Cougar Jumpstart Handbook

2025-2026



4-Year-Old Preschool

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Cougar Jumpstart PURPOSE
The purpose of the Cougar Jumpstart program is to prepare children for success as they enter Kindergarten in the following year. The Cougar Jumpstart staff supports parents in their mission to prepare their preschool children for school. We strive to provide a caring environment for children and families, utilizing current early childhood materials and other resources available in our communities. It is our philosophy to provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences for children that enhance their social/emotional, intellectual, language, and physical growth. Our ultimate goal for Cougar Jumpstart is to prepare your child for the transition to kindergarten with enthusiasm and readiness to learn that will follow them throughout their school years.

CM Cougar Jumpstart is a Four-Star Parent Aware-rated program, as recognized by the MN Department of Education.

We follow best practices to help your child reach their fullest potential!

VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN (VPK)
Cedar Mountain is a VPK site for the 2025-26 school year. This is wonderful and exciting news for our program as they are high-quality, publicly funded prekindergarten programs designed to prepare eligible 4-year-old children for success as they enter kindergarten the following year. With Cedar Mountain being a VPK site, there will be no cost of tuition or fee for transportation for the 2025-26 school year, depending on eligibility. This program is for all children who are four by September 1st.

The following is program information from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

Voluntary Prekindergarten Eligibility Program Requirements

- Eligible children must be four years old by September 1 and meet specific criteria, such as qualifying for free/reduced meals or being an English language learner.
- Health developmental screening must be completed within 90 days of enrollment, along with required immunizations.
- Schools must adopt a sliding-fee schedule based on family income and cannot exclude children with individualized education programs if accommodations allow participation.

Program Requirements

- Instruction must be play-based, focusing on social-emotional, cognitive, and language development.

- Each child's progress must be assessed using approved tools at entry and exit.
- Programs must align with state early learning standards and provide at least 350 hours of instruction per year.
- Parent engagement and coordination with community services are essential for comprehensive support.
- Maintain a staff-to-child ratio of 1:10 and a maximum group size of 20.
- Professional development for staff must be high-quality and aligned with early childhood education standards.
- Documentation of student information must be maintained for at least three years for audit purposes.
- Mixed delivery programs must operate within school district boundaries and meet developmentally appropriate service requirements.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Language Development

- To enhance communication skills with others
- To expand vocabulary and expression
- To develop verbal skills that enable problem-solving
- To learn listening skills
- To share ideas and ask questions
- To gain exposure to quality children's literature
- To retell stories after hearing them
- To increase memory skills

Social/Emotional Development

- To develop a positive self-esteem
- To willingly follow directions
- Become familiar with responsible behavior
- To promote and increase independent traits
- To increase self-control
- To use appropriate manners
- To encourage curiosity
- To discover new concepts and ideas
- To share with others
- To respect others
- To participate as part of a group

Cognitive Development

- To learn about concepts related to self, others, and the world
- To learn about math, science, social studies, health, etc. by involvement with hands on activities such as: building with blocks, measuring sand and water, observing changes in the environment, sorting and classifying objects, exploring nature, sing and listen to a variety of music, use a variety of mediums such as paint, colors, play dough etc.

Physical Development

- To use large muscles by running, jumping, and balancing
- To develop small muscles through play activities such as pegboards, puzzles, painting, and cutting

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Child must be 4 by September 1 of the current year
- Immunizations up to date
- 1 year out from Kindergarten

CLASS TIMES/SCHEDULES
Families will choose the option that best suits their needs, based on the availability of openings in each section.

Cougar Jumpstart - option 1
- Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
- 8:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Cougar Jumpstart - option 2
- Tuesdays & Thursdays
- 8:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.

School runs from September to May. The Cougar Jumpstart calendar follows the school calendar closely. Please follow the Cougar Jumpstart calendar for important dates throughout the school year.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT
We encourage parents to become involved by doing some of the following activities.
- Attend ECFE (and the parent education session) evening classes.
- Read a parenting book
- Attend an ECFE activity night
- Be a guest speaker at an ECFE parent session
- Share a special talent in the ECFE or School Readiness classroom
- Listen to a parenting speaker outside of the school
- Volunteer to help on field trips and special events
- Attend parent/teacher conferences
- Attend kindergarten connection (in the spring)
- Read to your child
- Help another family with transportation to and from school

FEE AND POLICIES FOR PAYMENT

<u>If a child qualifies for VPK, there is no cost.</u>

- Non-Refundable Registration Fee $25 (due when registration form is returned)
- Cougar Jumpstart M/W/F $240 per month
- Cougar Jumpstart T/TH $160 per month
- Transportation to local daycares $25 per month

Bills will be mailed out monthly for payment of tuition.

Arrival/Dismissal
If your child does not ride the bus, please time his/her arrival around 8:10. Classes begin at 8:30 a.m., and although teachers arrive earlier, they are not supervising the playground or hallways. Their time is spent in staff meetings, conferences with parents, and lesson preparations. Breakfast is served beginning at 7:50 and will be eaten in the cafeteria.
Please do not send children to either school building prior to 7:45, as there is no supervision for them.

TRANSPORTATION
Students are able to use the following transportation to get to and from Cougar Jumpstart.

Shuttle Bus
Students are able to ride the shuttle bus from Morgan to Franklin in the morning. The shuttle

leaves Morgan from the main office at 7:50 a.m. Students are able to ride the shuttle bus from Franklin to Morgan at the end of the day, returning to Morgan approximately 3:25 p.m. There will be a paraprofessional who rides on the shuttle bus when staffing is available.

Route Bus

Students are able to ride the route bus. The route bus transports students who live outside of the towns of Morgan and Franklin. Route bus services are also available for the following towns: Morton, Fairfax, Lower Sioux, and Redwood Falls. If you are in need of the route bus, contact the Cedar Mountain Bus Company at (507) 249-3136.

Van

Van service is available to daycares within the city limits of Morgan and Franklin. Due to time constraints and the availability of seats, this form of transportation may become full. If we do provide van transportation, we ask that you specify **ONE LOCATION** for pick up and drop off. There will be a paraprofessional who rides in the van. Families will be notified of pick-up and drop-off times. Van will honk upon arrival and wait three minutes for students to board. The van driver must see an adult upon arrival and when dropping off at the location. **The cost of this transportation is $25 per month.**

If there are any questions or changes with your transportation plan (example: your child is ill and won't be at daycare, etc.), please notify your child's teacher. **You are not responsible for contacting the bus company.**

ABSENCES

Parents are asked to call (507) 557-2251, email, or send a SeeSaw message to the school teacher if their child will not be in school for any reason.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Our school nurse will gather this information from a database. You will be contacted if there are any questions.

ENROLLMENT AND EMERGENCY FORMS

Please fill out forms completely and give them to your child's teacher **prior** to school starting.

PRE-SCHOOL SCREENING

All children in VPK need to have completed Early Childhood Screening within 90 calendar days of enrollment. The purpose of the screening is to alert parents to any health or developmental concerns a full year and a half before the child enters kindergarten. Given early attention, many health and development problems can be resolved before a child starts school. At the screening, a volunteer guides each child through play activities designed to determine physical coordination, speech, and learning development. State law requires each incoming kindergarten student to have been screened before entering kindergarten.

- Pre-School Screening will be on October 6 and October 7. More information will come from the Cougar Jumpstart teacher closer to the date.

SNACK TIME

Part of your child's experience when they come to Cougar Jumpstart will be having a snack. Snack provides time for your child to socialize with their new friends, as well as giving their bodies a small

nutritious boost. Milk will be served at each snack. **If your child has any food allergies, please notify your child's teacher**.

PEANUT SAFE SCHOOL
Because of severe allergic reactions, Cedar Mountain Elementary has been designated a peanut-safe school. We ask that you do not send any peanuts, tree nuts, peanut butter, or products containing peanut butter to school. When packing your child's snack or school lunch, please take this into consideration. Please especially read the ingredients in granola/breakfast bars carefully. If the ingredients label says "items may contain trace amounts of peanuts" or "item was made on a peanut line," it **is** safe to bring to school.

Rest Time
We will have a daily rest time during Cougar Jumpstart days. This will give students the opportunity to have a break in their day. Students are required to bring their own rest towel.

BACKPACKS
Backpacks must be standard size so art projects, papers, etc. will fit inside. Please no wheels on school bags, cinch sacks, or small-sized backpacks.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES
These are the supplies needed for Cougar Jumpstart

- 1 plastic pencil box
- 6 glue sticks
- 1 regular-sized Kleenex Box
- 1-2 containers of Clorox Wipes
- 2 packs of 24-count crayons
- 1 small glue bottle
- 1 child-sized scissors
- Pair of inside shoes
- 1 towel for rest time
- 1 regular-sized backpack

ILLNESS
For the protection of all children, a child who has any of the following symptoms will not be allowed to attend class:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or over
- Unexplained rash
- Diarrhea or vomiting (24 hours prior to drop-off time)
- Skin sores that are open or draining material (impetigo, scabies, ringworm, pink eye, or chicken pox, etc.)
- Streptococcal throat infection (24 hours after antibiotics are started)
- Any contagious disease (pinworms, viral infections, head lice, mumps, scarlet fever, etc. for the length of time specified by a physician)

Please keep students home 24 hours after they last vomited, had diarrhea, or started antibiotics. If a student has a fever of 100.5 degrees or greater, they will be sent home. They can return to school 24 hours after their temperature returns to normal and when ill symptoms no longer exist. If your child

has any health concerns, such as allergies, diabetes, asthma, or any other specific diagnosis, be sure that the school staff and nurse are aware of this condition.

If a child becomes ill during the day, the parent will be contacted to take the child home immediately. If the parent cannot pick up the child or the parent cannot be reached, the emergency person will be contacted.

For more minor mishaps (scrapes and bruises), staff will apply the appropriate first aid, and communication will take place with a parent/guardian. In the case of an emergency, every effort will be made to contact the parents or the listed emergency contact persons. When this is not possible, or expediency is of the utmost importance, 911 will be called.

If your child will be absent, please contact your child's teacher prior to class time.

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE
Children will be expected to follow certain rules regarding safety and to behave in a socially acceptable manner. If their behavior warrants correction, it will be given through verbal guidance. If further guidance is needed, a time-out will be used. Parents will be contacted for guidance in discipline methods used at home if time-outs are not effective.

CONFERENCES
Parent-teacher conferences will be held twice a year. Notices regarding these will be sent home with the children. Parents will have the opportunity to discuss their children's social and academic development with the classroom teacher.

COMMUNICATION
SeeSaw will be the primary source of communication. Important notes, calendar changes, etc., may also be sent home. Please check your child's backpack every school day.

CLOTHING
Your child should wear comfortable clothing that is suitable for active play. Your child should be ready for school with tennis shoes. If they are not wearing them that day, please send them in their backpack. This includes during winter, when snow boots are worn to school

There are times when your child may need a new set of clothes to wear due to spills and accidents, we have extra clothes in school for your child to change into but If you'd rather send an extra set of clothes to leave in their backpack, you may do so by putting them in a large Ziploc bag and labeling it with your child's name.

If your child borrows clothing from school, please wash the items and return them to school ASAP.

We recommend you label all clothing with your child's name (coat, hat, sweatshirts, backpack, etc.).

COLLABORATION
Collaboration between Early Childhood Special Education services and our Cougar Jumpstart program will occur. Blending children with a variety of developmental strengths and needs provides a unique educational experience for your child. We hope this opportunity will increase your child's knowledge, tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of our world and all it has to offer.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS
Announcements of cancellations are made on KLGR and WCCO radio/TV and through the **Parent Portal of Infinite Campus** alert system**.**

LATE START ----------Cougar Jumpstart will begin at the designated time announced
EARLY CLOSING-------Students will follow early out end-of-day dismissal procedures
NO SCHOOL----------No Cougar Jumpstart

INFINITE CAMPUS PARENT PORTAL
Cedar Mountain Schools will be utilizing the messenger system that is built into Infinite Campus for our automated messaging.

To receive messages from Cedar Mountain, we request that all Parents/Guardians use the Infinite Campus Parent Portal to ensure their contact information is up to date. **Failure to have updated or correct information in the system will cause you to miss important messages.** *(Example: School cancellation due to snow messages)*

How to check and update contact information:

1. Log in to the Parent Portal
2. On the left menu, click "**Household Information**"
3. From the Household Information page, you can verify the household phone number, as well as the household address. To update any of the information, click the "**Update**" button next to the information you would like to update.
4. You can also click on "**Family Members**" from the left menu to update or add phone numbers and email addresses for each member of the household.

Please contact the office if you don't have access to the Parent Portal.
As a district, Cedar Mountain has made a commitment to utilizing Infinite Campus as a tool for parents and students to receive information regarding grades, attendance, lunch account balances, fees owed and general school information. Infinite Campus also has the capabilities for families to pay fees and balances online. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the parent portal and contact the school office if you need further assistance.

CEDAR MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY HANDBOOK
Cougar Kids also follows the expectations and policies found in the Cedar Mountain Elementary Handbook. This document can be found on the school website.

PARENT OPPORTUNITIES
Early Childhood Advisory Board – An Advisory Board that is made up of parents. This group meets throughout the year and assists the Early Childhood Staff in enhancing the Early Childhood Programs in our district. If you are interested in being on this board, please talk to your child's teacher. The first meeting will be on October 20, 2025.



"Like" Cedar Mountain Schools Facebook Page. You will be able to find good information here as well as updates, pictures, special events, etc...

Updated August 2025

Letter given to all Cougar Jumpstart parents/guardians at Open House.

Dear Current and Prospective Voluntary Prekindergarten Families,

Cedar Mountain is a VPK site for the 2025-26 school year. With Cedar Mountain being a VPK site, there will be no cost of tuition or fee for transportation for the 2025-26 school year, depending on a family's eligibility.

Children are eligible for VPK funding (no cost) if they are four years of age as of September 1 in the calendar year in which the school year begins and if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Qualify for educational benefits (Free/Reduced)
- Qualify using state general financial eligibility requirements (WIC/SNAP/CCAP/FDPIR/MFIP)
- Is an English Language Learner
- Is an American Indian
- Has experienced homelessness in the last 24 months
- Is identified through health and developmental screening with a potential risk factor that may influence learning (any rescreen or referral at Early Childhood Screening)
- Is in foster care, kinship care, or in the care of child protective services
- Has a parent who is a migrant or seasonal agricultural laborer
- Has a parent who is/has been incarcerated
- Is defined as at-risk by the school district
    - On an IEP or referred/evaluated for special education services from 0-5 years of age
    - Chronic mental and/or physical illness of child/adult/sibling
    - Parent had a loss/change in job status in the last 12 months
    - Death of a family member or friend in the last 24 months
    - Birth of a sibling in the last 12 months
    - Sibling receiving special education services
    - A separation or divorce in the last 24 months
    - Chemical dependency issues
    - Child of a teen parent
    - Parent has no high school diploma or GED
    - Child of a single parent
    - Child lives in a multigenerational and/or blended household

Cedar Mountain Public Schools encourages families interested in our preschool program to complete all required forms, even if you think your child will not qualify. If your child does not meet the new program eligibility requirements, they may still be enrolled in VPK with a parent fee of $240 per month for the Monday/Wednesday/Friday class or $160 per month fee for the Tuesday/Thursday class.

To learn more about our pre-kindergarten program, including information on how to enroll a child, please contact Rachel Krenz at rkrenz@cedarmt.org.