



# Preschool Program Family Handbook



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# Providence Schools Preschool Programs

## Program Descriptions

The Providence Public School District (PPSD) provides education to children who live in the city of Providence and are **3 to 5 years** of age. Our district offers the following free early childhood education opportunities:

**State Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Classroom** which accommodates children who are 4 years old by September 1st.

**Itinerant Early Childhood Special Education Services** are services where special educators go into the community to support area preschools in accommodating the needs of students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and their families.

**Integrated Preschool Classrooms** are integrated preschool classrooms designed primarily for preschool children with disabilities to have an opportunity to be integrated with children that do not have Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). The maximum class size is no more than 15 students, with less than 50% of the children identified with a disability.

**Intensive Services** are provided for children having disabilities and who have been identified needing such services by the IEP team.

## Program Locations and Classrooms

[See the PPSD website.](#)

## Program Philosophy

All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance [equity](#). They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the early learning settings in which they work and when they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities. Daily activities are aligned with the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS) while incorporating accommodations to ensure developmental gains for all children ([www.rields.com](http://www.rields.com)). Family Engagement is valued as our relationships with our families play an integral part of a child's school success. Student growth is documented daily through multiple assessment strategies. Effective assessment practices lead to improved knowledge about children and translates into highly effective instruction.

We have adopted the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) commitment to children as a cornerstone of our philosophy:

- Appreciating childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle.
- Basing our work with children on knowledge of child development and learning.
- Appreciating and supporting the close ties between the child and family.
- Recognizing that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society.

- Respecting the dignity, worth and uniqueness of each individual.

Key features that influence our planning:

- Deep respect for the potential of all young children.
- Communication and collaboration among the three partners of education: children, parents, and educators.
- Amiable, rich environments that are engaging, welcoming, organized, aesthetically pleasing, and supportive of the work of children and educators.
- Voices of children, parents, and educators made visible through various forms of documentation.
- Relationships and interactions considered essential for the wellbeing and learning of children and adults.
- Children and educators constructing knowledge together through exploration and problem solving.
- Children's homes, culture, and language are valued by the community of learners and are reflected throughout all components of the program

## Classroom Environment and Curriculum Practices

**Environment:** The programs' classrooms have learning areas or "centers" set-up in the classroom with a variety of play-based materials. These centers and materials are designed to promote various learning and development in all areas of the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS). Our teachers and staff provide a positive, relationship building, climate where play is the vehicle to learn in a developmentally appropriate way for children of this age.

**Supervision and Staff Ratios** All classrooms have state certified, early childhood educators, and adhere to all required RIDE Adult:Child ratios for State Pre-K classrooms and for classrooms having identified students

with special needs. Individual Education Program Teams also consider identified needs when making appropriate service delivery decisions.

**Classroom Curriculum:** The Rhode Island Early Learning Development Standards (RIELDS), student learning profiles and ongoing assessment practices drive the classroom curriculum and instruction. All approved curricula are aligned with the RIELDS to ensure that all children develop skills in social and emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, physical health and motor, mathematics, science, social study, and the creative art areas.

### **Culturally Responsive and Anti-Racist Early Childhood Practices**

We believe that successful teachers learn about their students' histories, cultures, languages, background knowledge, and experiences (Adair, Tobin, & Arzubiaga, 2012; Souto-Manning, 2010, 2013; Volk & Long, 2005). Our early childhood teachers will have ongoing professional development opportunities that are steeped in [PPSD's culturally responsive framework](#). Culturally responsive educators (Gay, 1995) develop pedagogical practices that serve to counter structural and educational inequities that marginalized groups experience in schools. Culturally responsive models of education focus on developing culturally competent teachers who have positive racial identities that inform their ability to take up racial literacy practices to support diverse learners. Individuals with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds can be advocates and provide crucial support for diverse young children and families.

**Child Assessment Practices** - Child assessment practices include both standardized norm and standardized criterion referenced tools. Teachers use ongoing, formative assessments such as child observations, developmental checklists, and work samples that help teachers drive and differentiate instruction.

**Child Outreach Screening:** All 3-5 year olds who do not have IEP's should be screened annually. Providence public school screeners will come to all PreK classrooms to screen children who do not have an IEP with parental permission.

**IEP Reviews:** All Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) are required to be reviewed within one year of initiation, however, any team member, including parents, can request an IEP meeting at any time during that school year to discuss any part of that Program.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Eligibility, Enrollment Procedures and Requirements**

**A lottery** which randomly selects preschool students for the State Pre-K and integrated classrooms is held annually. Application details will be available on the Providence Public School District website.

**The State Pre-K applicants** register online through the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) website. State Pre-K applicants must be committed to having their child keep a consistent attendance. If a child is absent from the program for 20 days or more within the school year, the spot will be forfeited and filled by another State Pre-K wait-listed student.

**The Integrated Classroom applicants** register through our Child Outreach office. Please have all 3, 4, and 5 year olds screened. You may call Child Outreach at 401-278-0517 for further information.

**A Wait List** is maintained and is used as enrollment changes in each classroom.

A current **physical health examination** and **immunization records** are required in order for your child to attend any district program.

#### **Physical Examination**

A copy of your child's physical health examination is required of all students upon school entry. Please have your family health care provider complete the School Physical Form and return it to the school nurse-teacher at the school of attendance..

#### **Immunization Requirements**

The immunization regulations of the Rhode Island State Department of Health in accordance with the provisions of Title 16 of the General Laws of Rhode Island shall prevail. In cases of non-compliance, parents/guardians will be notified in writing that their child will be excluded from school until they provide proof of appropriate immunization. **No child shall be enrolled registered without proof of immunization prior to the 1st day of school.**

## **Health, Safety and Nutrition**

### **COVID-19 Reopening UPDATES**

- Please refer to the [family guidebook](#) and [health and safety guidance](#) on our [Reopening Strong](#) website for details around preparing your PreK student for return to school.
- [Here](#) is the PreK guidance that building leaders and educators will be using to ensure our PreK Students are ready to go on Day 1.

### **\*All processes below are still in effect**

#### **Illnesses**

Children with the following symptoms should not be sent to school.

**Fever:** A temperature of 101 or greater (children must be fever free for 24 hours without medication before returning to school)

**Diarrhea:** (3) or more watery stools in a 24 hour period

**Vomiting:** Vomiting on 2 or more occasions within the last 24 hour period

**Rash:** Body rashes, not obviously associated with diapering, heat, or allergic reaction to medications

**Strep throat:** That has not been treated or at least 24 hours

**Severe coughing:** Episodes of coughing which may lead to repeated gagging, vomiting, or difficulty breathing

**Pink Eye:** Pink/red eye(s) which may be swollen with white or yellow discharge (until the child has been on antibiotics 24 hours)

**Impetigo:** Blisters or sores on the face, neck, hands, or diaper area (may return 24 hours after treatment is initiated)

\*\*Parent(s) will be called to come and pick up any child any time who exhibits any of the above listed symptoms or is unable to participate in daily activities.

## Medication

**Dispensing of Medicine at School** - Medicine is dispensed at the school subject to the following conditions:

- Written permission will authorize the nurse to dispense medicine. A doctor's order needs to accompany the prescribed medicine for the child.
- The medicine is provided in its original container that clearly states the child's full name and the prescribed dosage.
- Medicine is kept in a secure place and is only dispensed by the school nurse. Medicine may not be kept in a student's lunch box.

## Emergency Policies and Procedures

**Contacting** - In case of any emergency, the parent/guardian will be called first. If a parent cannot be reached, then the individual(s) listed on the **Child's Emergency Form** will be contacted. ***Please make sure that you update all of your emergency numbers on a regular basis.*** It is also important that the individuals listed as emergency contacts are aware that they may be called and will be expected to pick up your child. If this situation arises, please make sure that all individuals are aware that they must **show a photo ID in order for the school to release the child.**

**Lockdown/Fire Drills/Evacuation Procedures** - All program staff and children will adhere to building based emergency response procedures and policies for lockdowns, fire drills and evacuation policy and procedures. Please read and refer to building based protocols.

## Reporting Child Abuse

PPSD staff are required by law to report any apparent incident of child abuse or neglect defined as "non-accidental infliction or threat of infliction of physical, emotional, or mental harm to a child".

## Toileting Needs, Personal Care and Belongings

**Toilet Training Policy**- All children without IEP's who are entering the program through the lottery, are expected to be toilet trained. The parent is viewed as the primary teacher for this task.

**Diapering** - If your child has a disability and is not yet toilet trained; please provide diapers, wipes, powders and creams. The school department does not supply these items. You can decide if you would like to send in an entire package of diapers, which can be kept in the classroom or a specific amount each day in his/her backpack. We recommend 4 per day, minimum. The use of pull-ups are discouraged and their use should be discussed with the teacher. Your child's teacher will discuss with you specific clothing needs for your child. During this process, children may require several changes of clothing per day.

**Clothing** - Children's clothing should be comfortable, allowing complete freedom of movement, washable, and suitable for daily indoor and outdoor activities. Since children are required to spend time outdoors every day, parents should consider weather conditions when planning daily dress. To encourage development of independent bathroom skills, children's clothing should be easy for them to manipulate with minimum assistance. We suggest **elastic waist** pants, such as sweatpants when toilet training. Children must wear shoes which are practical as well as comfortable. Open toed shoes are not practical for a quality classroom experience.

Your child will go outside every day for a minimum of 45 minutes. On a cold day, the children will still be going outside and parents should provide their child with **boots, mittens, a hat and warm clothing.**

The expectation is that all children have a **complete change of clothing “per season” that can be left at school.** These clothes will be used if and when an accident occurs. Everything that your child wears or brings to school should be **permanently labeled.**

Please know that although we give great care to making sure that items are returned, we cannot be responsible for an item of clothing that is not appropriately marked.

**\*\*\*Remember that children go outside every day.** This includes cold days and rainy days. Please make sure that you dress your child with the **appropriate outdoor clothing.**

**Backpacks** - It is encouraged that your child arrives every day with a book bag/backpack. The backpack is utilized to bring items to and from school.

**Resting Time Items** - The school will provide a cot and a sheet for your child. Families are asked to provide a **blanket.** Your child may also want to bring a special soft toy or small pillow. These are items that remain at school throughout the week. Each Friday, your child will come home with their blanket. Please wash the blanket and return on Monday.

Please be sure to **LABEL** all your child’s belongings with their name.

### **Behavior**

Teachers and Staff use pro-social and preventative strategies to promote positive social - emotional growth. In the preschool year, children are just learning how to express themselves and show feelings in positive, proactive ways. When a child is hurting themselves or others and/or is chronically disruptive to the extent they are not benefiting from the program, then families will be given assistance in obtaining resources to help the child. Other intensive services and/or placement options will be considered.

### **Diet and Nutrition**

**Snacks and Meals** - Daily USDA approved breakfast and/or lunch are provided to the children at no cost to the families. Free lunch applications will be provided to all families. A monthly breakfast/lunch calendar will be provided. Families always have the options of providing their own snacks and meals for their child. If we notice your child does not eat what is being provided on any given day, we will notify you.

**Peanut Free/Nut Free Classrooms** - By law, several eating areas in the buildings of our program schools are designated as “nut free” due to severe food allergies of students in our schools. You will be notified if your child is in a “nut free” classroom, and they will not be allowed to eat any food containing nuts in that classroom.

**Child Diet Restrictions** - Please notify the school nurse and teacher of any dietary restrictions.

### **Daily Routines and Expectations**

#### **Arrival and Dismissal Routines and Times**

**Routines and Times** - Please refer to your school building’s arrival and dismissal policies and procedures specifically as it pertains to school re-opening during COVID-19 response. The school principal and teacher will inform you of parking, busing, drop off and pick up routines, school schedules and routines. Please refer to contacts, numbers and times in the **Program Locations and Classrooms** section of this document.

#### **Tardiness/Early Dismissal and Absences**

**Arriving to School on Time and Staying the Entire Time**- It is expected and critical that your child arrives at school on time, and stays for the

entire time daily. Children who skip activities because of their late arrival often “miss out” on important skills or services. Also, when children arrive late or leave early, it is a disruption for the other children who are focused on their work or are in the middle of a group or activity. Establishing routines with children, helps them feel safe.

**Tardiness and Early Dismissal:** All children who are late must first report to the main office, where they will receive a late slip. If your child must be late to school, a family member is required to walk them to the office and sign them in. No child can be dismissed, for any reason, to anyone except a family member or designated adult listed on the child’s emergency form. Positive Identification must be presented to the main office before a child can be dismissed.

**Absence Policy and Procedures:** Enrolled children are required to regularly attend in order to maintain their enrollment slot.

Children are expected to be in school unless illness or family emergency keeps them from attending. On the day the child is absent from school, a family member should notify the school by phone by 9:00am. Upon returning to school, the family must provide a written note stating the date/dates and reason for the absences.

**Excused absences and tardiness** are:

1. Personal illness (program may require doctor’s note verifying absence or evidence of a doctor’s visit after 5 days)
2. Quarantine under the direction of a health officer
3. Personal medical, dental, optometric or chiropractic appointment.
4. Funeral services for a member of the immediate family
5. Observance of a religious holiday or ceremony
6. Documentation of required services (court, visitation, special education interventions, etc.)

**\*In the event of class isolation or quarantine; distance learning options will be given for families.**

**All other reasons for absence and tardiness (i.e. overslept, family vacation, travel plans, lack of transportation, weather, family decision to remain home (i.e. oversleeping, new baby, visiting relatives, etc. ) are deemed unexcused.**

Families will be contacted if a child is absent for **3 consecutive school days**. Once a child is absent, late or leaves early for **more than 5 school days** due to unexcused absences, a staff member will follow up with the family to discuss the absences. Every effort will be made to identify and solve any barriers from attending school regularly.

### **Snow Policy/School Cancellation Announcements**

When weather conditions or other emergency events cause a regularly scheduled school day to be cancelled, a public service announcement will be made via the major radio and television stations. Additionally, a call will be made to the home phone number that is listed on your registration forms. This is an automated phone call system with a recorded message that will be sent to your phone number. Distance learning opportunities will be given to families.

## **Family and Community Engagement**

### **Orientation**

Each school provides an orientation prior to the first day of school for families and children to visit the classroom and meet the principal and teachers.

### **Parent Teacher Communications and Conferences**

Families are provided a variety of opportunities to meet with their child’s teacher to discuss progress and concerns throughout the school year. Bi-annual family teacher conferences are offered at each school.



There are also monthly, school based and classroom based, bulletin boards newsletters, and written announcements that include monthly engagement activities as well as all pertinent information regarding your child's learning.

#### **Open Door Policy \* Suspended during COVID-19 Reopening\***

When health conditions return to normal, families will be welcome to contribute to their child's education through in person visits. Families may *always* contact their child's teacher with concerns and questions. Your child's teacher and school personnel will inform you of the many ways you can communicate with them throughout the school year.

#### **Volunteering \*Suspended during Covid-19 response\***

When health conditions return to normal, the Providence Public Schools Preschool Program appreciates volunteer efforts in our schools and classrooms. Parents, college students, senior citizens, politicians, business representatives, and community members are important sources of support and expertise that enrich the instructional program, assist teachers, and connect the student body with the community. All volunteers would have to obtain a local criminal background check, BCI , and apply through VIPS (Volunteers In Providence Program) .

All families of early childhood students are encouraged to join the school's Parent Teacher Organization (**PTO**) and School Improvement Teams (**SIT**) to participate and advise program leadership decision making opportunities.

#### **Family Survey/Program Evaluation**

Families will be encouraged to participate in an annual survey about their child's program.

#### **Confidentiality Policy and Procedures**

The Providence Schools Early Childhood Preschool Program maintains confidentiality and respects all families' rights to privacy, refraining from

the disclosure of confidential information. Personal information including medical records, family history and assessment information is stored in a secure location at the school. Access to this information is limited.

#### **Photographing and Social Media**

Photographs of groups of children or staff may not be posted on social media sites.

Please keep in mind that Identified images of students shall not and will not be made public without the written consent of the parent (s) or guardian (s). The only exception are for students who participate in school-sponsored programs that include public performances or events may have their image and/or name published. Musical performances, plays, athletic events, graduations and other ceremonies are often recorded for public presentation. Participation in such a performance or event shall be regarded as consent.

#### **Transitioning to Kindergarten:**

Providence Public Schools has a Kindergarten Choice Fair where parents are invited to meet representatives from the elementary schools and see some of the highlights and programs available. This event usually happens in January. Registration then begins around that time, and children who will be 5 by Sept 1 the following year need to be re-registered and give their top school choices at the registration center.

The pre-k teacher may send some information about the child to the child's Kindergarten teacher and will support the family to transition to the new school. Parents should bring child by the school and if there is an open house, families should attend as this will support the child to feel safe and comfortable in their new environment.

Children always need to feel safe and loved to be able to learn. Parents and teachers always need to work together to communicate and build a trust and partnership that will set the stage for successful educational experiences.

School \_\_\_\_\_

We are a team but you are the most important member of your child's team. Thank you for getting them to school every day as consistency and routines help your child feel safe and comfortable as they know what to expect. Thank you for all your support and communication. Together we will help your child do their best.

**Family Handbook Acknowledgement Statement**

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand all of the information in this handbook.

I will do my best to be sure that my child attends school every day, on time.

I will communicate with my child's teacher so that we can work together to support my child.

Parent  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher \_\_\_\_\_