

SOMSD Preschool Program Frequently Asked Questions Guide

1. **What is the SOMSD Preschool Program?** The SOMSD Preschool Program, primarily funded by the PEEA, is a high-quality preschool education program for three and four year old students who are residents of South Orange or Maplewood.
2. **I'd like to register my child for the District's Preschool Program. What do I need to do?** Residents domiciled in South Orange or Maplewood with a child turning 3 or 4 years of age by October 1st, may apply to be considered for enrollment in the District's Preschool Program. For general information and instructions, please access the District's Registration page. Please be advised that preschool registration dates and deadlines will be posted on our site annually. Please be advised that preschool registration information for each upcoming academic year is typically released some time in January. This information can be found on the registration section of the District's website.
3. **What are the preschools in the program?** Our program currently includes:
 - Applecore Learning Center (240 Franklin Ave, Maplewood)
 - La Petite Academy: Maplewood (1529 Springfield Ave, Maplewood)
 - La Petite Academy: South Orange (410 Irvington Ave, South Orange)
 - Zadie's of the Oranges (280 S Harrison St, East Orange)
 - Montrose Early Childhood Center (356 Clark St, South Orange)
 - Iris Family Center for Early Childhood Education (432 Scotland Rd, South Orange)
 - Curious Children Childcare Center (150 South Orange Ave, South Orange)
 - Village Babies Development Center (401 Valley St, South Orange)
 - Mickey Fried Preschool (170 Scotland Rd, South Orange)
 - Beth El Preschool (222 Irvington Ave, South Orange)
4. **How is it determined where my child goes?** Placement into the preschool program is based on program and availability. Registered students who are not placed into the program are put on a waiting list. Should a seat become available, the family will be notified. The South Orange and Maplewood School District is committed to providing high-quality preschool education and continues to establish more partnerships with private preschool providers.
5. **When will families be notified of placement opportunities after initial acceptance letters go out via the lottery system?** The District's goal is to provide families with notification of placement as soon as possible. Please be advised that there is no specific date when additional acceptance letters go out after the initial acceptance, as there are many factors that contribute to spaces opening up (e.g. families who move out-of-district, families who decline placement, students who qualify for special services, etc.). These circumstances are typically ongoing and occur throughout the year. Since placement is a fluid process, families who are offered placement via the preschool lottery due to such vacancies will be notified on a rolling basis.
6. **Why is preschool placement a fluid process?** Placement into our preschool program continues to be fluid until we have reached Universal status. Achieving Universal status means that we will have the capacity to seat all eligible preschool-age South Orange and Maplewood School District students. Until then, it's important that we continue with an equitable process in placement. Please know that there are many critical factors and complexities that must be considered before the District

is able to move forward with local preschool childcare expansion partnerships. While our District is not currently at Universal status, we remain committed to preschool expansion so that we can achieve our goal in offering a preschool program of high-quality to all eligible students.

7. ***Do I get a say in where my child goes?*** At this time, there is no parental choice. Our preschool program is consistent across all schools and offers the same educational experience to all students through the researched-based and State approved curriculum, Tools of the Mind. For more information on our curriculum, please review the Tools of the Mind Parent Brochure, which outlines curricular components of the day. This informational brochure can be found on the main page of our preschool website.
8. ***What does it cost to go to the SOMSD Preschool Program?*** There is no tuition for any age-eligible child residing in South Orange or Maplewood.
9. ***Will my child take a bus?*** All children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) whose program includes transportation are bussed to and from their preschool. Additionally, students receiving general education programming who reside more than 1.25 miles between their home and school are eligible for bussing.
10. ***What are the school day hours?*** The school day is six hours long. Start and end times vary, depending on the building. As an example, typical hours can range from 8:30am-2:30pm, or, 8:45am-2:45pm
11. ***Are there half day hours available?*** No. All schools run a full six hour day.
12. ***Is there before and after care?*** That depends on the location.
 - Providers run their own before and aftercare program.
 - Applecore: Contact Applecore for more information. Applecorelearningeccc@gmail.com
 - La Petite: Contact La Petite for more information. placey@somsd.k12.nj.us
 - At Montrose, the YMCA runs the before and aftercare program on site. There are limited spots. Contact the Y directly to find out if there is space available. www.metroymcas.org/south-mountain-ymca/montrose-before-care-after-care/
 - Zadies: Contact Zadies for more information. csmith2@somsd.k12.nj.us
 - Iris: Contact Iris for more information. jrubin@tstinj.org
 - Curious Children: Contact Curious Children for more information. sbrown1@somsd.k12.nj.us
 - Village Babies: Contact Village Babies for more information. stacy@villagebabies.com
 - Mickey Fried Preschool: Contact Mickey Fried for more information. cbruen@somsd.k12.nj.us
 - Beth El Preschool: Contact Beth El Preschool for more information. dweitz@somsd.k12.nj.us
13. ***When does the school year start?*** Orientations for each school year take place between September and October. All incoming families will receive more information on preschool orientation day prior to the beginning of each school year once all plans are finalized.
14. ***Where can I find the School Year Calendar?*** The District's calendar for each school year can be found on the School District's website:
 - <https://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/district-calendar-handbook/>
15. ***How many classrooms are at each school?***
 - At Applecore there are 4 classrooms.
 - At Zadies there are 2 classrooms.

- At La Petite (Maplewood) there are 4 classrooms.
 - At La Petite (South Orange) there is 1 classroom.
 - At Montrose there are 9 classrooms.
 - At Iris there are 4 classrooms.
 - At Curious Children there are 2 classrooms.
 - At Village Babies there are 2 classrooms.
 - At Mickey Fried preschool there are 3 classrooms
 - At Beth El Preschool there are 2 classrooms
16. **How many children are in a class?** Most classes, with the exception of the self-contained special education classrooms (which have 12), have a maximum of 15 students.
17. **Are the 3s and 4s classes separate?** No. All classes are multi-age.
18. **What are the teacher qualifications?** All teachers are New Jersey State Certified, with a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree. The District is committed to hiring dual certified* teachers for their preschool program. *Dual certified is having certification in both early childhood education and special education.
19. **What is a paraprofessional? How many are in a classroom?** Paraprofessionals are classroom aides. There is one "classroom para" in every class to help support the teacher and students. Depending on special education programming, there may be additional paraprofessionals assigned to students with special needs. This may be a "1:1 para" or a "shared para".
20. **How does lunch and snack work?** Every class has its snack and lunch in its own classroom. Each student brings their own snack. Lunch can be bought at school or brought from home. If there are students with food-related allergies, the teacher will let families know before the start of the school year what is not allowed to be brought into the classroom. Information on ordering lunch will be available before the start of the school year. If you think your family qualifies for a free or reduced lunch, or as family's financial circumstances change, this form can be completed at any point during the school year. Go here to learn more:
<https://www.somdsd.k12.nj.us/district/food-services/freereducedapplication/>
21. **My child has food allergies. What is your policy for food allergies?** Each school building will abide by its own allergy policy. Currently, all preschools follow the BOE policy #5331 that can be found here: <https://www.somdsd.k12.nj.us/board-of-education/policies/>
22. **What is an 'inclusion' classroom?** Inclusion means that there are students with special programming in the class with their general education peers. There is a maximum of five students, in a fifteen student classroom, who have special programming.
23. **I believe that my child needs more support in the classroom, what do I do?**
- First contact your child's teacher and discuss your concerns.
 - If needed, the Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) will become involved to work on strategies to help your child.
 - If there are more supports or modifications needed, a referral to the preschool Child Study Team (CST) can be initiated. The referral will get you a meeting with the CST, and at that meeting, there will be a determination if an evaluation is warranted. The CST is a component of the Special Services department, and they utilize evaluations to determine if your child qualifies for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) based on eligibility requirements indicated in the New Jersey Administrative law code.

24. **How do parents and families get involved with volunteering?** Some preschools have a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or a Parent Committee. For preschools that don't, as interest in parent involvement increases, there is the opportunity to start one. Please contact your child's school for more information.
25. **Where can I find out more?** Parent Handbooks will be made available before the start of the new school year. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact:
- Applecore, Ms. Stacy Brutus, Director: Applecorelearningecc@gmail.com
 - Zadio's, Ms. Winifred Smith, Director: dirwinismith@gmail.com
 - Le Petit, Ms. Pauline Woode, Director: placey@somds.k12.nj.us
 - Montrose, Mr. Leroy Johnson, Acting Principal: ljohnso3@somds.k12.nj.us
 - Iris, Ms. Carol Paster, Director: cpaster@tstinj.org
 - Curious Children, Ms. Sylma Brown, Director: sbrown1@somds.k12.nj.us
 - Village Babies, Stacy LaFontant, Director: stacy@villagebabies.com
 - Preschool Program, prekinfo@somds.k12.nj.us
26. **How is the expansion expected to impact registration for 2025-2026 for CURRENT students?**
As final registration plans for the following school year are completed, current three-year old student assignments will not change and re-registration is not required. Four-year old students will rollover into Kindergarten and re-registration is not required. A family relocating within the District will be required to document the new residence.
27. **When will rising Kindergarten families be notified of their Kindergarten placement?**

SOMSD III TIMELINE: 2025 - 26 SY

- **February 3rd - February 21st - All Grade Enrollment (Grades K - 12)**
 - **May 27th - Open Enrollment for all grades**
 - **By the middle of April 2025 - 6th Grade (current 5th grade) III placement letters sent to families**
 - **By the end of May 2025 - 1st Round Kindergarten placement letters to be sent to families**
 - **Summer 2025 - Placement letters will continue to be sent out to families for students placed based on III (K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, & 8)**
 - **August 2025: Teacher/classroom assignment letters may be sent one week before the start of the school year**
 - **September 2nd: First Day of School**
28. **How is Kindergarten placement determined?**
Please reference the District's Intentional Integration Initiative (III) Frequently Asked Questions guide: <https://sites.google.com/somds.k12.nj.us/somdsintegration/faqs>

29. ***How is the expansion expected to impact registration for the 2025-2026 for NEW students?*** As final registration plans for the following school year are completed, **current three-year old students'** assignments will not change and re-registration is not required. Four-year old students will rollover into Kindergarten and **re-registration is not required**. A family relocating within the District will be required to document the new residence. Since the District will be expanding access to a high-quality preschool program significantly, yet not to the point of being able to meet the needs of all interested three and four-year olds, a lottery system will be instituted. All available seats will be filled with a start date of September 2, 2025. Registration for all interested three and four-year olds will be completed in accordance with the District's Policy and Procedures. An application for Free-Reduced Lunch Eligibility will be incorporated into the application process.
30. ***Can parents register for online notification to focus on preschool registration process updates?*** The registration packet requires an email address; therefore, this will be used to disseminate information throughout the registration process.
31. ***Can the District provide alternate communication strategies to provide updates on the registration system?*** The District will disseminate information through its schools, public library, health department and realtors.
32. ***Can PreK Program registration be made available in other languages than English?*** Information will be made available in Spanish and French-Creole.
33. ***How can I find/obtain additional information?*** Please visit us at <https://www.somdsd.k12.nj.us/district/preschool-program/> or email prekinfo@somdsd.k12.nj.us.