



La Grande Elementary School
Family Guide
2026-2027

Table of Contents

Message from the Principal	4
Our School	
School Mission Statement	5
School Vision Statement	5
School Information	
Arrival & School Hours	6
Attendance & Absence Reporting	7
Emergency Closings & Delayed Openings	8
Policies & Procedures	9-11
Snack Time & Toys	9
Preschool Intervention & Referral Team (P.I.R.T.)	9-10
Visitors & Volunteers	10
Lost & Found	10
Report Cards & Progress Reports	10
PowerSchool	10
Parent-Teacher Conferences	10-11
Health & Medical Information	
Emergency Forms & Information	11
Returning to School After Illness or Injury	11-12
Administration of Medication	12-13
Epinephrine	13
Head Lice	13
Physicals & Immunization Requirements	13
Toileting & Diapering	14-15
Handwashing & Disinfecting	15
Supplies	16
Wholesome Learning	
Creative Curriculum	17
AI's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices	17-18
ESI-3 Screening	18
VB-MAPP Assessment	18-19
Teaching Strategies GOLD	19-21
Family Partnership	
Partnership	21
Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)	21

Supporting Your Child's Success

Social-Emotional Learning	22
Building Independence	22-23
Behavior Expectations	23
The Nurtured Heart Approach	23-24
Supporting Transitions	24-
Home-School Partnership	25

Off We Go: First Day Tips	26
--	-----------

Important Phone Numbers & Contacts	27
---	-----------

Message from the Principal

Dear La Grande Families,

Welcome to La Grande Elementary School! We are so happy to welcome our youngest learners! The information contained in this guide will assist and guide you during the school year. We are excited to work in tandem with you, ensuring our children enjoy a robust early childhood educational experience. Together, we will build a foundation grounded in high quality preschool programming, dynamic adult-child interactions, and inclusive learning experiences, all of which provide robust opportunities for your child to thrive. Our curriculum is anchored by the Creative Curriculum, which fosters exploration and discovery, and AI's Pals, which supports your child's development of self-regulation, resilience, and positive decision-making. These programs, combined, create the best possible school day and build strong K-12 readiness. We strive to help students become life-long learners and caring, responsible citizens who are respectful of each other.

This family guide serves as a preschool information hub outlining the essential policies and procedures to ensure your child experiences the most benefit from our instructional program. Please note that this handbook's information is a combination of both district PreK-12 policies/guidelines as well as state-mandated preschool procedures. With our youngest learners and their families, it is our goal to set the foundation of consistent communication and procedural practices that will prepare them for Kindergarten and beyond.

We ALL contribute to the success of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood preschool students! We encourage you to stay in contact with the school in order to discover their exciting daily experiences as well as learn how to partner with our preschool community. Here's to a school year filled with promise and endless possibilities for nurturing social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Fondly,

Megan McNally

Principal



School Mission Statement

The La Grande Elementary School community is a partnership of staff, families, and community members committed to creating a safe, caring, and nurturing environment where every child feels valued and a sense of belonging. We celebrate diversity, champion kindness, and honor each child's unique voice. Through meaningful relationships, play-based exploration, and engaging learning experiences, we inspire independent thinking, curiosity, and foster a genuine lifelong love of learning while helping every child reach their fullest potential.

School Vision Statement

Our school provides a nurturing and inclusive environment where young learners grow through developmentally appropriate experiences that prepare them to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.



Every child begins as a little acorn. Together, through care, encouragement, curiosity, and strong relationships, we help them grow.

Arrival and Dismissal Times

SCHOOL HOURS:

Half Day Preschool Hours			
	Regular	Single Session	Delayed Opening
AM Students Arrive	8:45 AM	8:45 AM	10:15 AM
AM Instruction Begins	8:55 AM	8:55 AM	10:25 AM
AM Student Dismissal	11:35 AM	10:40 AM	12:35 PM
PM Students Arrive	12:40 PM	11:05 AM	1:10 PM
PM Instruction Begins	12:50 PM	11:15 AM	1:20 PM
PM Students Dismissal	3:30 PM	1:00 PM	3:30 PM
Full Day Preschool Hours			
Full Day - Preschool	Regular	Single Session	Delayed Opening
Full Day Arrival	8:45 AM	8:45 AM	10:15 AM
Full Day Instruction Begins	8:55 AM	8:55 AM	10:20 AM
Full Day Dismissal	2:50 PM	1:00 PM	2:50 PM

Drop-off will take place in the front of the school, with all students entering through the multi-purpose room. Exact procedures will be provided prior to school starting.

Absence Reporting

If your child will be absent from school, report the absence using PowerSchool by 9:00 am on the day of the absence. If you do not have access to PowerSchool, call the main office.

Attendance

ABSENCES

If a child is absent from school due to illness or for matters other than illness, it is necessary to call the school attendance service as early as possible at (908)-889-8600. The attendance line is open 24/7. Please leave a message with the reason for absence. Parents must notify the school from the first day until return. An excused absence is one in which the school has been notified by the parent. An unexcused absence is one in which there is no notification.

NOTE: Non-response to a phone call from the school within **24 hours** requires the school to notify the police department.

Absences can also be entered in PowerSchool before **9:00 am**. Please notify the school if your child will be absent by completing the Absence/Tardy/Early Dismissal form in PowerSchool or by calling (908) -889-8600.

These options are available 24 hours a day.

All notes regarding absences are to be given to the main office upon return to school, but no later than 5 days following an absence. A child leaving school early must have a note from the parent, and the parent must come into the building to sign the child out. If you are going on a family vacation and your child will be out for an extended amount of time, kindly notify the office directly.

Emergency Closings

SCHOOL CLOSING

If severe weather forces the cancellation of school, the decision is made as early as possible. To find out if school is canceled, you may visit the district website at www.spfk12.org or there will be a message sent via email or text message.

DELAYED OPENING: 10:15 AM

If overnight weather conditions make traveling hazardous in the early morning hours, but roads are safe by mid-morning, there may be a delayed opening with preschool beginning at 10:15 am. The school will be open at 10:00 AM. Students should not be left unattended in or out of the school building. Lunch and snacks will be provided as they are on typical school days. Visit the district website at <https://www.spfk12.org/>, or there will be a message sent via email or text message.

EARLY CLOSING: 1:00 PM

If school is open but severe weather is forecasted, please check your phone, email, or district website for updated information. If early dismissal occurs, the school follows the plans for each child as indicated on the Early Dismissal Plan Form.

Please review this information with your child regularly.

It is extremely important that you notify the Main Office if any changes (i.e. telephone number, address, and routine) need to be made to your child's Early Dismissal Plan form.

Policies and Procedures

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools are committed to providing an equal opportunity for all students and employees, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, place of residence, social or economic condition, or handicap/disability in all school programs and vocational education opportunities.

Consistent with the intent of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (racial/ethnic equity), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (non-discrimination on the basis of handicap/disability), the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools afford all students and employees equal opportunity. More information can be found:

<https://www.spfk12.org/departments/human-resources/non-discrimination-policy>

Snack time

Meal and snack times offer excellent opportunities for students to practice independence, socialization, healthy eating habits, and good manners.

Time is allocated for students to eat in their classrooms alongside their classmates and the staff.

For children enrolled in the **full-day preschool program**, families are responsible for providing their child's daily snack and lunch.

For children enrolled in the **half-day preschool program**, snacks will be served family-style, and all families will have an opportunity to provide snacks for the class.

Please note: Your child's teacher will reach out to families with additional information and details at the beginning of the school year.

Toys

Children are asked **not** to bring toys to school except when requested for an educational activity. You will be notified in writing when your child will need to bring a specific toy from home. Toy weapons are never permitted in school.

What is Response to Intervention in Preschool?

The Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (P.I.R.T) is a school-based problem-solving group that assists teachers by designing and implementing strategies for children who are experiencing learning, behavior, health, or other problems that are interfering with a student's academic progress. Your child's teacher will notify you that

your child will be referred to P.I.R.T. You will be requested to provide information to assist the committee. An action plan will be developed with strategies for the teacher to implement and this will be shared with you, as well as any home interventions to help you and your child. In addition, P.I.R.T provides resources to families ranging from academics and behavioral support, accessing resources within the community.

Visitors

We ask that all guests and visitors to La Grande enter through the front doors. In order to monitor who has entered the building, all visitors must sign in with our Security Officer and receive a visitor's badge. Please wear the badge during your visit to the school. All staff members wear identification badges, and substitutes will also be issued identification badges. All visitors must show identification in order to pick up a child.

Volunteers

The staff at La Grande recognizes that the services of volunteers can enrich our educational program, assist our teaching staff members in the performance of their duties, and enhance the relationship between school and community. Please reach out to your child's teacher to see what opportunities are available. We will also periodically send emails asking for help with school-wide events. Please remember that volunteers may serve only under the direction and supervision of a teaching staff member. Our PTA is always looking for volunteers as well. Please look for information on this.

Lost and Found

The lost and found bin will be placed in the vestibule area. It is always a good idea to have your child's name on all belongings.

Report Cards and Progress Reports

All reports will be available in February and June. Depending on your child's educational placement, you will receive a report card, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) progress report, or both.

Accessing PowerSchool

The link is here: <https://spf.powerschool.com/public/>

Conferences

Conferences provide a time for parents and teachers to talk together, review the child's portfolio, and make plans and goals for improvement. Parent-teacher conferences will

be held in December and February. Children should not attend these conferences since this is a time to discuss any challenges and have open dialogue. Conferences may also be scheduled at any time during the school year when a teacher or parent has a concern. If you wish to arrange a conference, please contact your child's teacher.

Health and Medical Information

HEALTH and SAFETY are two of the most important components of our preschool program and keeping our students and staff safe from the spread of germs and illnesses.

Emergency Forms and Information

If a child becomes ill or injured at school, the nurse will contact parents or other responsible adults listed on the child's Emergency Form. It is essential that these forms be filled out and returned when they are first sent home and that parents notify the school of any changes (phone numbers, employment, or emergency contacts).

Returning to School After Illness or Injury

Diarrhea:

- If a student has 1 or more loose stools during school hours, the student will be sent home.
- Students may return to school 24 hours after the cessation of diarrhea.

Fever:

- If the body temperature measures 100 degrees F or above, contact the parent/guardian and exclude.
- Advise parent/guardian that student must remain home until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Vomiting:

- If vomiting is associated with gastrointestinal symptoms indicating a virus or associated with fever, parent/guardian will be contacted and student must be excluded from school.
- Students may return to school 24 hours after the cessation of vomiting.

Medical Interventions:

- Student returning to school post:
 - Hospital Admission

- Outpatient Surgical Procedure
- Note required from Medical provider to return to school with specific date
- Note must indicate if student may return to full activities
- Medical note must include any necessary accommodations

Your child may return to school after **24 hours** of being fever-free. Children who are limited or unable to participate in full activities require a doctor's note. Always reach out to our school nurse with any questions or concerns. Mrs. Cappadoccia can be reached via email as well: ccappadoccia@spfk12.org

Administration of Medication

It is the policy of the Board of Education that:

- The school will not provide pupils with any medication without an order from the treating health care provider.
- Pupils requiring prescription or over the counter medication at school must have a written statement from the treating health care provider which identifies the diagnosis, the medication, the dosage, the times(s), for administration, and the number of days on which the medication is to be administered.
- A written statement is required from the parent giving permission for the prescribed medication and relieving the school of responsibility for any possible adverse effects of said medication.
- Parents must assume the responsibility for delivering medication in the original container to the school nurse. Medication is to be held by, and administered only by the school nurse.
- The school nurse may administer emergency medication for severe allergic reaction as authorized by the school medical inspector.
- In the absence of the school nurse, alteration in medication time schedule may be necessary.

By state law and school board policy, the nurse is the only school personnel authorized to administer medication to a child at school. Medication can only be administered if prescribed by a physician. The parents must supply the nurse with "doctor's orders" as per state guidelines. If your child needs medication during school hours, it is requested that you have the pharmacist fill and label a bottle to be kept in school and bring the medication to the nurse's office. Parents should not send medication to school with children to keep on their person. This policy is necessary to protect the safety of all children. The medication must be in its original container, with the pharmaceutical label

clearly evident. Also, administration instructions and other information from the physician should be unobstructed.

The nurse is not authorized to administer over-the-counter medications. If your child's physician or dentist recommends an over-the-counter medication that you feel your child should have during the school day, ask the physician to write orders for the school nurse or feel free to call our school nurse for more information. The nurse has the necessary form required for all medications to be given at school.

Epinephrine

"Epinephrine shall be administered via epi-pen to pupils in emergencies on field trips by the school nurse, his/her designee(s), the student's parent/guardian or the student himself/herself, in accordance with board policy."

Pediculosis (Head Lice):

- Head lice are a nuisance, not a disease and pose no medical threats to the child or others. Children with head lice, who are not sick and pose no risk of illness, should not be excluded from school. By the time lice are discovered, the child has usually had them for 3-4 weeks; therefore, exposure has already occurred. Most importantly, school is not a high-risk area for getting lice. Over the last 14 years, multiple studies have proven that the school rarely is the site of lice transmission. Scientific research has shown that keeping students with eggs or lice, out of school does NOT reduce the amount of head lice at school.
- The nurse will examine the scalp of a student who complains of an "itchy head".
- The student's parent will be notified if lice, nits or any other concern is found.
- The student's parent/guardian will be advised to contact their healthcare provider or pharmacist for recommended treatment options.
- Encourage those parents to notify the parents of children with whom their child may have had head-to-head or close physical contact to check their child for head lice.

Once a diagnosis is made, a child more than likely has had the infestation for a while. Don't panic; the school nurse will notify you. Prompt treatment of this condition is in the best interest of the child and his/her classmates. Classroom or school-wide screening has not been proven to be necessary or effective at controlling the spread of head lice. The SPF District maintains that no healthy child should be kept from school. We do not have a *no-nit policy*. Once appropriate treatment has been started, a child may return to school. Our school nurse will re-check your child's head upon return to school.

Physicals

Physicals are required upon entering the school system. Families have 30 days from the start of school to provide this to the school nurse.

Preschool Immunization Requirements

- DTaP: a minimum of 4 doses
- POLIO: a minimum of 3 doses
- MMR: 1 dose given on or after 1st birthday
- VARICELLA: 1 dose on or after 1st birthday or medical documentation of having had chicken pox or lab work showing immunity
- HEPATITIS B: 3 doses
- PNEUMOCOCCAL (PCV): One dose given on or after 1st birthday
- HIB: 1 dose given on or after 1st birthday
- Influenza (FLU): One dose between September 1-November 30 of each year for all preschool students.

The NJ Department of Health provides detailed information about child and adolescent vaccine requirements for school attendance at this link:

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/imm_requirements/

NJ PRESCHOOL VACCINE CHART

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/imm_requirements/cc_preschool_requirements_parents.pdf

Flu Shots

The Flu vaccine is a requirement for childcare/preschool attendance for those who are 6 through 59 months of age. At least one dose of flu vaccine is **due by NOVEMBER 30 (no exceptions)**. Students who do not receive the flu vaccine, or have documentation for non-vaccination, by November 30 will be excluded from school until proof of vaccination is received.

Please reach out to our school nurse for more information.

Toileting and Diapering

Our preschool program encourages children's development of independence, including readiness for toilet training. Toilet training is a home-school partnership, and we work together with families to support each child's individual needs and progress. Parents are encouraged to reinforce toilet training routines at home while teachers provide guidance, encouragement, and support throughout the school day.

To help guide families, a slideshow is provided here: ["Promoting Independence and Potty Training" workshop](#). It includes helpful information, tips, and strategies to support children as they develop toileting independence will be available.

Families are responsible for supporting the toilet training process at home. The school will partner with families by encouraging independence and maintaining consistent routines during the school day.

Handwashing and Disinfecting:

Our staff wash their hands after cleaning the tables, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, and before serving food. The children are required to wash their hands when entering the classroom from outside, before and after meals, and after contact with any bodily fluids. Our students wash their hands:

- Upon arrival to the classroom
- Re-entering the classroom after being outside
- Before and after eating
- After using the toilet/diaper changing
- Before and after playing in sandboxes or water table

Table Cleaning Steps:

To clean the tables, our staff follow the steps recommended in the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-3):

- Use soapy water solution to clean tables using a clean and disposable paper towel
- After cleaning the table surface with soap and rinsing with water, disinfect tables by using a diluted bleach and disinfectant water solution

Supplies

Beginning of the Year Supplies:

- **Full-sized backpack** to hold large papers and easy for your child to open and close independently.
- A **Take Home Folder** will be provided for you. This folder will be used for communication between school and parents. Please put any notes or forms in the folder. Folders should be checked daily by teachers and families.
- **Extra Clothing** - All labeled with your child's full name. When accidents happen, soiled clothing will be sent home. Please send back replacement clothing the next day.
 - Shirts
 - Pants
 - Underwear
 - Socks
 - Shoes
- **One plastic shoebox-sized container** to be kept in your child's cubby

Please keep an eye out throughout the school year for any needed additional supplies and materials from your child's teacher.

Wholesome Learning: *Creative Curriculum*

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum designed to foster exploration, discovery, and a lifelong love of learning. It centers on developmentally appropriate, play-based learning that supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

The curriculum is organized into long-term "Studies," which are in-depth, project-based investigations of topics that are relevant and interesting to young children (such as Balls, Buildings, Trees, and Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). These studies allow children to explore concepts across all developmental areas, including literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts, while building critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By integrating these studies throughout the school year, we create a dynamic, responsive learning environment that honors each child's interests and unique voice.



Al's Pals

Al's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices

Our PreK classes use a nationally recognized social and emotional program called Al's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices. Al (our class puppet) makes visits to the classroom to talk about feelings and solving social problems. Social and emotional learning is an integral part of education and human development. Through engaging, age-appropriate lessons, children learn to identify and express their feelings, build healthy and supportive relationships with their peers, and practice essential problem-solving skills. The social aspects of Al's Pals center on children's sense of self, their relationship to others, their own valued and active role in the classroom, children's development of self-regulation, and how relationship skills inform, foster, and strengthen children's social interactions and relationships with peers, teachers, family, and community.

This program is fully integrated into our daily classroom routines and is aligned with both *The Creative Curriculum* and *Teaching Strategies GOLD* objectives. By fostering

these critical social and emotional competencies, AI's Pals provides a strong foundation that helps our students thrive socially and academically as they grow.

ESi3 Screening

- Throughout the first few weeks of school, your child's teacher will continue getting to know him/her as they talk, play, and explore together. In addition, teachers will use the *Early Screening Inventory-3 (ESI-3)* as a tool for gathering information about how your child is progressing towards developmental milestones. This screening will take place during the school day throughout the first eight weeks of the year, and the results will be shared with you. This screening is given to new incoming non-classified students.
- Another component of the tool is a detailed **ESI-3 Parent Questionnaire** so that you can share additional information and insights about your child with his/her teacher. This questionnaire will be sent home at the beginning of the school year.

VB-MAPP Assessment

Students enrolled in the full-day preschool program will be assessed using the **Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP)**. The VB-MAPP is a comprehensive assessment designed to evaluate developmental, language, learning, and social skills for children functioning within the developmental range of birth to 4 years of age. The assessment consists of three components: **Milestones**, **Barriers**, and **Transitions**. Students are typically assessed twice during the school year, depending on their enrollment date.

- **Milestones:**
 - The Milestones looks at the areas of: mands(asking for something), tacts (labeling), listener responding (following directions), visual perceptual/ matching to sample, independent play, social behavior/ social play, motor imitation, spontaneous vocal behavior, listener responding by function-feature-class, intraverbal, classroom routines/group skills, linguistic structure, reading, writing and math.
- **Barriers:**
 - The Barriers assesses the areas of: negative behaviors, instructional control, impaired tact repertoire, impaired motor imitation, impaired echoics, impaired visual perceptual skills, impaired listener repertoire,

impaired intraverbal repertoire, impaired social skills, prompt dependency, scrolling responses, impaired scanning skills, failure to make conditional discriminations, failure to generalize, atypical motivating operations, response requirement, reinforcement dependent, self-stimulation, articulation problems, obsessive compulsive behavior, hyperactive behavior, failure to make eye contact or attend to people and sensory defensiveness.

- **Transitions:**

- The Transitions takes into account the overall score on the Milestones, the Barriers score on negative behaviors and instructional control, the Milestones score on classroom routine and group skills, the Milestones assessment on social behavior and social play, working independently on academic tasks, generalization of skills across time-settings, behaviors, materials-people, range of items and events that function as reinforcers, rate of acquisition of new skills, retention of new skills, learning from the natural environment, demonstrating transfer between the verbal operant without training, adaptability to change, spontaneous behaviors, self-directed play and leisure skills, general self-help skills, toileting skills and eating skills.

Assessment results are used to identify each student's strengths and areas of need, guide individualized instructional planning, monitor progress over time, and support educational programming and placement decisions.

Teaching Strategies GOLD

Students enrolled in the half-day preschool program will be assessed using the Teaching Strategies GOLD, a nationally recognized, research-based assessment tool designed specifically for young children.

Teaching Strategies GOLD is an ongoing, observation-based assessment system. Unlike traditional testing, children are not given sit-down tests or quizzes. Instead, teachers observe children in their natural classroom environment—during play, group activities, routines, and center time—to evaluate what they know and can do.

It takes a whole-child approach, tracking developmental milestones and learning progress across 38 key objectives from birth through kindergarten.

Key Areas of Development Assessed

GOLD tracks progress across six primary developmental domains, along with foundational academic content areas:

- **Social-Emotional:** Managing feelings, following classroom expectations, making friends, and resolving conflicts.
- **Physical:** Developing fine-motor skills (using scissors, drawing, writing tools) and gross-motor skills (running, balancing, catching).
- **Language:** Listening to instructions, expressing thoughts clearly, expanding vocabulary, and engaging in conversations.
- **Cognitive:** Problem-solving, curiosity, memory, persistence, and classification skills.
- **Literacy:** Identifying letters and sounds, demonstrating print awareness, comprehending stories, and emergent writing.
- **Mathematics:** Counting, recognizing numbers, understanding shapes, measuring, and identifying patterns.

How It Works in the Classroom

1. **Daily Observations:** Teachers collect authentic evidence—such as observational notes, photos of projects, and work samples—during regular daily routines.
2. **Progress Progression:** Children's skills are evaluated along a developmental continuum rather than a pass/fail scale. This allows teachers to meet every child at their individual skill level.
3. **Checkpoint Periods:** Data is finalized two times a year to measure individual growth over time.
4. **Individualized Instruction:** Teachers use checkpoint data to tailor lesson plans, small-group activities, and learning environments to match each child's unique strengths and needs.

How Results Are Shared with You

Your child's growth will be shared during scheduled Parent-Teacher Conferences using GOLD progress reports. These reports highlight your child's developmental strengths, areas for growth, and concrete ways you can support learning at home.

Our goal is to build a strong partnership between home and school to help your child thrive. If you have any questions about Teaching Strategies GOLD, please feel free to reach out to your child's teacher!

Partnership

Our school embraces a positive and productive climate. It is important that interactions between parents and school personnel are respectful and constructive. As a school family, we all play a role in the educating of your children and must work together. If ever a concern arises, please reach out to your child's teacher and Ms. McNally anytime. We are here to work with you and solve problems collectively in the best interest of your child and all students we support here at La Grande.

Ways To Support Your Child At Home:

- **Morning Routines:** Establish a predictable routine, and providing a nutritious breakfast helps children arrive ready to learn and engage in the day's activities.
- **Sleep Routines:** Follow a bedtime routine. Aim for a regular sleep schedule. Limit bright lights and electronics at night.
- **Dressing:** Encourage children to practice dressing skills by allowing time to try tasks independently, such as putting on jackets, shoes, and managing simple fasteners. Choose easy-to-manage clothing, offer support when needed, and celebrate their efforts as they build confidence and self-help skills. Weather permitting, as often as possible, please dress your child appropriately.
- **Bathroom Routines:** Please use the bathroom before coming to school. Encourage your child to assist in the steps needed to use the bathroom.
- **Communication and Learning:** Use your child's newsletters and daily logs to foster conversations at home about their school day, learning experiences, and classroom activities. Reinforce academic concepts by asking your child to share what they learned and encouraging them to apply new skills at home.

SPF Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)

The Early Childhood Advisory Council is an organization composed of school personnel, families, and community stakeholders. It seeks to give those interested in the educational success of the students in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Preschool Program an avenue to learn and share information and experiences that are beneficial to all children. The council meets a few times per year to discuss the needs of the program, challenges, and success of our preschool children. Look for more information and dates for this.

Supporting your child's success

At La Grande Elementary, we believe that helping children succeed goes far beyond academics. Our youngest learners are developing confidence, independence, relationships, communication skills, and the ability to understand and manage their emotions. These skills provide an important foundation for learning and growing.

We view families as essential partners in this process. When children experience consistent expectations, encouragement, and support at home and at school, they are better able to feel secure, build confidence, and thrive.

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning is an important part of the La Grande experience. We intentionally help children learn to identify and express their feelings, build positive relationships, solve problems, communicate their needs, and develop self-regulation.

Throughout the school day, children have opportunities to practice skills such as taking turns, sharing, listening, asking for help, managing frustration, and working through challenges. These are skills that develop over time and require patience, practice, and encouragement.

Families can support social-emotional development at home by talking about feelings, modeling calm problem-solving, giving children opportunities to make choices, and helping them find words to express what they need.

Building Independence

Young children are capable of more than we sometimes realize. At La Grande, we encourage children to develop independence by giving them opportunities to try, make choices, solve problems, and take responsibility for age-appropriate tasks.

Children may be encouraged to:

- Manage their belongings
- Put on and take off outerwear
- Clean up after themselves
- Make appropriate choices
- Follow classroom routines

- Ask for help when they need it
- Try something independently before an adult steps in

We understand that independence takes time. Our goal is not for children to do everything on their own, but to help them develop the confidence to say, "I can try!"

Families can support this at home by allowing children extra time to complete tasks independently and celebrating their effort rather than doing things for them.

Behavior Expectations

At La Grande, we believe that behavior is an opportunity for learning. Our school-wide expectations are centered around being Kind, Responsible, Curious, and Respectful.

We teach children what these expectations look and sound like in different settings and provide frequent opportunities to practice them. When children make mistakes or have difficulty meeting an expectation, we use those moments to teach, guide, and help them develop new skills.

Our goal is to help children understand:

- How their choices affect themselves and others
- How to make safe and responsible choices
- How to repair relationships when problems occur
- How to express their needs appropriately
- How to try again after making a mistake

We recognize that young children are still developing the skills necessary to manage big emotions and challenging situations. Our response is grounded in connection, consistency, and teaching rather than shame or punishment.

The Nurtured Heart Approach

La Grande embraces principles of the *Nurtured Heart Approach*, which focuses on building children's inner strength and recognizing their successes.

We intentionally notice and celebrate children when they demonstrate kindness, responsibility, curiosity, respect, perseverance, self-control, and other positive behaviors. Through specific recognition, children learn to understand the positive choices they are making and the impact those choices have on their classroom and school community.

Rather than focusing our attention primarily on challenging behavior, we work to actively recognize children when they are demonstrating the behaviors and characteristics we want to see more often.

You may hear adults at La Grande use specific language such as:

"I noticed how you..."

"That was a responsible choice."

"You kept trying even when that was difficult."

"You showed kindness when you..."

Our goal is to help children recognize their own strengths and develop an internal sense of confidence and success.

Supporting Transitions

Transitions can be challenging for young children. Moving from home to school, changing activities, separating from caregivers, entering a new classroom, or adjusting to a new routine can bring excitement, uncertainty, or strong emotions.

At La Grande, we support children through transitions by providing predictable routines, visual cues, advance notice, encouragement, and caring adult support.

Families can help by:

- Talking positively about school and upcoming changes
- Establishing consistent morning and bedtime routines
- Allowing enough time to get ready without rushing
- Using simple, confident goodbyes
- Avoiding prolonged or uncertain departures
- Encouraging children to share their feelings
- Reminding children that trusted adults at school are there to help them

It is completely normal for children to experience some difficulty during transitions. We will work with families to help children build confidence and develop strategies that make transitions more successful.

Home-School Partnership

Children benefit most when the adults in their lives work together. We value families as partners and welcome communication, questions, ideas, and collaboration.

Families can support their child's success by:

- Maintaining regular communication with teachers and the school
- Sharing information that may help us better understand and support their child
- Encouraging independence at home
- Reinforcing our school expectations of Kind, Responsible, Curious, and Respectful
- Reading and talking together every day
- Encouraging children to talk about their school experiences
- Celebrating effort, growth, and perseverance
- Reaching out when questions or concerns arise

We also recognize that every child and family is unique. If something is working well, we want to celebrate it. If something is challenging, we want to work together to find a solution.

Growing Together

At La Grande, we know that meaningful growth takes time. Just like a little acorn needs care, patience, and the right conditions to grow into a strong tree, children need caring relationships, encouragement, opportunities to practice, and adults who believe in their potential.

Together, home and school can help every child grow into a confident, capable, kind, and curious learner.

Off We Go, First Day Tips

The first day of school is an exciting milestone in your child's life. Your child is embarking on a journey that will lead them on many roads of discovery and learning.

As wonderful as this new experience may be, it can also be quite stressful for the young child. New situations and change can, at times, be unsettling for all of us. For many children this may be their first experience of separation from parents or caregivers at home. It is common for even the most outgoing child to be anxious on the first day of school.

We have provided a few suggestions for assisting your child during this time. Please remember that the preschool staff will be available to provide support and assistance. Our goal is to make your child's first school experience happy!

- Prepare your child for the new school experience by explaining what to expect. Answer all questions directly and honestly.
- Convey a positive attitude. Young children are aware of your feelings. Your enthusiasm will assure the child that school can be a fun and exciting experience.
- Establish a routine involving both the night before a school day as well as morning preparation. Rituals and routines will add predictability and are comforting in unfamiliar situations.
- Clearly state to your child where you will be and when you will return. It may also be helpful to discuss what will happen when you are reunited.
- Maintain a clear goodbye routine. This may include warning your child you are leaving in two minutes, a kiss and hug, or a wave. Once you tell your child you are leaving, it is important to follow through. Extending the goodbye with "Ok just one more kiss, and then I really have to go" tends to heighten anxiety rather than relieve it. Avoid sneaking out; this seems to encourage children to become less trusting and makes the second day of school even harder.

Again, please know we are here to help make the first day of school a happy transition, and we look forward to an exciting and fun year. Welcome!

Important Phone Numbers and Contacts

La Grande Elementary School
330 South Avenue Fanwood, NJ 07023
Phone: 908-663-2200

Fax Numbers:
908-680-7158 - Nurse
908-680-7155 - Main

Position	Name	Email
Principal	Megan McNally	mmcnally@spfk12.org
Executive Secretary	Kara Goldstein	kgoldstein@spfk12.org
Nurse	Chris Cappadoccia	ccappadoccia@spfk12.org
Pre-K Case Manager	Tara Downing	tdowning@spfk12.org

