



PRE-K COUNTS FAMILY HANDBOOK

Governor Mifflin School District

Cumru Elementary School

601 Philadelphia Avenue, Shillington, PA 19607



**'23-'24
SCHOOL YEAR**



2023-2024

HANDBOOK

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WELCOME TO PRE-K COUNTS AT GM!

OUR PHILOSOPHY

It is essential that children's first experiences are robust ones, steeped in activities that develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, a deep understanding about themselves in a social society, and age-appropriate content. - *Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood, 2014*

***The Governor Mifflin School District Pre-K Counts Program is committed to...
engaging children, educating parents, and initiating success in school***

WHAT IS PRE-K COUNTS?

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is a state-funded preschool program for 4 year olds whose families meet the state income requirement of at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. This program is being offered to residents of the Governor Mifflin School District through a grant awarded to the district by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

Why is attendance at school so important?

A child enrolled in a PA Pre-K Counts classroom is considered full-time and must attend each school day, arrive on time, and stay for the full instructional day (5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year). Students most successful at school miss fewer than 10 days per school year (1 day per month). Consistent attendance at school will help your child grow socially, emotionally, and academically. We encourage your family to develop strong expectations for your child's attendance at school. Our suggestion? Track your child's attendance so you know exactly how many days he/she has missed.

Excused Absences

Excused reasons include illness of the student, death in the immediate family, health or dental appointments, and religious obligations. The PA Pre-K Counts regulations does not allow for excused absences for vacations or trips. Any days missed due to vacations or trips will be considered unexcused absences, and will count towards truancy according to PA Pre-K Counts guidelines. If families have significant need for their child to miss school, the Governor Mifflin Pre-K Counts program will work with the family on solutions to stay within the attendance requirements of the program to keep unenrollment as a last resort.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are any absences that are not included in the above definition of excused absences. Students enrolled in a Governor Mifflin Pre-K Counts classroom are considered full-time and must attend each school day, arrive on time, and stay for the full instructional day (5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year).

What if my child becomes ill in school?

You will be notified and expected to pick up your child at the nurse's office as soon as possible.

The teacher must have your daytime phone number and a valid emergency contact number on file at all times. Please notify the teacher immediately if changes are made to your contact information.

What if my child will be absent, arriving late, or leaving early?

Call Cumru Elementary at 610-775-5081 and leave a message with the automated system.

A note must be sent to school for each absence, tardiness, or early dismissal. **This is required in addition to the phone call.** When a student is absent from school for less than three days, the district requires that a written excuse be given to their teacher upon their return to school within three days of an absence. All absences are recorded as unlawful/unexcused until a note is received.

The excuse should contain the following information:

- The date the note is written
- Student's name
- Date(s) of absence
- Reason for absence
- Parent/Guardian signature

When a student is absent for three or more consecutive days, a doctor's note is required when the student returns to school. Please forward a doctor's note to school within three days in order for an absence to be excused. Your physician may fax a note to the school; if so, please fax using your school's fax number. (Cumru Fax: 610-685-0404) If a doctor's note is not received, the absence will remain unlawful.

What if my child has frequent absences?

If your child accumulates **three unexcused absences**, a notification letter will be sent home. If your child accumulates **six unexcused absences**, you will be requested to attend a conference to discuss your child's attendance. A team consisting of Pre-K Counts and Governor Mifflin staff members will work with the family to provide support, resources, and a plan in order to promote regular attendance.

Please note: Children who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10% unexcused absences over the course of the school year (more than 18 days total) and have not responded to program support may be dismissed from the Governor Mifflin Pre-K Counts program and replaced with an eligible child from the waiting list or who is recruited from the community.

SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

A child enrolled in a Pre-K Counts classroom is considered full-time and must attend each school day, arrive on time, and stay for the full instructional day (5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year). The Governor Mifflin School District does not believe in suspension or expulsion for Pre-K students. Rather, we believe in a collaborative approach to providing the support they need to be successful Pre-K students.

When a medical or behavioral condition and/or diagnosis requires a student to receive programming or other related services outside of the Pre-K Counts classroom a temporary modified schedule may be approved by OCDEL on a case by case basis, with the goal of moving toward full program participation. A team consisting of Pre-K Counts and Governor Mifflin staff members will work with the family, as well as the PA Pre-K Counts Program Specialist to provide OCDEL with all required information, so that they are accurately informed of the child's current situation.

Please note: If a family chooses to receive services that occur outside of the Pre-K Counts classroom and prohibit them from meeting the minimum attendance requirements and an exception is not granted by OCDEL, the child will no longer be eligible for PA Pre-K Counts services and may be unenrolled to open a spot for other eligible families.

CALENDAR & HOURS

Our Pre-K classes run Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM from Monday, August 21, 2023 through Friday, May 31, 2024 (pending snow make-up days) except as noted on our Pre-K Counts Calendar. Our Pre-K Counts Calendar and District Calendar are in the rear of this handbook and on our district website. Students are expected to attend each instructional day in its entirety.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Student Drop-Off occurs between 9:00-9:15 AM each day. **We ask all parents/guardians not to arrive prior to 8:50 A.M.**

Mrs. Davis' Classroom

Drop off & Pick Up Location: We ask that you drive up School Lane from Governor Mifflin Intermediate School and park in the half circle by the playground. Please pull all the way up; there are numbers along the fence to guide you. If the half circle is full you may wait in your car, in the right hand lane that flows into the half circle.

Drop-Off Procedure: At 9:00 AM, Mrs. Davis and/or another Pre-K staff member will invite you to assist your child out of the car and into our care. For safety reasons, please wait for a staff member before letting your child out of the car.

Pick-Up Procedure: 2:30 PM, Mrs. Davis and/or another Pre-K staff member will walk your child to you so that you may safely escort them into your car.

Miss Fonte's Classroom

Drop off & Pick Up Location: We ask that you drive up School Lane from Governor Mifflin Intermediate School and park in the right hand lane in front of the playground.

Drop-Off Procedure: At 9:00 AM, Miss Fonte and/or another Pre-K staff member will invite you to assist your child out of the car and into our care. For safety reasons, please wait for a staff member to arrive before letting your child out of the car.

Pick-Up Procedure: At 2:30 PM, Miss Fonte and/or another Pre-K staff member will walk your child to you so that you may safely escort them into your car.

Miss Vitabile's Classroom

Drop off & Pick Up Location: We ask that you drive up School Lane from Governor Mifflin Intermediate School and park in the half circle by the playground. Please pull all the way up; there are numbers along the fence to guide you. If the half circle is full you may wait in your car, in the right hand lane that flows into the half circle.

Drop-Off Procedure: At 9:00 AM, Miss Vitabile and/or another Pre-K staff member will invite you to assist your child out of the car and into our care. For safety reasons, please wait for a staff member before letting your child out of the car.

Pick-Up Procedure: 2:30 PM, Miss Vitabile and/or another Pre-K staff member will walk your child to you so that you may safely escort them into your car.

Late Drop-Off/Tardy Student

Students that do not arrive by 9:15 AM will need to enter the building with the adult providing transportation at Cumru Elementary's main office. The child will be noted as tardy, but marked present for attendance purposes. An adult signature will be required when a student arrives late to school.

Late Pick-Up

Students that are not picked up by 2:45 PM will need to be secured by an approved family member or other adult in Cumru Elementary's main office. The child will be noted as a late pickup and an adult signature will be required to release the child.

PLEASE NOTE: We will only release a child to a parent or legal guardian. Any changes require prior written notification by the parent or legal guardian. Please inform your teacher of any changes in your child's transportation home.

SCHOOL DELAYS & CLOSINGS

In the event of school closings or delays, Pre-K classrooms will follow the district schedule for closings and delays. Announcements will be made on local radio and TV stations, the district's messaging service Skylert, and will be posted on the district website.

2-Hour Delay Schedule: Students should be dropped off between 11:00-11:15 A.M. Mrs. Davis' and Miss Vitabile's students should wait in the half circle by the playground for assistance. Miss Fonte's students should wait at the front gate of the playground for assistance. **We ask all parents/guardians not to arrive prior to 10:50 A.M. on delayed start days.**

Early Dismissal Schedule: The early dismissal schedule for the Pre-K Counts classroom will be announced pending weather circumstances. **Parents are responsible for providing transportation home.**

ONLINE LEARNING

Our Pre-K Counts program is in-person. However, if the Governor Mifflin School District moves to online learning, so will our Pre-K program.

At that time, your child will be provided with an online learning backpack which includes the technology necessary to virtually meet with their class and teachers. It will also contain the materials needed for at home learning activities. You can expect 30-45 minutes of daily, "live" online instruction, as well as 30 minutes of follow-up activities. Children are required to attend the full virtual session just as they are expected to attend an in-person school day.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM PRE-K

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is designed to provide opportunities for your child to engage in a wide variety of activities that are aligned with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. You'll find learning areas with books, blocks, math materials, areas for dramatic play, and science materials that invite your child to explore new concepts and ideas. It might look and feel like play to your child, but all activities are designed to purposefully and appropriately build your child's readiness skills for the years ahead.

The Daily Schedule

Each part of the day is planned to meet specific skills in the PA Early Learning Standards. Your child will participate in large group activities, small group instruction, and independent time every day. The day also includes time for movement and outdoor activities, breakfast and lunch, and quiet time. The daily schedule is posted in the classroom, and you may also request a copy from the teacher.

The Curriculum

Our curriculum is ***The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Sixth Edition*** and is aligned to the PA Early Learning Standards. We also instruct using ***Learning Without Tears, Get Set for School***. Both curriculums include instruction and exploration in early literacy concepts such as letter/sound recognition, phonological awareness, concepts about print, listening comprehension, and pre-writing skills. The curriculum also includes lessons to develop early math concepts in number and shape recognition, counting, patterning, sorting and classifying, and topics in science and social studies.

Meal Times

Pre- Counts children will be served a nutritious breakfast and lunch. All meals are provided at no cost to the family. **Please make the teacher aware of any food allergies that may be a concern during meal times.**

Special Classes

In addition to your child's regular educational experience, Pre-K students also participate in a Specials Class Rotation. Our rotating specials are:

- Library
- Art
- Guidance
- Music
- Gym
- Innovation

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

How can I help my child adjust to school?

Your preschooler will be excited to show you the new skills that they are learning in school. Help foster their growing independence by...

- Marking EVERYTHING with your child's name: coats, hats, all loose clothing, notes to teacher and staff. Help your child recognize their name on the items they bring to school.
- Encouraging your child to tie, button, and zipper without help.
- Choosing clothing options a preschool child can easily manage. Your child should be able to put on or take off items such as boots, mittens, belts, and jackets with limited assistance.

How can I be involved in my child's education?

No matter your child's age or grade, family involvement is critical to your child's success in school.

Volunteering: We welcome parents to participate in their child's education by volunteering at school! Volunteers must get the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (Act 34) and Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151). The Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Check (Act 114), which includes fingerprinting, isn't mandated by the Commonwealth for volunteers who sign an Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form that assures the volunteer did not commit any reportable crimes in the past.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION (CONT'D)

Volunteering (cont'd): Current clearances must be less than one year old for anyone who hasn't volunteered in the district previously. School volunteers who have been a PA resident for ten years or longer, are required to sign a Volunteer Affirmation form. If you have not been a PA resident for 10 years, you must complete the Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Check (Act 114).

All necessary clearance forms are available at:

<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/>

Progress Reports and Conferences: The teacher will be collecting observations and work samples of your child's development throughout the school year. Your child may also be assessed on their growing skills in literacy, math, and social development. This information is used to plan lessons that meet your child's interests and abilities.

You will be asked to attend a parent-teacher conference in February to review your child's work and discuss progress toward their learning goals. The Governor Mifflin School District also works closely with the Berks County Intermediate Unit to provide early intervention services on an as needed basis.

ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

School-Sponsored Events

Join Pre-K parents, children, and our professional staff for exciting and engaging learning opportunities! Parents, children and teachers work side-by-side doing hands-on activities in reading, math, and science. Take home a book, materials and supplies, and ideas for extending learning at home. Stay tuned for more details!

Mifflin Community Library

Check out the Mifflin Community Library at www.berks.lib.pa.us/smi, or in person, to explore books, resources, learning activities, and special story time events.



Check our website for more
information and resources!

www.gmsd.org

GOVERNOR MIFFLIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

2023-2024 PRE-K COUNTS CALENDAR

Children enrolled in Pre-K Counts attend full-day programming.
Classroom hours are 9:00 AM-2:30 PM.

Pre-K students will follow the Governor Mifflin School District calendar with the exception of the below noted dates.

August 21, 2023	Staggered Start*
August 22, 2023	Staggered Start*
August 23, 2023	Staggered Start*
October 6, 2023	Pre-K Full Day
October 31, 2023	Pre-K Full Day
November 20, 2023	Pre-K Full Day
November 21, 2023	Pre-K Full Day
March 15, 2024	Pre-K Full Day
May 24, 2024	Pre-K Full Day
May 28 - May 31, 2024	Pre-K Full Day
May 31, 2024	Last Student Day (tentative)

**In order to give our youngest learners the best first-day experience, Pre-K students begin the year with staggered start dates. Your child's staggered start date will be communicated to you by your child's teacher. Your child should only attend their assigned staggered start date.*

JULY 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

AUGUST 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



GOVERNOR MIFFLIN SCHOOL DISTRICT 2023-2024 School Calendar

July 2023

■ Holiday - Independence Day 7/4

August 2023

■ New Teacher Orientation 8/8 - 8/10; 8/14
 ■ In-Service Day 8/16 - 8/17
 ■ First Day for Teachers 8/16
 ■ First Day For Students 8/21

SEPTEMBER 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

OCTOBER 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

September 2023

■ In-Service Day 9/1
 ■ Holiday - Labor Day 9/4

October 2023

■ Act 80 - Half Day 10/6
 ■ In-Service Day 10/9
 ■ Act 80 - Half Day 10/31

NOVEMBER 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

DECEMBER 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 2023

■ Act 80 - Full Day 11/20-11/21
 Parent-Teacher Conferences 11/20-11/21
 ■ In-Service Day 11/22
 ■ Holiday - Thanksgiving Break 11/23, 11/24, 11/27

December 2023

■ In-Service Day 12/21
 ■ Holiday - Winter Break 12/22, 12/25-12/29

JANUARY 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

FEBRUARY 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

January 2024

■ Holiday - New Years Day 1/1
 ■ Holiday - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 1/15

February 2024

■ Act 80 Full Day/ ■ Snow Make-Up Day* 2/16
 ■ Holiday - Presidents Day 2/19

MARCH 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

APRIL 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

March 2024

■ In-Service Day 3/15
 ■ Act 80 Full Day/ ■ Snow Make-Up Day* 3/27
 ■ In-Service Day 3/28
 ■ Holiday - Good Friday 3/29

April 2024

■ Holiday - Easter Monday 4/1

MAY 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

JUNE 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

May 2024

■ Act 80 - Half-Day 5/24
 ■ Last Student Day (tentative) 5/24
 ■ Graduation (tentative) 5/24
 ■ Holiday - Memorial Day 5/27
 ■ In-Service Day/Last Day for Teachers 5/28

**Due to the unpredictable nature of Pennsylvania winters, staff and students are cautioned against making firm vacation or travel plans for the indicated snow make-up days. Any additional snow days will be added to the end of the school year.*

