

FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program



Parent Handbook 2022-23

PreK Leading the Way!

MISSION STATEMENT

To inspire our students to soar with pride every day, offering the best of ourselves at every opportunity, and to lead with humility, understanding that our greatest accomplishments lie in working together to achieve excellence.

Approved by Franklin County School Board

Date: 07/28/2022

Franklin County Pre-K Program
85 School Road Suite 1
Eastpoint FL 32328
850.670.2810

Franklin County School Board

Melanie Inzetta-District 1

Pam Marshall, Vice Chair-District 2

Fonda Davis, Sr.-District 3

Stacy Kirvin, Chair-District 4

Jared Mock-District 5

Steve Lanier-Superintendent



VPK Program Goals:

- To enhance self-concept and improve self-esteem through a variety of projects and curricular activities that will result in acquired competencies
- To provide opportunities to grow in all areas of development: social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and aesthetic
- To instill a love of reading and promote early literacy
- To enhance aesthetic appreciation and cultural awareness and acceptance
- To improve social skills through appropriate role models/mentors
- To enhance creativity through a variety of media
- To improve gross motor skills and promote an improved body image
- To develop close relationships with families and encourage a positive attitude in parents and students toward school and learning

Our Philosophy:

CHILDREN NEED TO:

- feel loved
- feel safe and secure
- feel a sense of belonging
- feel good about themselves
- learn to get along with others
- practice good health, nutrition, and safety
- have consistency in their lives
- be engaged in learning through play
- be actively involved in their learning



VPK Program:

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is a program that is funded by the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida. State law mandates that children must be 4 years old on or before September 1st of the school year to be eligible. **There are no exceptions.** The Franklin County School District (FCSD) offers the VPK program free of charge to families as a 540- instructional hour school year program.

To participate in the free 3 hours of VPK instruction, parents must obtain a VPK Certificate of Eligibility (COE) from the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida. ~~elenw.org~~ Parents can apply for online at Early Learning Family Portal: Home (floridaearlylearning.com) and follow the steps. For questions, please call the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest FL at (850) 747-5400.

FCSD VPK LOCATIONS AND PROGRAMS

LOCATIONS	
Apalachicola Bay Charter School	Franklin County Learning Center
98 12th Street	85 School Road
Apalachicola FL 32320	Eastpoint FL 32328
PROGRAMS	
VPK Only: 8:00-11:00 AM Free	
VPK Plus: 8:00-2:30 PM \$60 per month	

VPK:

To complement the VPK program, the school district also offers extended day opportunities:

VPK Plus:

VPK Plus provides a seamless seven-hour day. After VPK hours (8:00-11:00 AM) parents can choose to have their child stay until the end of the school day 2:30 PM). This program is a fee-based program.

VPK Plus Fee Guidelines:

1. For families choosing to enroll in the full day VPK Plus program there is a \$60 fee for the afternoon portion of the program (11:00-2:30 PM) and a \$35 returned check fee.
2. All fees are due on the first Monday of each month. If payment is not made by the 15th day of the month, student will not be allowed to participate in the Plus program and must be picked up by 11:00a.m.
3. Parents/Guardians must sign a "Parent Handbook Acknowledgement" confirming that payments will be made in a timely manner to participate in the VPK Plus program.
4. Parents are not eligible for credits or prorated payments due to students' absences or school holidays.
5. The school district is not permitted to extend credit; therefore, all fees must be paid timely. Parents/Guardians are responsible for payment of the VPK Plus full day services.

VPK Attendance Requirements:

Although it is voluntary for your child to enroll in a VPK program, it is NOT voluntary for your child to attend. It is expected that your child will be on time and in school every day, unless there is an excused absence (see Student Code of Conduct and academic calendar at www.franklincountyschools.org)

Franklin County Pre-K Program will be operating a Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week for 180 days. All enrolled families received a calendar showing the scheduled days off during the operational period of **August 10, 2022** through **May 26, 2023**.

Attendance during the scheduled instructional days is of utmost importance to remain in the VPK program. Student success in Kindergarten is strongly linked to consistent attendance in the pre- school program. Additionally, Franklin County Pre-K funding is linked to attendance.

You will be required to sign and comply with the following policy on Attendance and Tardiness to remain in the VPK program.

- Absences: Children are allowed up to **3 absences per month**. Parents should contact the teacher or call the office if a child will be absent.
- Children should remain home for at least 24 hours after illness and without medication be free of fever, respiratory illness symptoms, discharge from eye, or gastrointestinal distress.
- Any absences beyond those three allowable by the program require a written note from the parent citing one of the following reasons:
 - ✓ Illness/injury of child or child's family member which requires hospitalization or bed rest
 - ✓ Physician or dentist appointment
 - ✓ Infectious disease or parasitic infection
 - ✓ Funeral/memorial service, or bereavement upon the death of child's family member
 - ✓ Compliance with a court order (visitation, subpoena)
 - ✓ Special education or related service for child's disability
 - ✓ Observance of a religious holiday or service
 - ✓ Family vacation, not to exceed 5 absences per program year

Please Note: Absences of 5 consecutive days require documentation to explain the absence.

Documentation for planned absences, signed and dated by the legal guardian, must be submitted in advance detailing the reason for the extended absence. If a child is sick, a doctor's note explaining the reason and duration for the absence is required. Failure to provide this documentation, constitutes withdrawal from the Franklin County Pre-K program. Withdrawals from the VPK program will not be eligible for re-enrollment in the VPK program.

Tardiness: Arrival for the VPK program is between 7:45 and 8:00 a.m. The earliest time arrivals will be accepted is 7:45 a.m. The instructional day starts at 8:30 a.m. and all children are expected to be in place and ready to start the day. Arrivals after 8:30 a.m. are disruptive to the group in progress and difficult for the arriving child as well. We understand that it is occasionally unavoidable to be "running late", but more than twice a month will not be acceptable and will be cause for termination from the VPK program.

Late Pick Up: The VPK program ends at 11:00 daily. A late fee of \$5 will be assessed if your child is not

picked up by 11:10. An additional fee of \$5 will be assessed for every additional 15 minutes the child is still in attendance.

Verification of student attendance and absences: The Franklin County Pre-K Program teachers will provide a form to parents/guardians for ~~to~~ review and to confirm your child's recorded attendance for the month. Your verification of ~~on~~ this form will not only verify the attendance, but also will direct the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida to direct payment to Franklin County Pre-K Program.

Student Behavior and VPK Discipline Policy:

Pre-K teachers design classroom environments that support healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development. The Early Learning Department collaborates with teachers and paraprofessionals to support student behavior that advance this important area of development with attention to self-regulation, appropriate emotional expression, relationship development and developing independence. In partnership with parents, we value modeling and reinforcing behaviors that are safe and appropriate in a variety of situations.

Our department embraces the program Conscious Discipline (Becky Bailey) as the foundational framework for behavioral support and social emotional development prioritizing students' safety and security within stimulating learning environments. Teachers recognize that relationships are essential for learning, and they intentionally design environments and foster interactions so that students are in healthy connected relationships with adults and peers. With the essential foundation of routines, rituals and structures in place, Pre-K students thrive.

In some cases, a student may continue to display disruptive or unsafe behaviors even with these foundational components in place. For those students, Pre-K teachers implement the following progressive discipline plan to intensify support and/or reconsider placement:

Step One: Implement routines, rituals and structures for all students that create a safe and connected classroom environment for learning and problem solving
If behavior continues or escalates...

Step Two: Notify the parents and school personnel about the behaviors and to develop a plan for intensifying behavioral support including documentation of behaviors and identifying support strategies. If behavior continues or escalates...

Step Three: Teacher and/or parent recommends child for screening and evaluations. The evaluations will determine the process for further assessments or actions from school personnel.

***Important Note:** At any point in this process, if a child's behavior excessively disrupts the learning of other students, causes damage to school property and/or is unsafe to self or others, the child's placement may be reconsidered. This includes shortening the child's daily schedule or withdrawing the child from the Pre-K Program. All students enrolled in The Franklin County School District must adhere to the Student Code of Conduct which states:

Misconduct that may result in discipline

Students are expected to behave during the time you are at school, at school activities. Students may be disciplined if they do anything during those times or attempt to do anything that violates a school rule or that may:

**Hurt, harass or threaten others*

**Damage property*

**Disrupt class, school or a school activity*

** Be dishonest or violate a criminal law or statute*

See FCSD Student Code of Conduct at www.franklincountyschools.org

Transportation:

Transportation is provided for students in the VPK program however parents may bring their children to the school and pick them up on a timely basis.

Dress Code:

Schools adhere to dress code policies as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct (www.franklincountyschools.org). Our curriculum “Frog Street” encourages active learning. Children will work with paint, sand, water, and many other types of materials. Children will also play outside daily and should wear comfortable clothing along with the appropriate footwear.

Personal Care and Toileting Issues:

Children who are enrolled in the VPK program must be toilet trained. Please contact the school if there are medical issues that require accommodations. The Franklin County School District complies with all state statues including the requirements of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

ABOUT OUR CLASSROOMS

Curriculum:

Franklin County School District’s VPK Curriculum is framed by The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: 4-Years Old to Kindergarten (2017). The standards describe the developing skills four-year olds should know and be able to do by the end of their prekindergarten year. The curriculum is designed so that students are developing toward these standards-based outcomes with individualized support within a collaborative setting. The curriculum encompasses development in eight essential areas: physical development, approaches to learning, social and emotional, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific inquiry, social studies, and creative expression through the arts. Within the framework of standardized learning outcomes, the curriculum includes a scope-and-sequence for teaching and learning over the school year with opportunities for teachers and partnering paraprofessionals to support children according to their individual learning needs. The curriculum documents include a year-long curriculum map summarizing key learning outcomes with more detailed learning goals provided in the quarterly unit guides for scientific inquiry, literacy and language development, and mathematical thinking and reasoning. The High Scope Preschool Curriculum along with a variety of materials provide teachers instructional support for implementation of the curriculum for academic subject-area learning in these eight areas.

Assessing and Communicating Children’s Progress:

The Early Learning Department along prekindergarten teachers value on-going, two- way communication with parents and families. It is our goal to consistently communicate the successes and challenges your child is experiencing so that parents and caregivers are informed about their child’s progress toward meeting expectations and together we can support your child’s success. Instruction and assessment go hand-in-hand. Your child’s teacher conducts on-going formal and informal assessments to monitor your child’s progress toward the end-of-year expectations defined by The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: 4 Years Old to Kindergarten (2017).

The valuable assessment information is used so that teachers are able to adjust instruction to meet your child’s changing needs as well as to communicate to you about your child’s progress. Each year there are regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences at the end of first quarter and third quarters when you will meet with your child’s teacher to review the Prekindergarten Progress Report provided to parents at these two intervals. As the conference dates approach, your child’s teacher will send information about scheduling your conference at a time that will meet your needs. In addition to these parent-teacher conferences, teachers welcome written communication and telephone calls should concerns arise or if you would like to arrange an appointment to discuss your child’s progress.

Our Qualified Teachers and Staff:

Every classroom follows a state approved VPK curriculum and students are taught by specially trained and/or certified teachers who are assisted by talented teacher aides. Each classroom will be staffed with one teacher and one paraprofessional for every 18 to 20 students.

VPK Inclusive Classrooms:

Education collaborate to offer inclusive classroom opportunities with typically developing children and children with special needs.

Important Classroom Information:

Snack

Teachers may use snack time as a vehicle to engage children in fun learning tasks.

All snacks must follow the Smart Snack Nutritional Guidelines as outlined in the District policy. (www.franklincountyschools.org)

Outdoor Explore

Children are provided daily time to run, play, and explore outside. Outdoor play opportunities are essential to growth, development, and learning. Our program offers unstructured play opportunities as well as outdoor explore stations which are specifically designed to provoke children's curiosity about a curriculum topic they are currently investigating in their classroom. Children choose which activities to engage in during outdoor explore. Teachers play with children to encourage physical, social, and cognitive development and assess students' growth in these areas.

Quiet Time

The Franklin County School District Early Learning Department's guidelines regarding nap time or quiet time in pre-kindergarten programs are aligned with the latest research in this area. All students in our pre-kindergarten classrooms are offered a time during the day that allows them to quietly rest or relax. Children are not required to nap during quiet time. All children are provided with activities which encourage individual, quiet play and learning at their mats during Quiet Time. This allows all children time for unstructured rest but does not require children to sleep if they are not tired.

Family Engagement-Be A VIP!

VIP's are Very Involved Parents who support their child's learning in our Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program. Our VPK Programs emphasize the key relationship between child, parent, and the learning environment. Research has shown that the most significant influences on children's lives come from their home and especially from the parents, who are the child's primary teachers.

Our VPK Programs provide opportunities for parents to gain confidence as the prime educators of their children by acquiring further knowledge and understanding of child growth and development. Information and guidance are also available about community resources for families seeking additional support.

You and your family are a valued part of our program. Teachers will communicate with you frequently through informal conversations, or in writing. Teachers are also interested in family concerns and home events. We encourage you to share any information about your child's life or activities that will help us provide a supportive and exciting program.

The program may hold various family activities throughout the year. You will be informed of

these events by your teacher. Family involvement in the program is highly encouraged and a large part of our program. By being actively involved with your child and his/her peers, you will serve as a positive role model. We encourage you to volunteer. Families can participate in many ways such as classroom activities, helping plan or implement special events, sharing your expertise, etc. Please note the following guidelines. The Franklin County School District's department of Early Learning and Exceptional Student

It is a Franklin School District policy that anyone volunteering or participating in school activities must complete a Volunteer Application. Volunteer applications are available on-line at www.franklincountyschools.org.

When you are volunteering in your child's classroom, you will not be permitted to bring other siblings or children with you.

For the safety of all children, you must obtain a visitor's pass from the school office before entering your child's classroom.

Throughout the school year we offer many opportunities to be involved in the prekindergarten classroom. We want to get to know families in an effort to support the children in our classrooms as best we can and in whatever way we can. Your child will become excited about the VPK program when you show excitement and support. Be enthusiastic, talk with your child about all the exciting activities in VPK. Ask your child's VPK teacher about ways to support and extend this special year of learning fun, and what educational activities you and your child can do at home.

Become a VIP! (Very Involved Parent!)



Parent Handbook Acknowledgement



In order to conserve resources, schools will not distribute paper copies of the parent handbook to every student. An electronic copy of the Parent Handbook is available on the District website at: www.franklincountyschools.org. If you require a paper copy of the parent handbook, one should be available in the front office of your child's school. If there is not an available copy at the school, please check the box below and one will be sent to you.

I would like to have a printed copy of the parent handbook.

VPK PARENT HANDBOOK

This parent handbook has been developed to provide our students and families' information on the policies and expectations for VPK in The Franklin County School District. Parents are encouraged to review the parent handbook and partner with us as we begin your child's formal educational journey.

FAILURE TO REVIEW THE PARENT HANDBOOK WILL NOT RELIEVE A STUDENT OR PARENT/GUARDIAN OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE POLICIES OR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LOSS OR DAMAGE TO SCHOOL DISTRICT OF FRANKLIN COUNTY PROPERTY.

I have read, understood and agree to The Franklin County School District VPK Parent Handbook:

_____ VPK Plus Parent Fee Policy (pg.3). Initials

Parents acknowledge that they are responsible for all payments being made in a timely manner. Late or Non-payment of fees for students enrolled in the VPK Plus program may result in exclusion from the full day program.

_____ VPK Discipline Policy (pg.4). Initials

We recognize that positive discipline teaches and encourages healthy social and emotional development. If a child is having difficulty in this area, the parent (guardian) and teacher will work together on meeting the needs of the child and the classroom. All Franklin County students must adhere to the FCSD Student Code of Conduct, if there is a pattern of extreme and disruptive behavior the child may be withdrawn from the program. Please note our department embraces the program Conscious Discipline (Becky Bailey) as the foundational framework for behavioral support and social emotional development.

By placing your signature below, you are confirming that you have read, understood and agree to policies and expectations in the parent handbook.

Child's Printed Name

Parent or Guardian Printed Name

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

Franklin County Pre-K Program will be operating a Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week for 180 days. All enrolled families received a calendar showing the scheduled days off during the operational period of **August 10, 2022**, through **May 26, 2023**.

Attendance during the scheduled instructional days is of utmost importance to remain in the VPK program. Not only is Franklin County Pre-K Program funding linked to attendance, but also the child's success upon entrance into Kindergarten.

You will be required comply with the following policy on Attendance and Tardiness to remain in the VPK program.

Tardiness: Arrival for the VPK program is between 7:45 and 8:00 a.m. The earliest time arrivals will be accepted is 7:45 a.m. The instructional day starts at 8:30 a.m. and all children are expected to be in place and ready to start the day. Arrivals after 8:30 a.m. are disruptive to the group in progress and difficult for the arriving child as well. We understand that it is occasionally unavoidable to be "running late", but more than twice a month will not be acceptable and may be cause for termination from the VPK program.

Late Pick Up: The VPK program ends at 11:00 daily. A late fee of \$5 will be assessed if your child is not picked up by 11:10. An additional fee of \$5 will be assessed for every additional 15 minutes the child is still in attendance.

Absence: Daily attendance in the VPK program is necessary for optimal learning, however, you will be allowed (3) absences per month. Any absences beyond those require a written note from the parent for one of the following reasons:

- Illness or injury of the child or the child's family member which requires hospitalization or bed rest;
- Physician or dentist appointment; Infectious disease or parasitic infestation;
- Funeral service, memorial service, or bereavement upon the death of the child's family member;
- Compliance with a court order (e.g. visitation, subpoena); Special education or related services for the child's disability; Observance of a religious holiday or service;
- Family vacation, not to exceed 5 excused absences per program year.

Please note: Absences of 5 consecutive instructional days may be considered a withdrawal from the Franklin County Pre-K Program. Withdrawals from the VPK program may not be eligible for re-enrollment. Franklin County Pre-K Program will allow one documented 5-day absence during the 180 day instructional period. Documentation must be submitted in advance, explain the reason for the 5-day absence, and be dated and signed by the child's legal custodial adult.

The Franklin County Pre-K Program teachers will provide you. You will confirm your child's recorded attendance for the month.

Your signature on this form will not only verify the attendance, but also will direct the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida to direct payment for the month's VPK program for your child to Franklin County Pre-K Program, and that you continue to choose Franklin County Pre-K Program to provide your

child's VPK program for the upcoming month.

To participate in the VPK Program at Franklin County Learning Center I agree to comply with the terms of this Absence and Tardiness Policy. My signature below is acknowledgement of my review and acceptance of the terms of this policy.

Child's Name

Printed name of parent/guardian

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

2022-2023 School Calendar

July 2022						
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 2022						
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28	29	30	31			

September 2022						
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October 2022						
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30	31					

November 2022						
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December 2022						
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Franklin County School District	
	
Aug 1-9	Teacher Pre-Planning/PD
Aug 8	Orientation
Aug 10	First Day of School
Sep 5	Labor Day - No School
Oct 3	Open House*
Oct 14	End of 1st Nine Weeks
Oct 20	Report Cards
Nov 4	Seafood Festival - No School
Nov 21-25	Thanksgiving - No School
Dec 16	End of 2nd Nine Weeks/1st Semester
Dec 19 - Jan 2	Christmas Break - No School
Jan 3	Teacher Planning Day *
Jan 4	Students Return
Jan 5	Report Cards
Jan 16	Martin Luther King Day - No School
Feb 20	Presidents' Day - No School
Mar 10	End of 3rd Nine Weeks
Mar 13-17	Spring Break
Mar 24	Report Cards
Apr 7	Good Friday - No School
Apr 10	Easter Holiday - No School
May 5	Estuaries Day - Early Release @ 1:00
May 23	Senior Recognition Night
May 25	Graduation
May 26	End of 4th Nine Weeks
May 26	Elementary Report Cards
May 26	Last Day for Students
May 29	Memorial Day
May 30-31	Teacher PD/Post Planning
June 1	Summer School Pre-Planning
June 5-29	Summer School (M-Th)

January 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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29	30	31				

February 2023						
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March 2023						
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April 2023						
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30						

May 2023						
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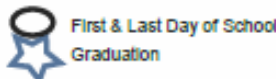
June 2023						
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SCHOOL PROGRAMS	
Oct 28	Homecoming
Nov 11	Veteran's Day Program
Dec 15	Christmas Program
Jan 17	MLK Program
May 25	Graduation

Aug 8	Orientation FCS 3-6 pm
Aug 8	Orientation PreK/FCLC 1-3pm
Oct 3	Open House FCS 5-6:30 pm
Oct 3	Open House PreK/FCLC 3-4:30 pm

SCHOOL BOARD	
Stacy Kirvin, District 4 (Chair)	
Pamela Marshall, District 2 (Co-Chair)	
Fonda Davis, Sr., District 3	
Melonie Inzetta, District 1	
Jared Mock, District 5	
Steve Lanier, Superintendent	

	School Closed
	FTE attendance window
	Employee Planning (no school for students)
	Report Cards
	Early release for students



**APPROVED BY THE
FRANKLIN COUNTY
SCHOOL BOARD
ON 03/31/2022**