lake, and the historic Swinging Bridge.



Staff



Mellonie Roesler-Begalke (Miss Mel) is the lead teacher in the classroom. She has a bachelor's degree in Child Development and two associate degrees, Early Childhood Education and as Developmental Disability Specialist. Miss Mel is currently working towards her pre-K-3 teaching license. This is her eleventh year teaching preschool. Miss Mel believes that young children learn and discover through play. She integrates real-life experiences into teaching units.. Nicole Garrison (Miss Nicole) is the assistant preschool teacher. She currently has 60 credits towards her bachelor's degree. Working with Miss Mel fulfills her vision of working with children in their preschool years. She believes that this is a wonderful time of potential for young children to learn social and emotional skills.

Community

Morrison Elementary Preschool is part of a small, wonderful community. Miss Mel took the children for regular field trips to build their sense of pride and belonging. The children got to know their neighborhood grocers after a visit to the store where they made a pizza in the deli, toured how meat was processed and packaged, and were treated to string cheese and cookies. They toured the local sew shop where they learned how outdoor clothing was made, right down to the machine that puts on the buttons. They visited the fire station and climbed aboard a fire truck. The junior high woodshop class hosted them, giving a preview of what to look forward to in later years. Each child was given wood and sandpaper to explore building skills. A regular trip to the library occurred each month. Students have eaten lunch at the senior center and local burger joint. All of these experiences help them to know about their town while growing an appreciation of small town culture. The Troy community has wholeheartedly embraced the preschool. Families have been very appreciative of having another option for their kiddos to participate in a program. Other preschool programs in the community have specific criteria that has to be met for a child to attend. So, that left families with no options before Morrison Elementary Preschool began.



BENEFITS

Language Development, Social Skills



Language Development

Children are assessed in the beginning of the school year for speech, hearing, vocabulary, alphabet and letter sound recognition. Several students were difficult to understand at the beginning of the year. Towards the end of the year, after being immersed in a vocabulary building curriculum and rich language environment, there was marked improvement in language and speech skills.

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Social Skills

Our school has received a platinum award from the Montana Behavior Initiative. So the philosophy of Being Safe, Respectful, Responsible, and Kind is very rich in our school culture. Our preschoolers learn these behaviors from the very start. This has helped them greatly to create positive relationships. By using the Creative Curriculum, following MBI guidelines, as well as our own personal beliefs in building strong character, we are able to guide our students into responsible citizenship.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Physical Learning Environment, School Readiness,
Social/Emotional Development

Physical Learning Environment



Morrison Elementary has a very warm and inviting environment. Natural lighting and twinkle lights are taken advantage of to avoid harsh, overstimulating fluorescent lights. There is a natural traffic flow around the room to encourage children to make use of the individual centers. Natural materials are used throughout the room to make it calm and inviting. Each area has books available and all materials are accessible for exploration.

School Readiness



Being located in the elementary school has given our students a terrific start in learning the building, the philosophy, the staff, and the expectations. They learn to make and keep friends. Our students also learn to write their name, the alphabet and sounds, fine motor skills (how to hold writing utensils, cutting), gross motor skills (climbing on play structures, coordination through mind/brain play), number recognition and counting, and shape recognition. By learning all of these skills prior to kindergarten, they will be ready to take on new skills.

Social/Emotional Development



Using the Creative Curriculum allows students to have the first six weeks of school to learn how to make and keep friends, to get used to their new environment, and to learn appropriate behavior expectations that will help them be successful. The intimate environment gives Miss Mel and Miss Nicole a window into how the children are getting along with each other. They are guided with gentle suggestions about how to make better choices. Children are taught coping skills that they can take with them to handle disappointment and conflict. Our classroom revolves around the philosophy of being Safe, Respectful, Responsible, and being Kind.

RECOMMENDATION

The Success of Morrison Elementary Preschool



The Success of Morrison Elementary Preschool



Much of Morrison's success can be attributed to the fact that a nurturing environment was created where preschoolers felt safe and welcomed. Miss Mel chose a curriculum that encouraged movement throughout the day and gave preschoolers a proper introduction to school culture and behavioral expectations at the beginning of the school year. Both of these factors helped keep potential challenging behaviors to a minimum. This allowed us to accomplish our priority and focus of giving our children a positive introduction to the school experience. With this start, they are likely to enjoy learning throughout all of their educational years. Our preschoolers are excited for kindergarten and ready for their next academic adventure.