



Rochester Community Schools
Great Start Readiness Program
2020 – 2021 Parent/Guardian Handbook

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Program Overview

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is Michigan's state-funded preschool for eligible four-year-old children with a focus on supporting children's development of school readiness skills. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Office of Great Start (OGS). Research on preschool programs and specific research on GSRP indicates that children provided with a high-quality preschool experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared to children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality preschool program.

To support learning at home and increase positive child outcomes, programs must provide for active and continuous involvement of parents in the learning process. Through advisory meetings, parents assist to evaluate and make recommendations about the program.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Rochester GSRP is to provide a secure and engaging environment which supports success in kindergarten and beyond by empowering young children to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically.

Program Philosophy

The Rochester Great Start Readiness Program believes individual children develop best in a nurturing classroom through active learning experiences. Teaching teams work to build confidence in all children in order to establish a solid foundation at their own developmental level. We foster supportive relationships with families and community partners to enrich the child's emotional and social development. These beliefs guide our practice and provide the framework for program decisions.

Curriculum

Our GSRP classroom(s) use the research based HighScope Curriculum that aligns with Michigan's Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Pre-Kindergarten. Curriculum areas include Approaches to Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development and Health; Language, Literacy, and Communication; Mathematics; Creative Arts; Science and Technology; Social Studies; and English Language Learners. In the HighScope curriculum, adults and children are partners in play. More information about the HighScope curriculum can be found at <http://www.highscope.org>.

Assessment

Developmental Screening: In partnership with families we complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) developmental screening for all GSRP children within two weeks of the child's first day of school. This information is entered online where it can be automatically scored. All families will receive their child's results and activities at or before the fall parent-teacher conference. Teachers and families will partner to use the information to plan for each child's success. If further evaluation is indicated by the results of the ASQ, the parents will be notified and a plan of action will be developed.

Ongoing Assessment: We use the HighScope on-line Child Observation Record (COR) to support and plan for each child's progress throughout the school year. The COR is an observation tool that helps tell the story of your child's growth and development throughout the program year. Notes are recorded and entered in all curriculum areas. Families receive a Family Report three times per school year.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is welcomed and encouraged. To establish and maintain a strong school-home connection, which benefits children, we offer the following ways for families to be involved:

- Volunteering in the Classroom: Talk with your child's teacher about how you can be involved as a volunteer. We provide support through our volunteer supervision policy. *(Currently suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions.)*
- Home Visits and Parent-Teacher Conferences: Teachers work with families to schedule two home visits and two parent-teacher conferences. Additional meetings can be arranged.
- Parent Orientation: Takes place at the start of the school year to support relationships, invite input, share community resources, and encourage future involvement in program decision making.
- Parent Advisory Meetings: Two or more are scheduled to share program goals, share community resources, and attain input related to program decisions.
- Data Analysis Meetings: Three are held with participation from parents, an administrator, teaching staff, and an Early Childhood Specialist to review program data and set goals.

Hours/Days of Operation

The classroom day is from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM, which is the same length as a full elementary school day, Monday through Thursday for at least 120 days during the school year.

Calendar

Each family is provided a program calendar prior to the first day of school. Refer to the calendar for information regarding the first day of school, last day of school, school breaks, or other days the classroom may not be open. If you are in need of another copy of the program calendar please contact your child's teacher or the program administrator.

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather, power outages, or other building problems may require that classes be closed. Families are encouraged to tune in to school closings listed on the local TV and radio stations to learn if school is closed for the day. If school is in session and needs to be closed, families will be contacted via phone and/or electronically to pick-up their child.

Before/After Care for GSRP

If you need care before or after the GSRP hours, please let us know. The state has set-up a website for families to search for child care. The website is <http://www.greatstarttoquality.org>. Once on the site, hover over, "families," at the top of the screen and select, "Finding Child Care and Preschool," from the drop down list that appears. Review the, "Search Tips," on the page and click on, "Find Child Care," in the green oval at the bottom of this section. Enter your information or login as a guest to search for child care.

Typical Daily Routine

This is a sample daily routine for a school day GSRP classroom. The daily routine for your child's classroom is posted in your child's class folder on the Pre-K webpage of the RCS website.

On regular school days, teachers will meet children and families at their car at 8:30 AM and bring children into the classroom. Doors will be closed and locked at 8:35 AM. Families arriving after 8:35 must call the child's classroom so that a staff member can return to the door and escort the child from their car into the classroom.

- Arrival/Greeting/Wash Hands** Children enter classroom at their own pace, they spend time with books, and/or interact with their peers. Children wash and dry their hands.
- Breakfast** Children have choices about what they serve themselves and whether they want to eat breakfast.
- Large Group** All adults and children participate in activities planned around children's interests and development.
- Planning** Children indicate their plan to adults and peers. Adults use a range of strategies to support children's planning.
- Work Time** Children are encouraged to follow their plan or revise their plan as they work. Children make many choices about where they want to work and decide how to use materials. Adults participate as partners and encourage children's problem solving with materials and social conflict.
- Clean-up** Children and adults clean up together, keeping it fun. Children make many choices where and how to clean, with adults supporting children's level of involvement.
- Recall** Adults provide a variety of materials and strategies to maintain interest as they encourage children to talk about their experiences during work time.
- Small Group** In a small group, children explore play, work with materials and talk about what they are doing. Children use materials in their own way.
- Outside Time** Children have many choices outdoors, as much as work time indoors. Adults supervise children to keep them safe as well as join in their outdoor play.
- Bathroom/Wash Hands** Children use the bathroom and wash and dry their hands.
- Lunch** After children use the restroom and wash their hands, they choose where they want to sit for a "family style lunch". They serve and clean up after themselves.
- Quiet Resting Time** Children are resting or sleeping. Children who are awake choose quiet play such as, books, soft music, stories or fine motor manipulatives.
- Wake Up/Bathroom/Wash Hands** Children are gently awakened. Children assist with putting their own rest items away. Children use the bathroom and wash and dry their hands.
- Small Group** Same description as above, with a focus on literacy.
- Planning** Same description as above.
- Work Time** Same description as above.
- Clean-up** Same description as above.
- Recall** Same description as above.
- Outside/Dismissal** Same description as above.

Rest Time

All children will be provided with a mat on which to rest. Families are welcome to provide their child with a small blanket. A large blanket or pillow should NOT be sent. Talk with your child's teacher if you would like to bring other rest items for your child. Please remember to label all items sent to school. Rest items provided by families will be sent home at the end of each week for laundering.

Transitioning into rest time, children are encouraged to gather their nap belongings and place them on their cot. The lights are dimmed and soft music may be played. Rest time is scheduled to last no longer than sixty minutes. After thirty minutes children that do not rest are welcome to participate in a variety of quiet activities on their mat, or at a table. After an hour, the lights are turned on and children are encouraged to return their rest items to their cubbies. Children that are still resting will be gently encouraged to wake up but not forced to get up.

Outdoor

Your child will go outside every day. Outdoor play time is structured to be a healthy, educational and enjoyable time for children. Please make sure your child is dressed in clothing that is appropriate for the weather conditions. If it has recently rained, your child will need to have a pair of boots to wear outside. If there is snow on the ground and/or the temperature outside is very cold, your child will need a snowsuit, hat, gloves or mittens, and snow boots. Each child must have a complete change of clothes (underwear, socks, shirt, and pants) that will be kept in the classroom. Each piece of clothing must be clearly labeled with your child's first and last name. If you are in need of any of these items please let your classroom teacher or program administrator know. Kindly remember if your child is too sick to go outside and play he/she is too sick to come to school.

Conflict Resolution/Discipline

Staff supports children as they begin to understand their behavior choices and learn acceptable ways of interaction with others. The approach we use promotes and encourages self-regulation, self-direction, self-esteem, and a spirit of cooperation. We use a six-step process to resolve conflicts. The steps are:

1. Approach children calmly and stop any hurtful actions
2. Acknowledge children's feelings
3. Involve children in identifying the problem by gathering information
4. Restate the problem in children's vocabulary
5. Ask children for solutions and encourage them to choose one together
6. Give follow-up support when children act on their decisions

We encourage you to help us give children a consistent message by trying to use the six steps at home.

Staff is prohibited from using these forms of punishment:

- Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, or inflicting other forms of corporal punishment.
- Restricting a child's movement by binding or tying him or her.
- Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.
- Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use.
- Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities.
- Excluding a child from daily learning experiences.
- Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box, or similar cubicle.

Attendance

Please make every effort to arrive at school on time. When children arrive after the day has started, they miss out on important parts of the routine. Children who consistently arrive on time and are in school every day quickly master the routine, learn more, are happier to be in school and receive the maximum benefit from our preschool program. If your child will not be in attendance, please call the classroom before the program day begins and let them know your child's name, the classroom, and the reason for not attending.

If a child is absent and the program is not contacted by the parent, the program will attempt to make contact with the parent. If the program cannot make contact with the parent for 3 consecutive days, then a letter will be sent to the parent. If the program does not receive a response within 10 days of the date of the letter the child may be moved to the program's wait list.

It is important that children are picked-up on time. If a child is still in attendance 30-minutes after the end of the GSRP day, and contact cannot be made with the parent, the program will contact the local police station to pick-up the child.

If a child is consistently absent, resulting in the child missing 15% or more of the program, the program will partner with the family to resolve the situation. If the situation cannot be resolved, then the child may be moved to the wait list.

If a child is planning to miss a consistent month or more of the program, the child may be moved to the wait list and another child enrolled. When the child who planned an absence returns the child may be re-enrolled if the program has an opening.

Referrals for Child and Family Needs

We strive to meet the individual needs of all children in the program. To determine each child's needs, the program encourages parents to partner with us to complete a screening that assesses children's developmental, behavioral, and language development. If these screenings - as well as information gathered from observations or provided by parents, doctors, or other specialists - result in a concern about the child's development or functioning, we will begin a process to follow up on that concern, including further evaluation if needed.

In case of a suspected disability (including moderate developmental delays or concerns that persist after intervention), parents may request an evaluation. Upon written request from the parent, the school district where the parent lives has 10 school days to inform the parent in writing of the intent to evaluate, and seek consent. Evaluations may only take place with written parental consent.

Once all information is gathered, it is reviewed with the parents. If the results recommend an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a meeting will be scheduled with parents and other personnel involved. Any additional services to be provided and who will provide such service will be determined at this meeting. Your child's teacher, administrator, and the school district team will work together throughout the year to ensure that the IEP is being implemented with fidelity, including the use of special modifications and strategies to support your child in being a fully participating member of the classroom community.

If your child enters the program with a documented special need, the documentation will need to include a notation that GSRP is a suitable setting in light of the needs of the child. Families may also need services unrelated to special education. To provide this support, families are asked to provide information related to the child's life experiences and current living situation. You will be asked to complete a Needs Assessment twice a year. If there is a non-educational need that your family has a staff member will seek the resources you need and follow-up accordingly.

Confidentiality

Out of respect for the privacy of each family in our program, all information pertaining to students and families will be kept confidential. If a student is attending a program administered by a public school, the student's COR assessment and attendance records may be passed on to the students' Kindergarten school building. Information may be reviewed by Oakland Schools and/or the MDE to ensure and support program compliance. The only instance in which information will be shared about a child or family without a parent's written consent is when staff has reason to suspect the child may have experienced abuse or neglect.

Notice of Program Measurement

GSRP sites are required to work with the MDE to measure the effect of the state-wide GSRP. Information is sometimes collected about GSRP staff, enrolled children, and their families. Program staff or a representative from MDE might:

- Ask parents questions about their child and family.
- Observe children in the classroom.
- Measure what children know about letters, words, and numbers.
- Ask teachers how children are learning and growing.

Information from you and about your child will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child could be identified. It is protected by law. If you have questions about this, contact:

Address: MDE
Office of Great Start
608 W. Allegan, P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909

E-mail: mde-gsrp@michigan.gov

Phone: 517-373-8483

Admission

Children must meet criteria based on the MDE, Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), and federal guidelines if the program is a GSRP/Head Start blend. Priority is given to families with greatest need. Students are not selected on a first-come, first-serve basis. Prior to admission, the following documents need to be completed and on file:

- Proof of age (four years old on or before September 1), which could be one of the following:
 - Birth certificate (a district may require a certified copy)
 - Passport
 - Hospital record
 - Baptismal record
 - Other governmental form such as a Medicaid Card
- Proof of income, which could be one or more of the following:
 - Tax return
 - Paycheck stub
 - W-2 Form
 - Written Statement from employer(s)
 - Public assistance
 - Signed Income Verification Form or local equivalent
 - Child Support documentation
 - Social Security Benefits documentation

- Proof of residence, which could be one of the following:
 - Driver's license
 - Property Tax statement
 - Signed Lease Agreement
 - Recent pay stub with employee address
 - Utility bill
 - Other recent government issued document listing the address and name of parent of child
- Eligibility factor information and related documentation
- Head Start Waiver (if applicable)
- Immunization records
- Child Information Record
- Application
- Free and Reduced Meal Family Application

Once the above documentation is on file, a determination regarding admission will be made. A child will either be admitted to the program or placed on the waiting list. Children will be on the wait list in order of need, listing those with greatest need first.

A Health Appraisal must be on file within the first 30 days of initial attendance or the child will not be able to attend until it is submitted. The Health Appraisal must have a physician's signature, stamp, and the date.

Tuition

Some families may be eligible and pay minimal tuition on a sliding scale provided by Oakland Schools. If a parent is responsible for tuition, they will be notified of the amount and specified time periods of payment (e.g. weekly, monthly, or one annual payment). Payment can be made with cash, check, or credit card. There are no fees for late payments, special trips or projects, days the program is closed, or if a child is ill or on vacation.

Withdrawal Process

Our GSRP withdrawal process consists of two parts: 1) the steps we ask families to take if they decide to leave our program and 2) reasons why a child might be asked to stay home or leave a GSRP program.

1. Parent initiated withdrawal

- If you decide to withdraw from our program, please let your child's teacher know as soon as possible so that we can notify a family on our wait list.

2. Program initiated withdrawal

- Once enrolled in GSRP, the only reason we will initiate permanent withdrawal from our program is due to low attendance (see page 7 for more information)
- Children will be asked to stay home while they have a contagious illness that endangers the health and/or safety of children or others. (see page 10 for more information)
- According to the MDE, children enrolled in GSRP programs "must not be excluded or expelled because of the need for additional medical or behavioral support." If your child is struggling in our GSRP program, we will partner with you to help your child succeed. (See page 7 for more information)

Accidents/Emergencies

In case of an accident/injury a staff member will identify the injury and notify the certified CPR/First Aid staff member. An incident report will be completed by staff and submitted to the office by the end of the school day. A parent can obtain a copy of the report by request.

When a child incurs a minor injury, staff will take the following steps:

1. Immediate care is provided to the child
2. A phone call, written report ("Ouch Report"), or both will be provided to the parent at or before dismissal on the day of the minor injury

When a child incurs a serious injury, staff will take the following steps:

1. A staff member calls 9-1-1 and then immediately phones any other required personnel that need to be notified when 9-1-1- is called, while the certified CPR/First Aid staff member remains with the injured child.
2. Ensure the scene is safe. If so, provide care and comfort to the injured child until EMS personnel arrive.
3. EMS personnel will determine if the injured party needs to be taken to the hospital.
4. The parents will be contacted by phone once the situation is under control. If the parents cannot be reached the next person on the emergency card will be contacted until either the program is able to talk with someone or all individuals have been phoned.
5. A staff member will ride in the ambulance if the parent is unable to do so.
6. Within twenty-four hours of the injury, a call will be made to the Department of Regulatory Services Licensing Division followed by a written report within three days of the injury.

Health Guidelines

Regardless of the precautions taken at home or school, your child may become ill during the course of the school year. If your child becomes ill, you will be called and asked to pick up your child. If you are unavailable, we will call someone on your Child Information Record. The child should be picked up within one hour of being notified. If your child has been absent due to a communicable disease, such as strep throat or pink eye, you may be required to present a doctor's note documenting that the child is able to return to school.

There are times when a child should not be sent to school. These times include when a child has:

- A fever (temperature of 100 or more)
 - Child must be free of fever for 24 hours (without fever reducing medication) in order to return.
- Diarrhea or vomiting
 - Child must be symptom free for 24 hours in order to return
- Discharge or redness of the eyes
- Discharge from the ear
- Green or yellow discharge from the nose
- Persistent or productive cough
- Sore throat
- Skin rash
- Ringworm (exclusion is not necessary unless the contact with others could promote spread), lice, hand-foot-mouth or any other communicable disease listed on the Oakland County Health Division Communicable Disease Reference Chart
(<https://www.oakgov.com/health/services/Documents/Communicable%20Disease%20Reference%20Chart.pdf>)

Parents must notify the school if a child has a communicable disease or an extended illness. When applicable, the school will notify families of an illness. A doctor's note for treatment of a communicable disease or an extended illness may be required for re-admittance to school.

Medication

In order to establish and maintain a system of safe storage, handling and administering of medications at school, an Authorization to Administer Medication Form is required. We will follow all steps noted in the Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers, Rule 400.8152, including:

- Medication, prescription or nonprescription, shall be given to a child by an adult caregiver only.
- A caregiver shall give or apply medication, prescription or non-prescription, only with prior written permission from a parent. A physician's permission may also be required.
- All medication shall be in its original container, stored according to instructions, and clearly labeled for a named child.
- Prescription medication shall have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's name, instructions, and name and strength of the medication and shall be given according to those instructions.
- Topical nonprescription medication, including, but not limited to sunscreen and insect repellent, requires written parental authorization annually. Any nonprescription medication needs to be provided by the parent.

Health Care Resources

Oakland County Health Division	248-858-1280	1200 North Telegraph	Pontiac, MI 48341 https://www.oakgov.com/health
Crittenton Hospital	248-652-5000	1101 West University Drive	Rochester, MI 48307
National Capital Poison Center	1-800-222-1222		www.poison.org
General Health & Wellness	American Academy of Pediatrics		www.aap.org
	Healthy children		www.healthychildren.org
	Bright Futures		www.brightfutures.org
Nutrition	My Plate (USDA)		www.choosemyplate.gov
	American Dietetic Association		www.kidseatright.org
Violence & Bullying			www.stopbullying.gov

Food Service

A planned food service program will be part of the school day. There is no cost for snacks or meals. The following meals/snacks will be served at the following times:

- Breakfast at approximately 9:00
- Lunch at approximately 11:30
- Afternoon snack at approximately 2:00

All meals will be fully compliant with the final rule for nutrition standards in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Menus with noted food substitutions will be posted in a place visible to parents. If there is a need for a child to receive substitutions due to medical or religious reasons, a Request for Food Service Individualization and Adjustments Form must be submitted. The center will comply with rule 400.8330 (3) to ensure children with special dietary needs receive meals/snacks in accordance with the child's needs.

Families are not allowed to send in food for their children simply because the child does not like the food served or prefers something from home. A child may have to be exposed to a food that is new 12 or more times before becoming comfortable with it. Through our family style dining approach, children will build relationships with each other while learning healthy eating habits.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children. Under the act, our employees are considered Mandated Reporters and are required, by law, to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Under the Act, Mandated Reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. Our employees are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents before reporting the matter, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition before making a report. We take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities.

Grievance Policy

We strive to provide a positive, nurturing environment for all. However at times, concerns may arise. If you have a concern about something related to your child's preschool program the best place to start to resolve the issue or concern is with the child's teacher. Talk about the concern with the teacher and try to reach a solution. If that does not work, you are welcome to contact the program administrator. We will work with all families to arrive at an agreeable resolution for all parties.

If an agreeable resolution cannot be attained between the parent and program staff, a parent can contact the Oakland Schools Early Childhood Unit Early Childhood Contact (ECC) at (248) 209-2000. If resolution cannot be found with Oakland Schools, families can contact the MDE at (517) 373-8483.

Licensing Notebook

The program licensing notebook is available on-site for parental inspection. The licensing notebook includes all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans (CAP) since May, 2010. The notebook is available to parents during regular business hours. Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from at least the past two years are also available on the child care licensing website at: <http://www.michigan.gov.michildcare>.

This handbook was developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Education.

Attachment A

Celebrations/Holidays

We invite families to share their home celebrations with the school community. Please share your ideas with your child's classroom teacher, the program director, or at the parent advisory meeting. We look to support celebrations while maintaining curriculum and grant requirements (e.g. not asking families to pay for or donate items).

Birthdays

We know that birthdays are important to every child and that children like to celebrate with their classmates. However sending in a food treat to the classroom to celebrate can exclude those children who have food allergies, diabetes, celiac disease, or other dietary restrictions. In addition, frequent sugary snacks do not contribute to achieving our goal of healthy bodies and healthy eating habits for all students. We ask that you do not send any snack (or other item) on your child's birthday. On their birthday (or half birthday for summer birthdays) each child will receive a small book and will be acknowledged by his/her teacher. Thank you for your cooperation.

Guests/Visitors

We welcome special guests and visitors into our classroom to support children's growth in knowledge, experiences, and relationships with family and community members. We may have a special guest share on a topic that the children are interested in, like a veterinarian. We may have a community member who has gone through our volunteer training join the classroom to interact with children during work time. We may have a family member join a table during lunch. If you have any suggestions for a special guest or visitor, please talk with your child's teacher or the program director.

Picture Day

School pictures are an important part of many cultural heritages in our community. To honor that, we have picture day in the fall every year. Your child will have the opportunity to be in a class picture, as well as individual pictures. Each child will receive one class picture and a small picture package for free.

Toys from Home

We recognize children may want to bring an item from home to school. As a program, we do not take any responsibility for damage to or loss of items brought from home. If challenges in the classroom are created by bringing toys from home we will work with the child and parent to determine a solution.