



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA
BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT



GENERAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

Matanuska Susitna Borough School District

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MSBSD Mission and Vision

“We prepare all students for success.”

The Vision of the MSBSD is that each child be taught as a whole person, whose growth occurs in developmental stages that are uniquely individual and continuous.

The mission of the MSBSD Federal Programs Preschool is to provide children and families a dynamic, developmentally appropriate and research-based preschool education program to prepare children for school and life success.

Philosophy

Children learn best in an early childhood program that provides developmentally appropriate educational experiences in an integrated setting. Our early childhood program is designed to provide a stimulating learning environment that supports the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of every child. In this engaging environment, children learn through appropriate experiences that encourage active participation in learning. Our classrooms build a community of learners by providing children with enriching experiences to develop self-confidence, independence, and strong cognitive and social skills. We respect the dignity, worth and individuality of each child and are committed to helping children achieve their full potential. Our goal is to help children grow up confident in their own identity and respectful of other people. The MSBSD recognizes the significant relationship among teachers, students, parents, and families and encourages continuous collaboration in a climate of mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

Purpose

The purpose of the MSBSD Early Learning Program is to provide a high-quality preschool experience that meets each child’s diverse needs. The Preschool classroom provides a rich learning environment that encourages and supports children to take risks that lead to new skill development through hands-on inquiry and constructive play. We provide a setting where children feel cared for, safe, and respected. It is an opportunity for all four-year-old children to take part in a planned, active learning experience that builds their readiness skills.

Program Standards

All MSBSD preschool classrooms implement the [State of Alaska Early Learning Guidelines](#) and the standards from NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). Each site assesses each child to identify their status and progress on the developmental continuum. Student growth and progress is shared with parents during Parent Teacher Conferences and other meeting times as arranged by the team.

Eligibility

Students must be eligible for at least one of these programs:

- **Title I** - students must live within the physical boundary of a designated Title I school
- **Migrant Education (Title I-C)** - students are currently enrolled in the Migrant Education Program through the Federal Programs department.
- **Indian Education (Title VI)** - the student is an enrolled member or descendent of an enrolled member of a recognized tribe or tribal group. Documentation is required.

The following requirements must also be met:

- Students are 4 by September 1.
 - Note: students who are 5 by September 1 are not eligible for preschool and will need to enroll in kindergarten.
- Students must be fully toilet trained.
 - A child is toilet trained when he/she can make known their need to use the bathroom and can perform basic hygiene needs independently.
 - We recognize that children who are newly toilet-trained will occasionally have accidents. For liability reasons, if a child has an accident, the teaching staff will supervise and give any verbal instructions required for the child to clean up himself/herself. The parent/guardian may be contacted to pick up the child, if necessary. The school nurse will only support in extreme circumstances and parents will be notified.

Enrollment Process

- Parents review all eligibility requirements listed above
- Parents register their students in preschool through PARENTVUE, beginning July 1.
- Upon staff return to school in August, preschool teachers complete enrollment and roster students in AM/PM sessions based on the date and time of registration.
- Birth Certificate and immunization records must be on file at the school prior to student attending.
 - Waivers for immunizations are permitted and can be printed from the MSBSD website.
- The ASQ-3 Screener is completed during the Home Visit or Roll-In process and is required to be completed within the first 45 days of school.

Screener: ASQ-3 (General Education Only)

MSBSD preschools programs prioritize student growth and development. One of the tools we are required to use in support is the Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3). This is a developmental screening tool designed to help us better understand each child's strengths and identify any areas where they may need additional support.

For newly enrolled students (no matter when they enroll), we are required to have parents complete the ASQ-3 within 45 days of their enrollment and return it to school. If students enroll after the fall home visits are completed, please give the ASQ-3 information to their parents and request that they return it to school as soon as possible. All preschool students must have an ASQ-3 on file.

If an ASQ-3 was completed by another agency within 45 days of the student's attendance at school, the district can accept a copy of this ASQ-3 and does not need to complete a new one. The copy should be provided to the Preschool Instructional Coach for maintenance at the district office.

What is the ASQ-3?

The ASQ-3 is a set of simple, age-appropriate questionnaires that look at key areas of a child's development, including:

- Communication
- Gross motor skills (like crawling and walking)
- Fine motor skills (like grasping and drawing)
- Problem-solving
- Personal-social skills (like playing and self-help)

Why do we use it?

- Early identification: Children develop at their own pace, but early detection of any delays can lead to timely support and intervention, which is most effective when starting early.
- Partnership with families: You know your child best. The ASQ-3 is completed by both teachers and parents, allowing us to work together to understand your child's development.
- Supporting all learners: The ASQ-3 helps us tailor our teaching to meet the individual needs of each child, ensuring they are challenged and supported appropriately.

Parent Expectations

Parents are requested to fill out the questionnaire about their child's skills and behavior during the Home Visit or Roll In appointment. ASQ-3 needs to be completed prior to the first day of class. For students enrolling throughout the year, it is to be sent/completed within 45 days of enrollment. It takes only about 10–15 minutes and provides valuable insights to the teacher.

The ASQ-3 **is not a test**—it's a tool to guide learning and support. Results are shared with families and if anything raises a concern, the teacher will connect with you to discuss next steps together. Results are not used to diagnose any issues; they are used as an indicator of your child's strengths and areas where additional support may be needed. Results of the screener are not used to exclude students from programming.

Attendance Expectations

We are happy to have the opportunity to provide your child with a high quality preschool experience! While in attendance at our preschool, the following expectations have been set to help maximize the success of your child in our program:

- Attendance is important! Please get your child to school on time every day. Multiple tardies and/or absences may result in your child losing his/her space in this program.
- There is NO district provided transportation for general education preschool. Families will need to provide their own transportation to and from school.
- After five days of absences you will be contacted by the teacher.
- After 10 days, district policy is to drop your child from the program. Communication with the teacher is vital to keep your spot.
- Prompt Pick-up - Please be prompt in picking your child up on time at the end of his/her preschool day.

Parent Involvement

Parent Involvement is a very important part of a child's education. Your involvement in the classroom is both welcomed and encouraged. Below are some guidelines to ensure success of all students:

- Please notify the teacher at least one day in advance of your request to spend time in the class, unless you are a regular volunteer.
- Confidentiality is extremely important. Respect the privacy of all children by not discussing matters you may observe while in the classroom with anyone.
- Support the classroom learning environment by allowing the teacher to manage and redirect behavior. If you have concerns, please address those concerns with the teacher. Please direct your child to listen and follow the directions of the teacher at all times.
- No cell phones in the classroom. If you need to use your phone, please leave the classroom.

Curriculum

Based on the belief that children learn through play, active manipulation of their environment, life experience and communicating with peers and adults, **Creative Curriculum** is designed to facilitate children's involvement in their own learning. The program balances active and quiet play. Children work both alone and in small groups where teachers facilitate the children's interactions with each other and their environment.

Heggerty is a daily, 10-minute curriculum that helps preschool students develop phonemic awareness, a foundational skill for reading. Through a variety of engaging, interactive, and fast-paced activities, it teaches children to hear and manipulate the sounds in words, such as rhyming, blending, and segmenting. These quick lessons are a fun way to prepare your child for future literacy success.

Parents may request a review of curriculum units from their teacher that outlines the program goals for the year.

Class Schedule

Our Preschool Program for 4 year olds is Monday through Friday, 2.5 hours a day per session. Please note that Monday's schedule will vary depending on the site and due to PLC Monday (Late Start). Preschool starts one week after school begins, and it begins the same day as Kindergarten. Once school starts, the school schedule follows the regular elementary school calendar.

During that week prior to school starting, parents will be contacted by the child's teacher offering a home visit. This is an opportunity for your child to meet their teacher and a time for your teacher to get to know your child better. This is also a time for parents to fill out required paperwork.

Assessments/Observational Data

Assessment for learning is an ongoing process that arises out of the interaction between teaching and learning. The assessment goal for Federal Programs Preschool is to focus on student growth through the collection of observational data.

Collecting Observational Data can do more than simply identify students' learning needs; it can be used to assist improvements across the education system in a cycle of continuous improvement:

- Students and teachers use the data collected to determine their next teaching and learning steps for each individual child, as well as the whole group.
- Parents and families are kept informed of next plans for teaching and learning and the progress being made, emphasizing that parents play an active role in their children's learning.
- Teachers will formally collect data for placement on the developmental continuum at the beginning and end of the year. During the year, observational data is collected in an ongoing process.

Behavioral and Social/Emotional Expectations for Students

Each child walks in the door with a different learning history and understanding of what it means to be in a classroom. Although each teacher has a different approach to handling behavior in their own classroom, preschool teachers and staff recognize that it is important to ease children into this new experience by establishing behavioral expectations across all settings in the school where children learn and interact. This creates a foundation of predictability and consistency to make the learning environment a positive place for children and staff.

An important part of our preschool is Social and Emotional Learning. Each child will learn social/emotional skills such as kindness, sharing, self awareness, and self-regulation. These skills

are foundational and contribute to a child's overall academic success, as well as their success in life. The ultimate goal for preschoolers is to become good citizens by learning how to identify their feelings, what to do with them, use coping strategies and problem solving skills—all with the goal to help self-regulate and get along with others.

We believe all students can behave appropriately. Teachers do not allow disruptive behavior to stop teaching and/or interfere with other students from learning. Our goal is to help students learn to monitor and control their own behaviors. When disruptive behaviors occur that cannot be quickly corrected, the teacher follows schoolwide discipline practices.

If a child has a pattern of challenging behaviors that disrupt the classroom, a collaborative team approach will be implemented to identify interventions and supports that can be implemented. This process is called MTSS, or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. This approach includes collaboration and communication with the school's team, preschool teacher, and principal with the goal of helping the student develop and use socially appropriate skills in school.

Emergency Drills

Emergency Drills will be practiced each month at each school site. Preschoolers participate in fire, earthquake, and lock down safety procedures. In addition, personal safety lessons are taught throughout the school year. In the event of a school crisis, teachers will follow school safety procedures and the directions of the Building Principal. Preschool classrooms use the book, "I'm not scared, I'm prepared" to help in alleviating fears of drills.

Communication – Notification

Open communication with families is the best way to keep everyone informed and build positive relationships. Parent emails, messages and calls will be returned within 24 hours except over the weekend. Parents who do not feel a teacher is responding adequately should contact the building principal.

Monthly Newsletters will be sent home at the beginning of each month to keep families informed of what is happening in the classroom as well as school wide.

Playground Equipment Use

The use of playground equipment by preschool students is not permissible unless the equipment has been approved by Risk Management and/or approval by site principal. If equipment is not safe for young children, teachers will utilize large open spaces and trails for outdoor activities.

Field Trips & Special Celebrations

Field Trips

- Preschools are eligible to participate in field trips. However, financial support is the responsibility of the school site or parents.

- Transportation for field trips is not available.
- Parents need to transport and chaperone their preschooler at each event.
- Each student will require a completed parent permission slip to attend, even though they are transported and chaperoned by the parent. This is a district required slip.

Special Celebrations

Special events such as birthdays and holidays may be celebrated in class. Parents may send in special treats for their child's birthday or events. Parents, please connect with the teacher prior to sending in/dropping off treats. Please also be aware of any student allergies.

If there are any specific holidays your family does not celebrate or acknowledge, please let the teacher know as soon as possible and communicate with the teacher regarding alternatives.

Supplies & Donations

Personal Supplies to bring to school:

- Labeled Backpack
- Labeled Change of Clothes
- Labeled Water bottle

Suggested donations for classroom supplies—These items are OPTIONAL:

- Tissues
- Wipes
- Hand sanitizer/Soft Soap
- Disinfectant wipes
- Crayons
- Water colors
- Glue Sticks
- Large Pencils
- Paper Products/ Cups

Snacks

Children need fuel to stay focused. To help promote our students' physical health and development, each preschool program will provide an opportunity for children to eat a snack each day. Snacks will be eaten at the table in a family style setting for safe eating and to provide students with an opportunity to learn social skills in this setting.

Snacks for special occasions are welcome. These can be store-bought or homemade. Please check with your child's teacher about how she/he conducts snack time and/or special occasion snacks time in their classroom.

Please let your child's teacher know if your child has food allergies (including airborne). Your child's teacher will inform you of any food allergies that you need to be aware of when preparing food for the classroom or sending in snacks for your child or the class.

Parent Interview Form – Typical Questions

Please be prepared to answer these questions for the teacher

List 5 words that describe your children.

What are some of your child's favorite things to do?

What does your child do when he/she is upset? How is he/she comforted?

How often do you read with your child? What is your child's favorite book?

Please list any special likes, dislikes, or fears your child may have.

Describe how your child interacts with others.

What do you want your child to work on in Preschool?

Sample Daily Schedule

Morning Class (AM SESSION)

9:15-9:30 Arrival

9:30-10:00 Big Group

10:00-10:20 Small Group

10:20-10:35 Bathroom

10:35-10:50 Snack

10:50-11:30 Free Play

11:30-11:45 Story Time/Go Home

Afternoon Class (PM Session)

1:15-1:30 Arrival

1:30-2:00 Big Group

2:00-2:20 Small Group

2:20-2:35 Bathroom

2:35-2:50 Snack

2:50-3:30 Free Play

3:30-3:45 Story Time/Go Home

Community Partnerships

Chugiak Children's Services (CCS)

The MSBSD partners with CCS/Head Start Wasilla, to provide families with limited income opportunities for full day Preschool. Please contact CCS/Head Start in Wasilla to find out if you qualify.

EARLY LEARNING	CONTACT US
 Children enrolled in CCS enjoy a learning environment of the highest quality, staffed by qualified early childhood educators. All our programs are licensed by the state or municipality. Our primary goals are to promote children's social skills and school readiness. • Classroom experiences include literacy development, early math and science exploration, creative arts, and physical health and development. • Nutrition program provides healthy meals in accordance with the USDA food program. • Developmental and health screenings, with medical resources and referrals as needed. • Variety of outdoor play opportunities and field trips for children enrolled in Head Start. • Regular opportunities to meet with the teachers at the center or at home to discuss your child's progress. OUR MISSION: Making a difference in the lives and families of young children within our communities.	ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE 2060 E Industrial Dr. Wasilla, AK 99654 Tel: (907) 373-7000 Fax: (907) 373-7020 Web: www.ccsalaska.org E-mail: admin@ccsalaska.org <u>HEAD START (AGES 3-5):</u> CHUGIAK CENTER 16430 Old Glenn Highway Chugiak, AK 99567 Tel: (907) 688-2660 Fax: (907) 688-1309 MEADOW LAKES CENTER 7362 W Parks Highway #752 Wasilla, AK 99623 Tel: (907) 373-7165 Fax: (907) 373-7300 PALMER CENTER 905 W Auklet Avenue Palmer, AK 99645 Tel: (907) 746-4483 Fax: (907) 746-5183 WASILLA CENTER 2100 East Foundry Way Wasilla, AK 99654 Tel: (907) 373-7795 Fax: (907) 373-0752 <u>EARLY HEAD START (AGES 0-3):</u> PALMER CENTER 905 W Auklet Avenue Palmer, AK 99645 Tel: (907) 746-4483 Fax: (907) 746-5183 WASILLA CENTER 2060 East Foundry Way, Unit A Wasilla, AK 99654 Tel: (907) 373-7736 Fax: (907) 373-7756 This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Section 504 Coordinator, at (907) 373-7000 or RELAYAlaska 1-800-770-TYPE or 1-800-770-TALK. For further information about this policy, contact Tabatha Peterson.

2021-2022



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BIRTH TO 5 YEARS**

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Families In Transition (FIT)

Children experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible to attend the MSBSD Federal Programs preschool programs funded under Title I. Children experiencing homelessness have the right to receive transportation to preschool (even if preschool transportation is not typically provided). This transportation continues for as long as the child is homeless, and until the end of the academic year in which the child moves into permanent housing.

Possible Services & Supports

Families In Transition (FIT) can assist students in removing barriers to their education Possible services may include:

- Free Lunch

- Clothing Voucher
- Winter Gear
- Backpacks
- School Supplies
- Water Bottle
- Tutoring
- FAFSA Assistance
- Transportation to School of Origin
- Field Trip Assistance
- Sports Fees
- Shoes

For more information, contact the Families In Transition Coordinator:

<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org>