

Jackson County School System Pre-Kindergarten Handbook



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Jackson County School System

1660 Winder Highway
Jefferson, GA 30549
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www.jacksonschools.ga.org

The Jackson County School System is excited to partner with you as your child begins their Pre-K journey and discovers the joy of learning. Our goal is to provide a safe, engaging, challenging, and fun learning environment where every child can grow and thrive.

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Dear Pre-K Parents and Guardians,

Welcome! We are excited to partner with you as your child begins their Pre-K journey and discovers the joy of learning. It is a privilege to play a role in your child's growth and development, and we are committed to making each day a positive, engaging, and meaningful learning experience. Thank you for entrusting us with such an important part of your child's education. Together, we look forward to an exciting and rewarding year.

Our goal is to provide a learning environment that is safe, engaging, challenging, and fun. This handbook is designed to familiarize you with our Pre-K program, including our policies, procedures, and expectations. We hope you will find it to be a helpful resource throughout the school year. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher or school administrator.

Thank you again for allowing us to be part of these important early years in your child's education. We look forward to partnering with your family and making this a wonderful and successful year for your child.

Sincerely,

Resa Brooksher

Pre-K Director



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Pre-K Policy

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) requires children enrolled in Georgia's lottery-funded Pre-K program to attend school for a minimum of 180 full instructional days (6.5 hours per day), or the equivalent of 1,170 instructional hours each year.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is designed to prepare children for success in kindergarten by providing high-quality, child-centered, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that support the growth of the whole child.

Parent Orientation

Jackson County School System Pre-K classes hold a Parent Orientation each August. This orientation is required for all parents and guardians and is held within the first 20 days of school.

During Parent Orientation, families will receive important information about our curriculum, student assessments, parent engagement opportunities, the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), and other details about our Pre-K program. We encourage all families to attend, as this meeting helps ensure a successful start to the school year.

Dress Code

Pre-K Student Attire

Students should wear clothing that is comfortable, weather-appropriate, and suitable for active learning. We recommend T-shirts or other comfortable tops, shorts or pants, and closed-toe tennis shoes.

Comfortable clothing and shoes help children participate safely in playground activities, classroom learning, bathroom routines, and other daily activities while



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encouraging independence throughout the school day.

Attendance:

Parents of the children who were selected for JCSS Pre-K Program commit to sending their children to school for the complete 6.5 hour day, 180 days per year. Children who are late, leave early, or are absent for 10 consecutive days without a medical or other reasonable excuse may face disenrollment.

We appreciate your ongoing partnership in supporting your child's education. As educators and caregivers, we share a common goal: helping students grow, thrive, and reach their full potential. One important factor in achieving that success is consistent school attendance. When students are present and engaged each day, they benefit from the full range of classroom instruction, discussions, and activities that build knowledge and confidence over time. Every school day is a valuable opportunity for learning, and even small amounts of missed time through absences, tardies, or early checkouts can add up and impact progress.

Excused absences are those permitted by Georgia law, State Board of Education policy, and Jackson County Board of Education policy. Students may be excused for the following reasons:

- Personal illness or attendance in school endangering the student's health or the health of others
- Serious illness or death in the student's immediate family
- Court orders or orders by government agencies
- Observance of religious holidays
- Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to the student's health or safety
- Scheduled medical, dental, or eye appointments
- Registering to vote or voting, not to exceed one day
- Visits, up to five school days per year, with a parent or legal guardian who is on leave from or being deployed to military service



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- One excused day per school year for the treatment of head lice

Parents/guardians may submit written notes excusing up to five (5) absences per school year without additional documentation for any of the reasons listed above.

Notes must be submitted promptly and within five school days of the student's return to school.

Parents or guardians must provide valid medical documentation for absences when required. Please be advised that submitting false or altered medical documentation is a serious offense. Falsifying a doctor's excuse may constitute a violation of state law and may be referred to the appropriate authorities. The school system reserves the right to verify medical documentation submitted for student absences.

The Jackson County School System Pre-K Program follows a graduated attendance intervention process focused on prevention, family engagement, early identification, and support. Our goal is to work collaboratively with families to identify barriers to attendance and provide interventions and resources. Attendance intervention steps may include:

- Notification by phone after 3 unexcused absences
- Letter sent to parent/guardian after 5 unexcused absences
- Attendance meeting after 6 unexcused absences
- Referral to Ga Pre-K after 10 unexcused absences

The following guidance will apply to unexcused tardies and/or early dismissals:

- The school will send a letter to the parent/guardian notifying them of the student's tardy and/or early dismissal record after the student accumulates 10 unexcused tardies and/or early dismissals.
- When a student reaches 15 unexcused tardies and/or early dismissals, the parent/guardian will be referred to the System Pre-K Director. A parent conference will be scheduled to review the student's tardy and/or early dismissal record and determine the reason(s) for the excessive tardiness or early dismissals. An intervention plan will be developed to address the



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problem. If the issue continues despite documented interventions, the student may be referred to Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning using the Chronic Tardiness Report for consideration of disenrollment.

The Jackson County School System is committed to partnering with families to support student attendance, academic success, and overall well-being. Thank you for your continued support and cooperation.

Illness

Children learn best when they are healthy and feeling their best. If your child has a fever of 100.4°F or higher, is vomiting, has diarrhea, or is experiencing other flu-like symptoms, such as chills or body aches, please keep them at home to rest and recover.

To help keep all students healthy, children must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning to school.

Georgia's Pre-K Assessment

Georgia's Pre-K Program uses a statewide assessment called the Work Sampling System (WSS) to monitor each child's growth and development throughout the school year.

Rather than using paper-and-pencil tests, teachers observe children as they participate in everyday classroom activities, routines, and play. Throughout the year, teachers collect observations and examples of each child's work to document progress over time.

Using this information, teachers complete a Developmental Checklist that measures children's progress in seven areas of learning:

- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science



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- Social Studies
- Social and Emotional Development
- Health and Physical Development
- The Arts

These areas are aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), which guide instruction in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms and support children's readiness for kindergarten.

The information gathered through the Work Sampling System helps teachers plan instruction that meets each child's individual needs and documents their progress throughout the year. Families will receive updates on their child's development through a Narrative Summary Report, which teachers will review and share with parents.

Family Involvement

Families are an important part of a child's success in Pre-K. We encourage parents and guardians to be actively involved in their child's learning whenever possible.

Research shows that children are more successful in school when families are engaged in their education. We welcome opportunities for families to participate in classroom activities, special events, and other school experiences throughout the year.

Volunteering in the classroom is encouraged when opportunities are available. It provides valuable support for students and teachers while giving families a chance to see their child's learning and development firsthand.

Pre-K Standards

The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) are high-quality learning standards designed for children from birth through age five. These standards provide guidance for instruction in all Georgia Pre-K classrooms and are based on current educational research.

GELDS outline the knowledge, skills, and behaviors children should develop before



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entering kindergarten. Teachers use these standards to guide classroom instruction, plan developmentally appropriate learning experiences, and assess each child's growth and progress.

By using GELDS, Pre-K teachers provide meaningful learning opportunities that support children's development and help prepare them for success in kindergarten.

Pre-K Curriculum

Jackson County School System Pre-K classrooms use Benchmark Ready to Advance Early Learning, a comprehensive curriculum designed to support the growth and development of the whole child. Through engaging, age-appropriate activities, the curriculum promotes children's social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development.

Ready to Advance includes 10 units built around connected topics and concepts that combine social-emotional learning with important academic skills. The curriculum is based on research about how young children learn and recognizes that each child brings unique experiences, strengths, and needs to the classroom.

The curriculum helps children develop skills that support kindergarten readiness, including concepts about print, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and early reading strategies. Teachers support early literacy development through:

- Big books and thematic units that introduce children to engaging stories, printed text, and the reading process.
- Student books that help children build vocabulary and practice early reading skills.
- Reader's Theater activities that encourage children to explore language, communication, and the world around them in a fun and interactive way.

Through Ready to Advance, teachers provide meaningful learning experiences that encourage curiosity, confidence, and a strong foundation for future success.



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Family – Teacher Conferences

At least two parent-teacher conferences will be offered to families during the school year. These conferences provide an opportunity for families and teachers to work together to support each child's growth and development.

During the conference, teachers will share the Georgia Pre-K Progress Report, which provides information about your child's progress in the following areas:

- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Science
- Social and Emotional Development
- Health and Physical Development
- Creative Expression
- Approaches to Play and Learning
- Cognitive Processes

Teachers will also share suggestions and ideas for ways families can support and extend learning experiences at home.

Parent-teacher conferences are typically held in person. If a family or teacher is unable to meet in person, the conference may be held through a web-based platform or by phone. If a conference cannot be scheduled, the Narrative Summary Report will be provided to families electronically or mailed home.

For Narrative Summary Reports shared electronically or by mail, a parent signature is not required. Teachers will document the date the report was provided and the method of delivery (electronically or by mail).

School Nutrition and Meal Prices

The School Nutrition Program provides nutritious breakfast and lunch to students each school day. Meals are planned to meet at least two-thirds of the recommended daily dietary allowances and include a variety of nutritious options. Daily lunch choices include protein-rich entrées, vegetables, fruit, enriched or whole-grain breads and cereals, and fat-free or low-fat milk.



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The School Nutrition Program is an extension of the educational process of the school district. The program maintains compliance with the federally funded National School Lunch Act, the Georgia Department of Education, and the Jackson County Board of Education.

Sources of funding include payments from students and adults, federal reimbursement for student meals, state funds, and food provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Full-Price Meal Costs for the 2026-27 School Year:

- Elementary School Breakfast: \$1.75
- Elementary School Lunch: \$2.50
- Adult Breakfast: \$3.25
- Adult Lunch: \$5.25

Parents and guardians are welcome to enjoy meals with their children at the adult meal prices listed above.

During the 2026-27 school year, households which have qualified for Free or Reduced Meals will not be required to pay the reduced price of \$0.30 for breakfast, nor the \$0.40 for lunch, due to the Georgia Department of Education funding being utilized to cover these costs.

WHO CAN GET FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS?

- All children in households receiving benefits from SNAP or TANF are eligible for free meals.
- Foster children who are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals.
- Children participating in their school's Head Start program are eligible for free meals.
- Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals.



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- Children may receive free or reduced-price meals if their household's income is within the limits of the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines.
- Children receiving Medicaid may be eligible for free or reduced priced meals.
- Parents may apply for free and reduced meals at ANY POINT throughout the school year.

To apply for free and reduced meals, parents can log into [Linq Connect](#). Paper applications will also be sent out on the first day of school.

APPLY FOR FREE & REDUCED MEALS. CLICK HERE!

Please note, there are multiple Jackson County School Systems throughout the nation. Please ensure you select the Jackson County School System located in Jefferson, Ga.

Reading with Your Child

Reading aloud to your child is one of the most important ways to build the skills and knowledge needed for future reading success. Sharing a variety of books helps children discover new ideas, build vocabulary, develop language skills, and explore their interests.

Make reading a special time to connect with your child by asking questions, talking about the pictures, and encouraging your child to share their thoughts and ideas. Your local library is a wonderful resource for finding new books to enjoy together.

A complete listing of recommended children's books can be found on the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning website: www.decal.ga.gov

Below are examples of different types of books that support early literacy development:

Alphabet Books

Alphabet books help children learn letters and connect letters with their beginning sounds.



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- *Dr. Seuss's ABC* — Dr. Seuss
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* — Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
- *Eating the Alphabet* — Lois Ehlert

Counting Books

Counting books help children practice counting skills and connect numbers with quantities.

- *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed* — Eileen Christelow
- *Anno's Counting Book* — Mitsumasa Anno

Concept and Informational Books

These books introduce concepts children explore in school, such as colors, shapes, opposites, sizes, and information about the world around them.

- *Red, Blue, Yellow Shoe* — Tana Hoban
- *Boats* — Anne Rockwell

Poetry and Rhyming Books

Rhyming books help children develop listening skills and recognize sounds in words, which are important foundations for learning to read.

- *Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* — Jack Prelutsky
- *Hickory Dickory Dock and Other Nursery Rhymes* — Carl Jones
- *Over in the Meadow* — Ezra Jack Keats

Predictable and Repetitive Books

These books include repeated words or phrases that help children recognize patterns and participate in reading.

- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* — Bill Martin Jr.
- *Are You My Mother?* — P.D. Eastman

Picture Books and Wordless Books

Picture books help children understand stories and explore different types of



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literature. Wordless books encourage children to use pictures to create their own stories and develop language skills.

- *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* — Laura Numeroff
- *The Snowy Day* — Ezra Jack Keats
- *The Mitten* — Jan Brett
- *Good Dog, Carl* — Alexandra Day
- *School* — E. McCauly

Enjoying books together every day helps children develop a love of reading and builds a strong foundation for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Supporting Positive Behavior at Home

Four-year-olds are learning how to manage their emotions, solve problems, follow directions, and interact positively with others. Families play an important role in helping children develop these skills. Consistent expectations, encouragement, and positive guidance help children feel safe and confident as they learn appropriate behaviors.

Here are some strategies that can support positive behavior at home:

- Set clear and simple expectations. Let your child know what behaviors are expected using language they can understand.
- Be consistent. Children benefit from knowing that expectations and consequences remain the same each day.
- Offer choices. Providing two acceptable choices helps children develop independence and feel a sense of control.
- Use positive language. Tell children what they can do instead of only focusing on what they should not do. For example, say "Please use walking feet" instead of "Don't run."
- Praise positive behaviors. Recognize your child when they make good choices, show kindness, follow directions, or try something new.
- Teach and model problem-solving. Help your child name their feelings and practice ways to handle frustration, disappointment, or conflict.



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- Use routines. Consistent daily routines help children know what to expect and make transitions easier.
- Allow natural consequences when appropriate. Help your child understand how choices affect themselves and others.
- Stay calm. Children learn from the adults around them. Remaining calm helps children learn how to manage their own emotions.

Remember that learning appropriate behavior takes time. Young children are still developing self-control and emotional regulation. With patience, consistency, and support, families can help children build the skills they need for success in school and in life.