ROCHESTER
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Welcome to Kindergarten!



A Question & Answer Guide for Families

Five Schools. *One Mission.*

WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN at Rochester Catholic Schools

We welcome you and your child to Kindergarten at Rochester Catholic Schools (RCS). At RCS, we have a goal of helping you become the best parents/guardians for your child. We desire to be your partners in the spiritual and educational journey of your child. Know your child will be loved and safe with us.

Parents and guardians are the first and most important teachers of their children. Our educators are here to guide your teachings and provide an excellent foundation rooted in faith, social skills and academic growth.step

Entering kindergarten is a milestone; it is a very big step for children, but also for the adults in their life, as well! Embrace and celebrate this next stage, talk positively about school, get to know other families in your neighborhood, volunteer in your child's classroom, pray together, and remember we are praying for you, too!

As you prepare for the start of your child's education, we have created this question and answer guide to support you as parents. These commonly asked questions and responses from our kindergarten team serve to guide your preparations and establish a foundation for lifelong learning.

Thank you for choosing Rochester Catholic Schools!

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT TIMELINE

- ★ **October:** Attend RCS Showcase of Schools and apply online for kindergarten
- ★ **November:** Join our Taste of Kindergarten event and follow us on social media
- ★ **December:** Complete and submit your applications for financial assistance
- ★ **January:** Sign up with Raise Right, our tuition rebate program
- ★ **February:** Register for your Early Childhood Screening
- ★ **March:** Sign your tuition agreement
- ★ **April:** Come out for Kindergarten Signing Day
- ★ **May:** Review the RCS school year calendar and save the dates
- ★ **June:** Celebrate summer with our community event
- ★ **July:** Start weekly preparation for kindergarten and back to school forms
- ★ **August:** Get ready for school - Meet The Teacher Day and the First Day of School

Holy Spirit Catholic School
Early Preschool - Grade 5
Principal Amy Heimer
5455 50th Ave. NW
Rochester, MN 55901
507.288.8818
Attendance Email: hsattendance@rcsmn.org

St. Francis of Assisi School
Preschool - Grade 8
Principal Andy Poterucha
318 11th Ave. SE
Rochester, MN 55904
507.288.4816
Attendance Email: stfattendance@rcsmn.org

St. Pius X School
Preschool - Grade 5
Principal Dave Jenson
1205 12th Ave. NW
Rochester, MN 55901
507.282.5161
Attendance Email: stpattendance@rcsmn.org

Co-Cathedral of St. John Middle School
Grades 6-8
Principal Matt Langsdale
424 West Center Street
Rochester, MN 55902
507.282.5248
Attendance Email: stjattendance@rcsmn.org

Lourdes High School
Grades 9-12
Principal Mary Spring
2400 18th Ave. NW
Rochester, MN 55901
507.289.3991
Attendance Email: lhs attendance@rcsmn.org

RCS Central Office
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Q: What is the purpose of kindergarten?

A: There are several important components to a kindergarten year, but one of the most important at Rochester Catholic Schools is growing together in faith. Each day we will pray together as a classroom community and learn how great Jesus' love is for all of us.

Along with faith, we foster and develop each child's sense of self-esteem. This means our youngest learners gain confidence in themselves, practice decision-making skills, and experience opportunities to be independent. We model and guide cooperation - we teach our students how to learn and work together.

Kindergarten is also a time when children's curiosity and natural love for learning is apparent. Children learn to express themselves and communicate their feelings and knowledge of the world through their beginning skills in reading, writing, math and science.

Last, kindergarten is a fun and safe space to learn and grow together while celebrating each student's gifts and talents.

Q: What skills signal my child is ready for kindergarten?

A: Because each child is a unique individual, with diverse experiences, RCS understands our rising kindergarteners will be growing and maturing at different rates. It is important to remember you have been gifted this child by God to help prepare them for their educational journey. Going to school is an exciting time for your family and child -- it is a wonderful opportunity for Rochester Catholic Schools to partner with you in the education of your child. Please review the following readiness skills that may provide an adequate foundation for a smooth transition to kindergarten.

1. Your child should be showing signs of independent behavior and should feel comfortable in a school classroom without the presence of a parent/guardian.
2. Your child should be able to relate in a positive manner to other children of the same age by taking turns, sharing, and showing care for others.
3. Your child should show an increasing ability in verbal communication with clear and correct speech, avoiding infancy baby talk.
4. Your child should be able to follow two and three step directions.
5. Your child should be able to gain meaning by listening and responding to questions.
6. Your child should demonstrate an improvement in ability to control impulsive behavior.
7. Your child should be increasing in the ability to perform fine motor skills - cutting, drawing, coloring, and manipulating smaller objects.
8. Your child should be increasing in the ability to perform large motor skills - jumping, hopping, and skipping.
9. Your child should be able to follow simple rules.
10. Your child should know how to ask for help when needed.

Q: What can I do at home to help my child prepare for kindergarten?

A: Children need time to transition and as a parent you play a key role in helping your child have a successful start to their educational journey. Starting in May, we invite you to prepare your child with this weekly schedule leading up to the first day of school!

Week 1	**Faith**	Establish a nightly prayer routine. Learn the Before Meal Prayer. *"Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ, Our Lord. Amen."*
Week 2	**Health & Wellness**	Schedule your child's Early Childhood Screening if not already done. Call 507-328-4004. Verify necessary forms, immunizations, and transportation services are in place.
Week 3	**Reading**	Visit the library. Make reading a priority - read 30 minutes everyday with your child through at least fourth grade! Ask guiding questions along the way to check comprehension.
Week 4	**Communication**	Practice saying your full name and age. Practice saying your parent/guardian/sibling's full names.
Week 5	**Music & Rhymes**	Listen to children's music in the car. Sing the alphabet song and recite nursery rhymes.
Week 6	**Directions**	Ask your child to complete tasks with two or three step directions.
Week 7	**Writing**	Guide your child as they print their name using a capital letter (uppercase and lowercase): Simon Smith. Practice printing numbers.
Week 8	**Independence**	Spend a whole day away from home with a relative or close friend.
Week 9	**Memory & Safety**	Learn from memory your full house address and phone number.
Week 10	**Large Motor**	Go outside! Play games that teach following directions while hopping, skipping, climbing, kicking, and running.
Week 11	**Small Motor**	Try on your school uniform, shoes, and fall jacket -- make sure it fits! Practice small motors skills of buttoning, zipping, tying, and snapping.
Week 12	**Organization**	Collect your school supplies. Set up a homework spot in your home. Establish a consistent location for your child's backpack. Clean out a dresser drawer for school uniforms.
Week 13	**Schedule**	Children thrive with routine and structure. Create a simple daily schedule to follow and hang it in your home. Include: Wake-up at your school time. Make bed. Brush teeth. Comb hair. Eat breakfast. Remember my backpack. School. Play time. Supper. Homework. Story time. Prayer time. Bedtime. Sleep time.
Week 14	**Math**	Count things you see in your home and in nature. Look for patterns. Practice mathematical relationship words of before, after, now, later, yesterday, today, tomorrow.
Week 15	**RCS Eagle!**	Welcome to the RCS family -- you are a Kindergarten Eagle! Our school colors are purple and gold! Remember to label all of your school supplies, uniform tags, and personal belongings. Review RCS and school calendars. Come out to our events! And, start a memory box to hold all of your child's special projects from school!

Q: Does RCS have an early entrance option to kindergarten?

A: No. RCS follows the recommendation of child development experts and upholds the age requirement of five years old on or before September 1.

Q: Is an early childhood screening mandatory at RCS?

A: Yes. We partner with Rochester Public Schools to provide a free and fun comprehensive developmental screening for children ages 3-5. The State of Minnesota requires all children to complete a developmental screening before entering kindergarten programs. This screening gives you an early look at your child's hearing, vision and development which helps us paint a picture of your child's skills in thinking, language, motor control as well as social/emotional development. In addition, screening staff will connect you with resources to help prepare your child for success in school. The best time to schedule your child's screening is any time after their third birthday. **To schedule your child's screening, call RPS at (507) 328-4004.**

Q: What school supplies are needed in kindergarten?

A: Your family will receive a list of school supplies from your child's school over the summer. Children should bring a backpack to school each day. We recommend that the backpack is kept in the same place in your home so that it is readily available each school day. Taking care of his/her backpack is a simple task for which your child should assume responsibility.

Q: Does RCS have a school uniform?

A: Yes! RCS is committed to advocating for the dignity of every person. Our dress code serves to reinforce our Catholic values, limit social pressure on students, minimize financial expenses on families, and maximize the time available for teachers to instruct students. RCS communicates a school uniform for kindergarten students. We ask our students to wear their uniform shirt and bottoms to school each day. Uniform sweatshirts may be purchased at the RCS Spirit Shop located at Lourdes High School. To learn more about our school uniform, information may be found on our website.

Q: When may I enroll for Kindergarten?
A: RCS begins accepting applications for kindergarten the first week of October. To enroll in kindergarten, a student must be 5 years of age on or before Sept. 1. To apply, parents complete an online application found on the RCS website. In early January, families are notified of their admission status and acceptance.

Q: My child has a summer birthday. Should I wait another year to enroll?
A: As a parent, you know your child best. One thing to keep in mind as you make this decision is even if you think your child is ready for school now, summer birthdays catch up with a child in future years. Summer birthday children will be the youngest of the group, the last with getting a driver's license, and some only 17 years old when heading off to college. In the classroom we note that often an extra year at home makes a difference and creates leaders rather than followers. To help make this decision, invest in a strong pre-kindergarten program as this is the readiness year for kindergarten. Ask your child's pre-kindergarten teacher for their thoughts on your child's readiness; they have the most unbiased insight on your child.

Q: Does RCS provide childcare on non-student school days?
A: No. Please review the RCS calendar to note holidays and non-student days. RCS does not provide childcare on non-student days or holidays.

Q: Does RCS offer financial aid for Kindergarten?
A: Yes! RCS prioritizes financial aid for students entering Kindergarten - Grade 12. To apply for financial aid, apply for a parish grant, or seek a scholarship through a private Foundation, deadlines and applications are posted on the RCS website. In addition, families seeking financial aid should be participating in the Raise Right tuition rebate program.

Q: Does RCS offer an extended care program for before or after school care?
A: Yes! We offer both Extended Care AM and PM programs for students in kindergarten through grade eight at Holy Spirit Catholic School, St. Francis of Assisi School, and St. Pius X School. Registration for School-Age Extended Day is in May and the link is on your RCS Portal. Extended Day is provided between the hours of 6:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. We provide space for quiet work time, physical and social activities, and opportunities for games, learning, and fun. Registration and rates are posted on our website.

Q: Does RCS offer summer programs for kindergarten students?
A: Yes! Our schools are bustling over the summer, too! Join us for summer care, summer academy, summer tutoring, and summer sport camps! Registration and rates are posted on our website.

Q: What is “Step Up to Kindergarten”?

A: For students attending The NEST pre-kindergarten programs, we intentionally plan events during the school day to introduce our rising kindergarten students to our kindergarten teachers and acclimate our young learners to the kindergarten classrooms. Story time with our kindergarten educators, mini lessons and in-school field trips to practice being a kindergartener are part of our step up events. Step up events are a wonderful way for our kindergarten educators to begin forming relationships with their future students and make for smoother transitions at the beginning of year.

Q: What is “A Taste of Kindergarten”?

A: This free and fun family evening begins with a shared meal at our three kindergarten schools. Our parish pastors and building leadership, along with our kindergarten teachers, welcome families from RCS and the Rochester community to come out to get a taste of what kindergarten is like at RCS. After dinner, parents meet with our kindergarten educators while the rising kindergarteners have a special activity led by other educators, students, and parents. This event serves as an informational evening for families that are exploring kindergarten options in the Rochester area.

Q: What is “Kindergarten Signing Day”?

A: RCS hosts a parent/student event in the spring called Kindergarten Signing Day. On this evening, all enrolled rising kindergarten students and their parents/guardians gather at their school campus for one hour. Our kindergarten educators will lead an activity with the rising kindergarteners while the building principal welcomes and shares school specific information and answers questions as parents/guardians prepare for the kindergarten year. Topics of conversation include:

Introductions	**Faith Development**	**Readiness Skills**	**Academic Growth**
Parent Partnership	**Parent Portal**	**Childhood Screening**	**Communication**
Conferences	**Attendance**	**Transportation**	**Community Events**
School Supplies	**Uniforms**	**Calendars**	**School Forms**
Volunteers & Virtus	**Health & Wellness**	**Home Transitions**	**Save the Dates**

Q: What is “Meet the Teacher Day”?

A: Meet the teacher day is held a few days before the first day of school. It is a time to come to school with your family and find out the name of your child’s teacher, visit the classroom, and socialize with new families. This day is for introduction and preparation so that both you and your child are able to find comfort in the new school year which begins within the next week. Please take time to introduce yourself and your child to your teacher. You may bring school supplies and our kindergarten educators may have additional information ready to share with you.

Q: Does RCS offer bussing for kindergarten students?

A: Afternoon transportation services are provided by Rochester Public Schools (RPS) to RCS kindergarten - grade 12 students that live within the bussing boundaries of their school. At this time, morning transportation is not provided to RCS students. Please contact RPS Transportation with any questions by calling 507-328-4260. In addition, if your child will be riding the bus, your family must complete the online Registered Rider form found on the RPS website. Please complete this form by August 1.

Q: What does a day in kindergarten look like?

A: Each day in kindergarten is filled with faith, fun, foundational learning, and friends.

- Welcome with Morning Announcements
- Opening Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance and Morning Meeting
- Literacy Lessons (Phonics, Reading, Writing)
- Music and/or Movement Activities
- Fellowship and Faith-Based Lesson
- Lunch and Outdoor Recess
- Rest & Relaxation
- Math Lessons (Numbers, Classifying, Problem Solving)
- Choice Time & Snack
- Specialists (Spanish, Art, Music, Physical Education, Guidance, Library)
- Outdoor Recess
- Closing Prayer, Afternoon Announcements, & Dismissal

Q: How is the Catholic faith integrated into my child's school day?

A: Sharing your faith with your children is a beautiful gift. At RCS, we will teach, model, and practice the Catholic faith in our kindergarten classrooms. We learn about Jesus. We explore how saints lived lives of love and virtue. All are welcome at RCS! Your family does not need to be Catholic to attend one of our schools. We invite you and your family to journey with us on your own spiritual journey.

Q: What does "kindergarten is learning how to be in school" really mean?

A: Remember Kindergarten is way more about learning *how to be in school* than about academics. Not that academics are not important, they are! But so much of kindergarten is social. Lifelong skills of learning how to get along, wait your turn, and be a good friend are established in kindergarten. With solid foundational social/emotional/behavioral and friendship skills, the academics fall into place more easily in the years to follow. Teach your child how to be a friend. Teach your child how to give a genuine compliment. Teach your child how to say no, thank you with kindness. Teach your child to see when someone else needs a friend. These foundational skills speak to the values we uphold at RCS.

Q: What is the curriculum of your kindergarten?

A: Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through high school, it is our goal to cultivate the crucial skills of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and effective communication while embracing the Gospel message. We believe in creating active, joyful, and individualized learning environments for our youngest learners. Our schools offer lessons and units of study using these and/or other programs:

- Religion with *Sadlier*
- Guidance/Safety with *Circle of Grace*
- Guidance with *Second Step*
- *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*
- Phonics with *Letterland*
- Reading with *Amplify*
- Spanish
- Writing and Manuscript
- Math with *Math in Focus*
- Math with *Progress in Math*
- Science with *Mystery Science*
- Social Studies with *Scott Foresman*
- Art with *Art Attack*
- PE
- Music

Q: What does it mean my child's curriculum is vertically aligned?

A: Vertically aligned curriculum is intentional spiraling and repetition of skills and knowledge that builds a child's academic foundation day to day; week to week; month to month; and year to year. At RCS, the curriculum of The NEST pre-kindergarten program vertically aligns with our kindergarten programming. Vertically aligned curriculum prepares students for what is coming at the next grade level, creates an atmosphere of collaboration between educators at different grade levels, establishes benchmarks and placements as students advance through goals and objectives, and ensures parents that their child is being guided through meaningful and purposeful lessons in preparation for lifelong learning.

Q: May parents volunteer at school?

A: Yes! We love our parent volunteers! All volunteers at RCS must successfully complete the Diocese of Winona-Rochester Safe Environment training: Virtus and a Criminal Background Check. You can sign up for Virtus training by visiting www.virtusonline.org and clicking on registration on the left side of the page. Follow the instructions for registering and enrolling in a training. When your training is complete, please bring your Virtus Certificate and Criminal Background Check form to the school office. We strongly suggest you complete this training so you are in compliance when volunteer opportunities arise.

Q: How does a teacher monitor and communicate the progress of my child?
A: Your child's teacher is constantly observing your child during the school day to watch for signs of growth or challenge, both academically and behaviorally/social-emotionally. Individual progress is documented in a variety of ways with each teacher and via the RCS Parent Portal. Each week, your kindergarten student brings home daily work in their backpack to share with you. Please take time to review these papers as they serve as a means for you to understand the progress of your child. RCS provides written progress reports at the end of each quarter for kindergarten.

In addition, parent-teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring. Conferences are a time to discuss your child's progress and readiness skills for first grade. Please feel free to schedule a conference any time during the year for additional opportunities to visit about your child. In kindergarten, all assessments are done one on one. In the first quarter, your child will receive a checklist assessing social, academic, self-care and safety skills. Beginning in the second quarter, students will receive their first official report card.

Q: How does RCS communicate with parents?
A: Your classroom teacher and building principal will communicate with you via newsletters and weekly broadcasts. Families are opted in automatically to receive our electronic newsletters delivered via email every Friday and/or the last day of the school week. If you do not have access to email, please notify your school office and a paper copy will be provided for you. Please be sure you have set your email settings to accept communications from us. In addition, we encourage you to join our Facebook and Instagram pages for our latest news and photos!

Thank you for choosing Rochester Catholic Schools! We feel truly blessed to be entering into partnership with you in the education of your child. Let's make this a great year!