



# Manitou Springs Preschool Family Handbook

2025-26

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Manitou Springs Elementary School

110 Pawnee Ave

Manitou Springs, CO 80829

719-685-2195

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## Our Preschool Philosophy

At Manitou Springs preschool, we are committed to creating a safe, inclusive environment where every child and family feels valued. We welcome children ages three to five of all abilities, honoring the unique strengths and needs each learner brings.

Our play-based curriculum supports growth across all areas of development. Through hands-on experiences, meaningful play, and extended time indoors and outdoors, children build independence, solve problems, and form strong relationships. We integrate mindfulness, sensory system practices, and self-regulation strategies into our daily routines—helping children develop self-awareness, manage emotions, and engage their bodies and minds in ways that support learning and well-being.

We believe learning thrives in a community. Our classroom culture celebrates connection—through shared meals, collaborative play, and respectful communication. Beyond the classroom, we extend learning into our wider community through walking field trips, family engagement events, and partnerships with local organizations.

We deeply value the voices and expertise of our families. Working together, we build strong, trusting relationships that support each child's success. These relationships nurture healthy brains, resilient learners, and curious thinkers ready to engage deeply with the world around them.

*Strong relationships build healthy brains ready for deep learning.*

## Staff

The MESE preschool program staff is:

- Julie Lavigne MA ECSE, Director, Special Education Teacher, Colorado Shines 3.0 level 6
- Britany Stockton, Early Childhood Professional Credential 3.0 Level 3
- Nora Brachtenbach, Early Childhood Professional Credential 3.0 Level 3

## Eligibility

Young children who are three years old by October 1, 2025 through five years of age will be accepted for enrollment on a space available basis. If there are positions available,

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preschoolers who turn three during the school year as well as those who are identified as needing special services can attend upon their third birthday.

## Hours of Operation and Drop-off/Pick-up Procedures

The preschool follows the same schedule as Manitou Springs Elementary School except for the start date. The preschool will begin August 25<sup>21</sup>, 2025<sup>55</sup>. Our preschool will conclude in May 2026<sup>66</sup>. The finalized schedule for the 2025-26 school year is available on the district website <http://www.MSSD14.org>. Please click on the district calendar link where our complete calendar for this school year along with closing dates for holidays and professional teacher development are found. There will be no preschool on Fridays. Both morning and afternoon, and full-day sessions will be as scheduled on the district's "late start Wednesdays." No "late start Wednesdays" for preschool.

The District 14 Manitou Springs preschool follows the school district calendar with three sessions that meet daily Monday through Thursday

**Morning Session 7:50-10:20**

**Afternoon Session 11:05-2:50**

**Full-Day Session 7:30-3:00**

Fridays are reserved for Child Find Evaluations, progress monitoring, professional development, and curriculum planning and cleaning.

Transportation by D14 district busing is reserved for children identified as having special transportation needs. Pick-up and drop-off timing will be handled on an individual basis with the transportation department. Families who have older siblings may discuss preschool students riding home with the older siblings from school on a case by case basis with the preschool team and transportation department.

Any parent or approved adult will be required to check in at the front office before entering the building.

Arrival and departure locations may vary depending on the needs of students. This will be communicated by staff to families if there is a change.

### **Morning Session Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures**

Families of morning students will drop off students in the preschool at 7:50. Parents or authorized persons will be required to sign the child in with a preschool teacher using the sign-in sheet. Families will pick-up their child after the morning session at the south locked playground gate at the top of the hill on Pawnee Ave at 10:20am and will be required to sign their child out using the sign-out sheet.

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### **Afternoon Session Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures**

Families will be met at the Elementary Front Office at 11:05. Students who are tardy may enter the front office. Parents or authorized persons will be required to sign the child in with a preschool teacher using the sign-in sheet. Families will pick-up students outside on the west side of the playground and will be required to sign their child out using the sign-out sheet.

### **Full-Day Session Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures**

Families will drop off and pick up their students in the preschool classroom. Drop-off time is at 7:30am and pick-up time is at 3:00. Parents or authorized persons will be required to sign the child in with a preschool teacher using the sign-in sheet.

## **Enrollment**

- Enrollment shall be open to any child living in the Manitou Springs School District. We do “choice-in” children from surrounding school districts on the basis of availability. Parents must provide transportation to and from MSES for choice students.
- Enrollment in the school shall be granted without discrimination with regard to sex, race, creed, or political belief.
- Each child must meet age requirements.
- Children who are identified with having special needs have first priority to attend preschool.
- We offer tuition-free preschool positions as part of the Colorado UPK Program for those children who qualify.
- Proof of residence is required for all students. This can be in the form of a lease or mortgage agreement in the parent’s or legal guardian’s name, utility bill, or phone bill (not cell phone).
- Children who live out of the district can complete an application during the district’s determined choice windows throughout the year and are “choiced” into the preschool on a space available basis after students who live in School District 14.
- Admittance into the preschool does not guarantee admittance into MSES kindergarten. Families will need to complete new registration for entering kindergarten.

## **Admission and Registration Procedures**

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Applications for the preschool program can be submitted by parents/guardians using the student registration link on the district website [www.mssd14.org](http://www.mssd14.org). Please contact the MSES registrar or the preschool director for questions about applications and enrollment. Preschoolers identified as having special education needs have admission priority. Admission into the preschool program does not imply a permanent slot in the program for the year. At any time the Preschool Director, the school principal, and/or the Director of Special Programs may determine it necessary to reduce classroom enrollment to better meet the needs of preschool children having different abilities. Enrollment practices seek to be compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Compliance with Colorado Department of Education licensing standards state that the following items must be on record in the preschool classroom, school office, or nurses office. These items include:

- Copy of birth certificate
- Colorado Department of Health form of updated immunization records
- Student data sheet with additional information attached
- Current physical from an approved health professional- this must be updated yearly
- Proof of residency
- Home language screening
- Pre-K parent handbook signature
- Allergy information
- Video authorization
- Sunscreen authorization
- Guardian work information
- Emergency pick up by authorized adults form

**Your child will not be able to attend the preschool program until all of these items have been verified and filed in the school office.**

## Tuition Policies

Tuition for the 2025-26 school year for the 3 year old program is \$300 for Part-Day (10 hours), \$350 Half-day (15 hours), and \$600 Full-day (30 hours) per month for nine months (September-May) and is determined by the Superintendent of schools.

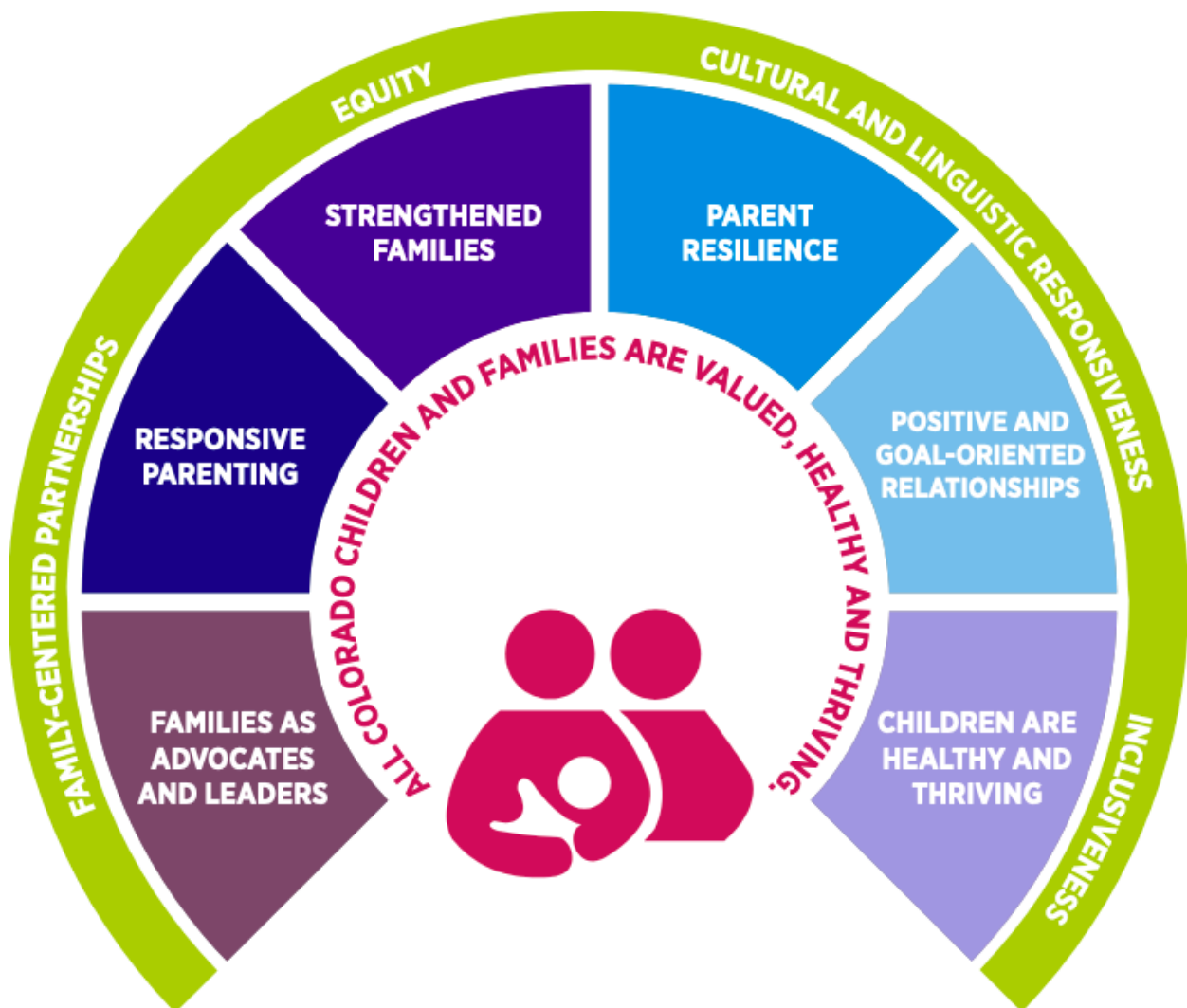
The state of Colorado offers funding for all students in a qualifying program in their year before kindergarten and for students two years before kindergarten if they meet qualifying factors. If your family qualifies for a Colorado UPK position, there will be no tuition charged. You can apply at [UPK.colorado.gov](http://UPK.colorado.gov). The Local Coordinating Organization for Manitou Springs School District is Joint Initiatives. If you have questions about UPK, you can reach them at this [link](#).

Each family that is paying tuition will be required to sign a contract agreement between the family and the school district. Please sign the financial agreement as a part of the digital registration process.

It is the responsibility of the family to ensure that payment is received by the fifth of each month. The MSES financial secretary, Elody McIlhargie, is the contact for payment and questions. You can reach her at 719-685-2159 or [emcilhargie@mssd14.org](mailto:emcilhargie@mssd14.org). No billing will be sent to your home. Failure to maintain a current account may result in disenrollment of your child from the preschool program.

Absences will not result in a reduced tuition rate.

## Family and Community Engagement Policies



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We understand the importance of our partnership with families and the safety that comes with building these relationships early. Our program implements the following policies and procedures through beginning of the year home visits, family conferences twice a year, in-person sign-in and sign-out, and family field trips.

- The use of interpreters or other language resources to effectively communicate in families' home language;
- Seeking input from participating families on priorities, interests, home routines, and cultural and social practices;
- Engaging with families on goals which inform the provider's interactions and instruction with children, including with multilingual learners;
- Engaging families and community partners in decision-making on preschool operations;
- Involving families in the transition of children into and out of the Preschool Program, including the transition into Kindergarten; and
- The quality of program-family and program-staff interactions.

## Transition Policies

### Transitioning Between Early Childhood Programs

Moving from home to preschool—and later from preschool to kindergarten—is an important milestone for young children. Our goal is to provide intentional opportunities that support children and families through each stage of this process.

At the start of each school year, the preschool team will conduct **home visits** to help build strong relationships with families and students in a comfortable, familiar setting.

We will also host an **Open House** for all preschool families. This event allows families to explore the classroom environment, meet teachers, and connect with other families in the program.

Families transitioning from **Part C services** (early intervention) to **Part B services** under IDEA will be offered both a home visit and a classroom visit during the evaluation process.

For more information, please contact our Child Find Coordinator, Julie Lavigne, at [jlavigne@mssd14.org](mailto:jlavigne@mssd14.org).

For students moving on to **kindergarten**, we provide a **transition day** that includes touring kindergarten classrooms, practicing lunchtime in the commons, and participating in a family tour of the elementary school. Preschool students will also visit exploratory classrooms and meet the teachers. In addition, kindergarten teachers will visit preschool classrooms to lead activities and introduce themselves.

Throughout the year, our **daily routines** are intentionally designed to foster independence and provide repeated opportunities for students to practice the skills they will need to thrive in the school environment.

## Curriculum

- Our program implements a mix of evidence-based packaged curriculums and teacher created activities to support students' development in all areas according to the Colorado Standards
- Classroom newsletters with upcoming important dates will be sent home at least once per month highlighting themes, important news, and other information. This is a great way to see what we are doing in the classroom
- **Social-Emotional Curriculum**
  - We implement the [Incredible Years Dinosaur School](#) curriculum in our classroom with trained providers. Each student's progress is monitored with a pre-test and a post-test
  - We use [The Safe and Sound Protocol](#) as a universal intervention for all students
  - Our staff has completed professional development in trauma informed care
- **Reading, Writing, and Communication**
  - Lively Letters The Lively Letters™ program addresses multiple targets, simultaneously training students in the critical skills of: phonemic awareness, phonics, and speech production
  - Core Knowledge Language Arts is used to support an outline for our scope and sequence and supported by teacher created activities
- **Developmental Screenings, Assessments and Progress Monitoring**
  - All families will be asked to complete an updated Ages and Stages Questionnaire Third Edition, Ages and Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire second edition, and the Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener at the beginning of the school year
  - Each student will have a vision and hearing screening



- All students who have an Individualized Education Plan will have their progress monitored and documented using Teaching Strategies GOLD
- Four year old students will be assessed at the beginning and end of the year using our Lively Letters and Learning Without Tears School Readiness assessments to monitor growth and areas of need

## Withdrawal

Please notify the school upon withdrawal of a student from the program. If notification does not occur, the school district will drop your child from the program after 14 calendar days. If this should occur, you will need to re-enroll your child in the preschool program. Please contact the classroom teacher to have your child placed back on the preschool waitlist by calling 719-685-2166.

Please see Section 5-Admission and Registration and Section 6-Tuition for further information about reducing enrollment in special circumstances or removal from the program.

## Meals and Snacks

Meals will be provided by the nutrition services department as part of the recently passed bill in Colorado to provide meals for all students.

## Authorization for Pick-up

The preschool releases children only to adults (siblings/extended family members) for whom written authorization has been given and maintained in each individual child's file.

In case of emergency, the child may be released to an adult for whom the child's parent/guardian has given verbal or written authorization. If a non-designated person should pick up your child, please write a signed note to the classroom teacher. This person will be asked to provide a driver's license or personal identification until the preschool staff knows these people. Please inform each child. A preschool sign-in/out sheet will be provided at pick-up and drop-off. Your child will need to be signed in and out each day.

## Procedure for children who are picked up late or not at all

A building staff member will call the parent and emergency numbers listed if someone has not picked their child up when the classroom session ends. If no one can be contacted, the child will need to wait in either the front office or the preschool until 4:00 p.m. At that time the Department of Social Services will be contacted.

## Health and Illness Policy

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Please keep your child at home if they are not feeling well. Children who are sick have difficulty learning. Some symptoms your child may have that might result in staying home include:

- A temperature above 100.4 F
- Constant runny nose with greenish discharge
- Upset stomach
- Lung congestion
- Recurrent coughing
- Do not send a child to school who has been vomiting or has had an episode of diarrhea within the last 24 hours

Please do not send a child to school who has a suspected or confirmed communicable disease. These symptoms include:

- Sore throat of longer than three days duration, especially if associated with swollen lymph nodes or a rash.
- A child diagnosed with Strep Throat must stay home until after 24 hours of treatment has started.
- Red or inflamed, swollen eyes or discharge from eyes which is not allergy related.
- Weeping cold sores or other lesions like impetigo until under treatment.
- Rashes that are not allergy related and are not diagnosed.

If a child appears to be ill at school, we will take them to the nurse's office for a quick exam and fever check, we will then keep your child in the nurse's office and telephone you to come and pick up your child. **For this reason, it is imperative that we have the current phone numbers of someone who will always be available to pick up your child.**

Please let us know if your child has any allergies (food or otherwise) as well as any other medical conditions that may affect their performance at school.

## Absence Policy

Families are expected to communicate absences with the preschool program or the front office by calling or emailing before the absence or the day of. Once a student has 5 unexcused absences, there will be a communication meeting with families to discuss ways to increase attendance.

Please email Nora Brachtenbach at [nbrachtenbach@mssd14.org](mailto:nbrachtenbach@mssd14.org) if your child will be absent from school.

## Injuries

If your child is injured in the school or on the playground, preschool staff will assess the injury. If the injury warrants it, your child will be taken to the nurse's office for basic first

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aid. If your child requires more than basic first aid, the school district nurse or medical technician will notify the parent or if necessary call 911. In the event 911 is called, parents will be notified immediately.

## Storage and Administration of Medication

Parents and physicians must complete medication forms for prescriptions and over-the-counter medications according to the Nurse Practice Act. These forms are available in the office. Medicine must be kept in the original container. All medications are to be turned in to the office where they will be kept. Please inform the classroom teacher as to the time of administration of the medication.

## Discipline

A classroom that is developmentally appropriate, consistent, highly engaging, and full of self-directed activity with authentic praise and positive reinforcement from regulated adults results in few discipline issues. If needed, natural and logical consequences will be used as a simple consequence. Other behavior management systems may be put into place if behaviors occur on a regular basis including redirection, staff intervention, a calming walk, deep breathing, or the use of an activity we know the child to be successful with. If a child's behavior becomes disruptive or dangerous, the remaining students will be escorted from the class to give the dysregulated student time to regulate at which point they will re-engage with the class without shame.

## Weather and Dress

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes, sturdy shoes, and provide outdoor play clothing appropriate for the weather. Outside recess will be held daily, weather and schedule permitting.

During cold and wet weather children will need to have a weather ready coat, head covering, gloves, or mittens and waterproof boots before going outside for recess.

During excessively hot weather, children will regularly be offered water to drink. If a child appears flushed or overheated, a cool down time will be enforced with the child in the shade or inside the school. Children who play outside for extended periods on sunny days will be encouraged to wear sunscreen if parents have provided it and have signed a permission form for sunscreen. **PLEASE LABEL** all water bottles, hats, mittens/gloves, boots and coats so mix-ups don't occur.

## Emergency Drills

Fire, inclement weather drills, evacuation, and lock-down drills will be held often enough for staff to know how to direct children in emergency situations. In the event of floods,

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severe weather, or if MSES is severely damaged or unsafe, children will be taken to an off-site location that will be communicated by our safety team and parents will be notified by telephone.

## Transporting Students

All transportation provided by the Manitou Springs School District 14 will utilize approved bus drivers and school district buses.

Students with special needs who require the related service transportation will have this service provided to and/or from the school as part of their Individual Education Program. Students will be loaded and unloaded out of the path of moving vehicles. Students riding on school transportation will be required to follow all school transportation rules. In case of an accident, the driver will: call the police 911 no matter how minor, call MSSD immediately if an injury has occurred and administer first aid until help arrives. School personnel will call parents to notify them of the accident and of needed medical treatment and/or pickup.

In case of bus problems, the children should remain on the bus weather permitting or be taken to a controlled area.

Parents of peer models are responsible for transporting their children to and from the school.

Requests for transportation can be made to Kelly Kahler [kkahler@mssd14.org](mailto:kkahler@mssd14.org) 719-685-2233.

## Weekly Schedule

Our classroom will follow the district calendars, meeting Monday-Thursday for the school year. Preschool does not follow late start Wednesdays.

## Television and Video

Regular television programming is not viewed at MSES. PBS, special programming, documentaries, and educational programs that relate to the curriculum may be viewed in addition to theme-related content from the internet. Videos may be viewed if age appropriate (length, content, and rating). All children may watch "G" rated videos.

## Field Trips

Walking field trips and field trips which require parent transportation will be scheduled to enhance children's learning and family engagement. Parents must sign field trip permission slips for each field trip using a bus.

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## Safety on Trips

Parents/guardians will be notified in advance of all field trip activities. We are asking parents to provide transportation for their child for any field trips requiring transportation. Parents will also be asked to be responsible for the safety of their child before, during, and after specified field trips. Field trips will be scheduled far enough in advance that families can make plans for their child to attend. Field trips may be planned for both morning and afternoon sessions. If there is to be no in-person school on the day of family field trips, the families will be notified in the newsletters. The trips may also fall out of our typical preschool schedule, depending on our destination.

## Late Arrivals on Field Trip Days

In the event all staff and children are out of the preschool room, a notice will be posted on the classroom door with the details of the field trip.

## Inclement Weather

If the Manitou Springs School District is closed for any reason, you will receive a “robo” call from the District Office. This usually occurs before 6:00 a.m. If the district announces a late start, there will be no morning preschool. Tuition will not be reimbursed.

## Personal Belongings

The preschool program is not responsible for any personal items of children or staff. Personal items that need to be brought to the program need to be labeled with the child’s name. Children are not to bring toys into school except on special days.

## Diapering and Toilet Training

Peer models enrolled in preschool should be fully toilet trained. Individual needs around diapering and toilet training for children with special needs will be discussed at their individual education plan meeting, initial home visit, or family conference.

## Parent Teacher Conferences and Home Visits

Parent conferences for all students are conducted twice a year either in-person or remotely. Home Visits are performed at the beginning of each school year.

Please see the preschool newsletter for dates.

Parent conferences for students with special needs are conducted on an as needed basis. In addition, there is an annual review of the student’s IEP.

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A parent may ask for a conference at any time. Please make your request through the classroom teacher.

Parents of children who qualify for UPK tuition are required to attend all parent conferences.

## Child Abuse Reporting

All employees are trained Mandatory Reporters and have the responsibility to report suspected child abuse to the Department of Human Services in El Paso County.

## Complaint Procedures

Please contact the preschool director first. If the difficulty cannot be resolved through this means, please contact the school principal at 719-685-2195. If you have any concerns about the operation of the preschool program please contact the MSES principal. In the case of suspected child abuse by a preschool staff member, immediately contact the principal. If however, you wish to report any incident directly to social services you may do so by contacting:

**El Paso County Department of Human Services**  
**1675 Garden of the Gods Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80907**  
**719-636-0000**  
**Child Welfare Hotline: 1-844-264-5437**

If it is suspected that a staff member has abused a student, you may report this directly to the Department of Human Services Division of Child Care at:

**Department of Human Services Division of Child Care**  
**1575 Sherman Street, Denver, CO 80203-1714**  
**1-800-799-5876**

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Procedural safeguards for students requiring special services are discussed prior to conducting an evaluation of a child. Please follow complaint procedures listed in the procedural safeguards handout if you have any concerns regarding programming for your child with special needs.