

Cardinal Kids Family Handbook 2024-2025



Lawrence Township Public Schools

Lawrence Township Early Childhood

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Lawrence Township Board of Education

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Ms. Vanessa Bekarciak, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

Mr. Thomas Eldridge, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Mr. Sean Fry, Director of Personnel and Administrative Services

Ms. Melanie Fillmyer, Director of Guidance

Ms. Jeanne Muzi, Director of Student Achievement, Equity and Opportunity



Building Administrators

Dr. David Adam, Principal, Lawrence High School (LHS)

Dr. Clifford Williams, Assistant Principal, LHS

Dr. Katie Stein, Assistant Principal, LHS

Ms. Brenda Eke, Assistant Principal, LHS

Mr. Geoffrey Hewitt, Principal, Ben Franklin Elementary School

Ms. Amy Amiet, Principal, Eldridge Park Elementary School

Ms. Kristin Burke, Principal, Lawrenceville Elementary School

Ms. Ebony Lattimer, Principal, Slackwood Elementary School

Early Childhood Staff

Ms. Egnita Pardo, Supervisor of Early Childhood Education

Ms. Dana Schleider, Preschool Instructional Coach/PIRS

Ms. Renee Wells, Prek Social Worker



Lawrenceville Elementary School

Katie Bergen

Kara Manrique

Ashleigh Tangen

Theresa Lampley

Kelly Liston

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Ben Franklin Elementary School

Kim Vinch

Julianna Docheff

Loren Sansone

Eldridge Park Elementary School

Kim Grohowski

Slackwood Elementary School

Melissa Pacutta

Lawrence High School

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Introduction

We are excited to work with you and your child to develop the foundation for your child's future academic and developmental success. We strive to offer a quality program that recognizes and values each child's unique traits and potential. This handbook was designed to acquaint you with our program policies and procedures. Please read and refer to this handbook as needed.

District Mission Statement

The mission of the Lawrence Township Public Schools is to foster a community that: values academic excellence, critical thinking skills, and lifelong learning; challenges each student to become a responsible citizen of a global society; respects different learning styles and adapts instruction accordingly.

Curriculum Overview

All preschool classrooms implement the research-based curriculum, Tools of the Mind. It is built on the Vygotskian theory that the goal of early childhood education is to foster children's self-regulation as they gain content knowledge. It consists of strategies created to support children's development in understanding their world, through play. It provides activities sequenced in a developmental trajectory and scaffolds to support children based on their current levels of development. Focusing on self-regulation, the curriculum supports children's underlying cognitive skills, social-emotional school readiness, and foundational skills in literacy, mathematics, and science. In the Tools of the Mind classroom, teachers aim to scaffold children so they can act as masters of their own behavior and assist children in gaining control of their social, emotional, and cognitive behaviors, including early literacy and mathematical skills. Tools of the Mind is designed to support the development of cognitive, social-emotional, and self-regulation/executive function.

[NJ DOE Tools of the Mind Brochure](#)



Protecting Instructional Time

The instructional program is our priority. Valuable instructional time is protected when interruptions are kept to a minimum. Parents, school volunteers, and non-school personnel entering the school for any reason must report to the office before going to the classroom instructional area. Please be prepared to state the reason for your visit. If parents must visit a classroom we will gladly schedule a visit in advance as a courtesy to our teaching staff.

School Hours

School	Regular School Hours	2-hr Delayed Opening	Early Dismissal
Ben Franklin Elementary	9:30-3:30	11:30-3:30	9:30-1:15
Eldridge Park Elementary	9:30-3:30	11:30-3:30	9:30-1:15
Lawrenceville Elementary	8:30-2:30	10:30-2:30	8:30-12:30
Slackwood Elementary	9:30-3:30	11:30-3:30	9:30-1:15
Lawrence High School	8:00-2:00	10:00-2:00	8:00-12:00

Delayed Openings and Emergency Closings

In the event of inclement weather, hazardous road conditions, or any other emergencies requiring us to close schools, the district website will be updated to notify families. Phone messages and emails from the district will be used as well. QuickNews (via link on our website) will also be updated. If you do not have internet access, you can call the school closing number at (609) 671- 5590.

Lunch is still served on days when the school is on a delayed opening or early dismissal.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25, Board Policy 5200, every parent, guardian, or other person having control and custody of a child shall cause the child to regularly attend school. The Board of Education requires students enrolled in the school district to attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the State.



The curriculum for students enrolled in Lawrence Township Public Schools is designed to achieve certain educational goals within the number of school days provided by our resources. Maximum attendance is a prescribed condition upon which all courses of study are predicated. Students are expected to attend school daily when schools are in session. Developing good attendance habits now sets a precedent for later school years. Regular attendance improves the opportunity for optimal student learning.

Regular, on-time attendance is an essential part of social and academic success. If your child needs to be absent, please notify the school by telephone.

For unanticipated absences, the parent must notify **the school** as early as possible on the day of the absence and the reason therefore.

Parents are asked to call the school and provide:

- The Student's Name
- The Teacher's Name
- Date of absence
- Reason for absence

The school's automated phone message will be sent to families if their child is absent and they did not contact the school or they contacted the school but did not leave a reason for the child's absence. Using this phone message allows our main office and health office staff to better serve students and families while ensuring each family is informed of their child's absences. If you receive this phone message in the future, please return the call to assist the school in accurately recording your child's absence.

State-approved reasons for excused absence include:

- Religious holidays recognized by the New Jersey Department of
- Education (NJDOE);
- Court appearance;
- Take Your Child to Work Day, as approved by the NJDOE;
- Other good causes approved by the Principal.

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing documentation for all absences. For anticipated absences, the parent shall notify the school **in writing prior** to the absence.



For excused absences, documentation must be provided within three days of the student's return to school in the form of a written note from the parent identifying the religious holiday observed or verification of a court order. Failure to provide such documentation **within the three-day period** shall result in the absence being considered unexcused.

All other absences are considered unexcused.

NOTE: FAMILY VACATION TRIPS ARE NOT CONSIDERED EXCUSED ABSENCES.

Days absent due to vacations or other family trips shall be counted as unexcused absences. Teaching staff members are not required to provide outlines, homework assignments, or related study materials in advance or in anticipation of such trips.

Please notify the principal immediately if you are planning to remove a child for this reason.

Late Arrival to School

A student arriving 15 minutes after the start of the day is required to report directly to the school office with a parent/guardian. The habit of punctuality should be encouraged. Students may not report directly to the classroom without first being signed in. Students arriving after this time will be marked as tardy.

DISTRICT CALENDAR

Early Release/ Pick Up:



Parents are encouraged to schedule appointments after school hours. However, personal circumstances may arise requiring a student to be released early from school. Removing a student from school before the regular dismissal time must be reserved for only urgent instances. Parents/Guardian picking up their child early should provide written notification in advance when possible. To ensure the smooth and safe handling of such situations, parents must send a note that includes:

- Date
- Name of student
- Reason for the early dismissal (i.e. doctor/dentist appointment- doctor's/dentist's name, appointment time, and telephone number, etc.)
- A telephone number where the parents may be reached during the school day

A parent picking a student up early should report to the main office, and a staff member will call the classroom to have your child come down to the office. The parent/guardian will sign out the student. Students returning to school after signing out earlier in the day, must re-enter via the main office and sign back in.

If someone other than the parent or guardian is to meet the student, a note is required indicating the person has parent/guardian permission to pick up that particular child. This person should also be ready to present a photo ID upon arrival.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

[Please refer to your building handbook for guidance.](#)

Transportation Department

Andrea Nesmith
Transportation Supervisor
(609) 671-5445 Office

Alberto Rodriguez
Transportation Coordinator
(609) 671-5444 Office



Cindy Dilts
Transportation Specialist
(609) 671-5443 Office

<https://www.ltps.org/transportation>

Health Information

We will do our part here at school to minimize the spread of illness by encouraging lots of hand washing and nose blowing (followed by more hand washing) and sending students and staff home when they are ill. We ask that you each support us by following the illness policy outlined in our parent handbook and as listed below so that we can minimize the spread of illness to our students and our staff. It is so important that our staff remain healthy so that they can be here to help the children settle in and create effective classroom communities.

Student Illness Protocol (The 24 Hour Rule):

The best way to prevent the spread of illness in our schools is for children to stay home when they are sick. Below is a list of the most commonly seen illnesses and the exclusion time from school required by the Lawrence Township Board of Education:

FEVER Any child with a temperature of 100 degrees or more is excluded from school. Children must be FEVER-FREE (temperature below 100 degrees) for a **full 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine**, BEFORE returning to school. Children's temperatures do not remain constant throughout the day. It is important to check your child's temperature a few times throughout the day, not just in the morning or at night, to be certain they have completely recovered from their illness.

VOMITING AND/OR DIARRHEA Children with stomach viruses often do not have a fever. It is difficult to know whether a child's vomiting or diarrhea is caused by a virus, something they ate or some other reason; therefore, any child who vomits or has diarrhea is excluded from school. Children who vomit or have diarrhea should remain home until they have not vomited or had diarrhea for a full 24 hours. Children should be tolerating regular meals without discomfort before returning to school.



COUGH Children who are coughing continuously should remain home if; the cough is such that it interferes with their ability OR the ability of others to concentrate on school work, even if they are fever-free.

STREP THROAT Children diagnosed with strep throat need to be on antibiotic therapy for a full 24 hours before returning to school. They must also be fever-free for a full 24 hours before returning to school.

PINK EYE Children diagnosed with bacterial conjunctivitis need to be on antibiotic therapy for a full 24 hours AND have no purulent discharge from the eye(s) before returning to school.

INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS (ILI) Children with a fever, cough and/or sore throat are considered to have ILI. Children with ILI should stay home & not go into the community (except to seek medical care) for AT LEAST 24 HOURS after being fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Children should feel well enough to perform regular school activities before returning to school.

INFECTIOUS SKIN CONDITIONS Children must be on medical treatment prescribed by their physician for a full 24 hours prior to returning to school. For open and/or draining lesions, exposed areas must remain covered while in school. A physician's note stating the condition is no longer contagious may be required by the school nurse in order for the student to return to school.

CHICKEN POX Children diagnosed with chicken pox may return to school after they are fever-free for a full 24 hours and all lesions are dry and crusted before returning to school. Many children return to school before they have recovered from an illness. Children who are not fully recovered from an illness may still be contagious and able to infect others. Children who are not feeling well have difficulty performing well in school.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Make sure the school has accurate phone numbers where you can be reached during the school day in the event of an illness or emergency. In the case of a seriously ill or injured child, the uncertainty and timeliness of voice mail is not helpful. Please provide phone numbers of a co-worker or supervisor who would be able to get a message to you quickly. If your workplace is located more than 45 minutes from school, please provide the number of someone who would be able to accept responsibility for your child until you are able to get home from work.



**WE ARE NOT PERMITTED TO SEND A SICK CHILD HOME ON THE BUS.
Lawrence Township Public Schools Nursing Department**

Allergies:

Please inform the school nurse of any known allergies that a child might have. We are committed to making every effort to provide the safest possible environment for our students who may have allergies.

EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOL FOR NON-ILLNESS

LICE

Pediculosis capitis is an infestation of the hair on the scalp. The gold standard for diagnosing head lice is finding a live louse on the head. Students will be sent home if the school nurse determines that the student has lice. Students would be allowed to return to school after proper treatment with an anti-pediculosis shampoo and rechecked by the school nurse. If the child continues to show evidence of live lice infestation, he/she will be excluded until the signs dissipate. If the nurse determines no live lice upon return to school s/he may return to class. If a student returns to school with nits only s/he will return to class. Please contact your school nurse for more information.

Medication Policy:

Medications During School Hours: Whenever possible, the parent/guardian should arrange with their physician for medication to be given outside of school hours. If, however, their physician deems it necessary for the student to take medication during school hours, there are specific procedures to follow. These procedures are to be followed for all medications, including over-the-counter or short-term medications such as antibiotics or cough medicine. (Medication forms are online-at our district website). New doctors' orders are required at the start of each school year.

1. The physician must complete and sign one of the three District forms:
 - Asthma Action Plan- Students who have asthma and use an inhaler or nebulizer.
 - Allergic Reaction Action Plan- Students who have food or other allergies and require emergency medication.
 - Request for Administration of Medication- Any other medication required during school hours.
2. The parent/guardian must sign the medication form and return it to the nurse.



3. All medications should be brought to school by the parent/guardian and must be picked up at the end of the school year or the end of the period of medication. Medications will be secured and dispensed by the school nurse. Any medications not picked up by the parent, after reasonable efforts to have the parent retrieve the medication have failed, will be destroyed or discarded by the school nurse, in accordance with proper medical controls.
4. Asthma Medication via NEBULIZERS: In addition to the medication, the parent needs to also provide a mask, chamber & tubing that will remain in the Health Office.

The prescribing physician must provide written orders if there is a change in the original order. New orders are required in September even if a change order was received during the school year.

**ALL MEDICATIONS MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE SCHOOL NURSE BY A PARENT/ GUARDIAN.
STUDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TRANSPORT MEDICATION.**

Immunizations:

In order to safeguard the school community from the spread of certain communicable diseases and in recognition that prevention is a means of combating the spread of disease, the Board of Education requires the immunization of students against certain diseases in accordance with State statutes and rules of the New Jersey State Department of Health and Senior Services.

In order for your son or daughter to register for school, it is necessary to provide a physician-certified record of your child's immunizations. If the records are not in English, you must also submit a translated copy. If the original records cannot be obtained, the immunizations must be repeated according to New Jersey State law.

LISTED BELOW ARE THE IMMUNIZATIONS REQUIRED BY THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL:



<u>Preschool Students:</u>	
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTP)	Appropriately immunized for their age (ACIP standards)
Polio Vaccine (IPV) or (OPV)	Appropriately immunized for their age (ACIP standards)
Measles	1 dose—on or after the 1 st birthday
Rubella	1 dose—on or after the 1 st birthday
Mumps	1 dose—on or after the 1 st birthday
Haemophilus influenzae b (Hib)	1 dose minimum—on or after the 1 st birthday
Varicella	1 dose—on or after the 1 st birthday OR a doctor's or parent's statement that the child had the disease
Pneumococcal Conjugate (PCV)	1 dose minimum—on or after the 1 st birthday
INFLUENZA VACCINE—one dose of influenza vaccine REQUIRED between September 1 and December 31 of each year	

PROVISIONAL ADMISSION: Students who do not have the required immunizations MAY be given a provisional admission by the school nurse. IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED FOR A PROVISIONAL ADMISSION, written proof from the student's physician showing the student has begun the immunization series AND the date of their next appointment MUST be provided to the school nurse.

[Health Forms](#) can be found on the district website.

Dress Guidelines

In accordance with district policy (5511), The Board of Education recognizes that each student's mode of dress and grooming is a manifestation of the student's personal style and individual preferences. The Board will impose its judgment on students and parents or legal guardians when a student's dress and grooming affect the safety or educational program of the schools or as set forth below.

Students may not wear clothing or engage in grooming practices that present a health or safety hazard to the individual student or to others; materially interfere with school work, create disorder, or disrupt the educational program; cause excessive wear or damage to school property; or prevent the student from achieving his or her own educational objectives because of blocked vision or restricted movement.

The Board of Education prohibits students from wearing, while on school property, any type of clothing, apparel or accessory which indicates that the student has membership in, or affiliation with,



any gang associated with criminal activities. The local law enforcement agency will advise the Board, upon request, of gangs which are associated with criminal activities.

The Building Principal shall determine whether the dress or grooming of students comes within these prohibitions. N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1, 18A:11-7, 18A:11-8, 18A:11-9

Please label all sweaters, jackets, coats, school bags, backpacks, etc. with your child's name. Often a child will have a garment identical to someone else's in the classroom.

The clothing should be placed in a large Ziploc bag and labeled with your child's name.

Rest Time

Your child will have a rest period daily. You will need to send in a fitted crib sheet which will be put on your child's cot/mat daily. You will also need to provide a lightweight child-size blanket. Relaxing music will be played and the lights will be turned off. If your child does not fall asleep, they will stay on the cot to relax with a quiet activity.

Nutrition Policy

The Board of Education recognizes that child and adolescent obesity has reached epidemic levels in the United States and that poor diet combined with the lack of physical activity negatively impacts on students' health, and their ability and motivation to learn (LTBOE Operations Policy 8505.)

The following items may not be served, sold or given out on school property at anytime before the end of the school day:

Foods of minimal nutritional value (FMNV) as defined by U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations;

- All food and beverage items listing sugar, in any form, as the first ingredient;
- All forms of candy.

Meals/Snacks

Nutritious meals and snacks are essential for young children's optimal growth and development. The energy provided by healthy foods ensures that children will be ready to fully participate in the day's learning opportunities. During meals and snacks preschoolers learn how to make nutritious choices, discover a wide variety of different foods, and develop healthy eating habits.



Parents who choose to send lunch from home are advised to send lunches that are ready to eat, using a thermos or ice pack, as we are unable to heat lunches. Please be sure to provide healthy snacks for school such as; fruit, vegetables, cheese, yogurt, crackers, pretzels, granola bars. No candy or soda.

Contact your school nurse regarding any changes in your child's health.

BREAKFAST/LUNCH

Our cafeteria operates under the National School Lunch Program. The Type A lunch is balanced to meet one-third of the daily food requirements of the child. The district participates in a computerized Point of Sale (POS) system which increases the level of service in the cafeteria. Every student has been entered into the PaySchools Central Point of Sale (POS) system. Payschoolscentral.com is a secure, family-friendly system for online meal prepayments and nutrition education. Payschoolscentral.com (online payments) allows parents to deposit money on their children's school meal account via credit/debit card or PayPal account. Prepayments can also be made to a student's account via cash or personal check made payable to Lawrence Township Cafeteria Fund.

Student account balances and purchase history can also be viewed online at www.payschoolscentral.com. Student accounts will be accessed by their student ID number. If your child has qualified for free or reduced meal prices, this information is noted in the system, and the meal will be processed just as it is for all other students without any special indication to the students. If you have any questions about these services please contact the district's food service manager at 609-671-5594, PaySchools Central Customer Service at 877-393-6628, or on the LTPS.org website <https://www.ltps.org/diningservices>.

FREE AND REDUCED BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

Food service is offered in all the public schools in Lawrence Township. To be sure that the school system is meeting the nutritional needs of all children, it is the policy to provide free/reduced-priced meals to children in need of assistance. Applications for these services are available on the Genesis Parent Portal. Paper copies are available in the school's main office. It is important that every child return this form. For those families who are not interested, please check the appropriate box on the form and return it.



Free/ Reduced Lunch Application can be found on the Genesis Parent portal:

<https://parents.ltps.org/genesis/parents?gohome=true>

Lunch Account (PaySchools Central) Information

Lawrence Township Public Schools is now using PaySchools Central to add funds to your child's lunch meal account.

Please follow these Steps to Manage your Students' Lunch Account

Visit [PaySchoolsCentral.com](https://payschoolscentral.com) or download the PaySchools Central Mobile app, available on Google Play or Apple App Store.



Once registered, you will receive an email to finish the account details: set up a password, link student(s), choose notifications, and set up a payment method.

From the dashboard, you can review the meal and fees balance, add account restrictions, and opt to pay all or partial balances, set up auto replenishment, and more.

All student balance from our previous program, MySchoolBucks has already been transferred to PaySchools Central.

Parents/Guardians can still complete the Free/Reduced Meal Application online through the [Genesis](#) parent portal.

Contact PaySchools Central Customer Service at 877-393-6628 for additional assistance or LTPS School Dining Services at 609-671-5594.



Communication

The best educational results happen when parents and teachers work together to plan for and discuss a student's educational needs. We encourage frequent communication between families and teachers.

Talking Points for Families App



Download the Free LTPS Mobile App!

- View news stories
- Access important phone numbers
- View grades
- View calendar info
- Receive alerts
- See lunch menus





Email and Voicemail

All Lawrence Township Public Schools teaching staff members have an email account and may be contacted this way. In most, though not all, cases the staff member's email address is the first letter of the staff member's first name and the complete last name followed by @ltps.org. All teaching staff members also have voicemails and may be reached via voicemail as well. Please remember when contacting teachers that the majority of their day is spent working directly with students. As such, it may take a day to reply.

Report Cards and Conferences

Report cards and Teacher Conferences are used to communicate student progress with families. Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in the fall and spring. Progress reports will be distributed three times a year. Report cards will be distributed at the end of the school year.

Back To School Night

Back To School Night is an opportunity for our families to visit their child's classroom and meet the teacher. This year's back-to-school night is scheduled for **September 19**. Your child's teacher will be available to say hello and you can walk through the school and see all of the staff. Back to School Night is not a time when we conference with the individual families or have student-specific meetings.

Family Engagement

Families are their children's first teachers and have a powerful effect on their young children's development. There are multiple benefits of family engagement in children's education. It has a more positive impact if it begins early in a child's educational experience. For this reason, the presence and engagement of families in preschool is essential. Family engagement means doing with—not doing to or for. It is an interactive process, which involves families and staff working together in ways that promote equity, inclusiveness, and cultural responsiveness.

Lawrence Township's Early Childhood program is a community-centered educational environment. In keeping with this emphasis, families are encouraged to become an integral part of the classroom and the school community. There are various ways that families may be encouraged to collaborate and communicate with teachers and staff.

Some of these include:

- Participation in school-wide and classroom events & celebrations
- Volunteerism
- Active communication with the teachers through conferencing and parent meetings
- Early Childhood Family Advisory Council



Early Childhood Family Advisory Council (ECAC): The Lawrence Township Early Childhood Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing the implementation of preschool and strengthening the relationships with families, schools, local businesses, colleges/universities, and health agencies. The responsibilities of the ECAC include serving our children and families of Lawrence Township by facilitating and sustaining collaboration while ensuring success for all children.

Participation in this committee, or its subcommittees, is completely voluntary, yet essential to support the growth of all our preschoolers in the district.

If you are interested in joining the Early Childhood Advisory Committee, please email Ms. Egnita Pardo, Supervisor of Early Childhood Education, at epardo@ltps.org or complete the ECAC interest form by scanning the QR Code.



Board of Education Policies

The information provided in parts of our handbook is based on the Board of Education's policies and regulations. Policies and Regulations may be viewed in their entirety on the Lawrence Township Public School's website, www.ltps.org under the Board of Ed tab/Board Policies. Board policies will be referenced throughout the handbook.

Policies can be located by selecting the "Board of Ed" tab and selecting "Board Policies" on the drop-down menu. Policies are listed numerically in folders on the website. For those who do not have access to a computer, copies of the policies are available in the main office.

[LTPS REFERENDUM 2025](#)

Download the [LTPS Full Policy and Regulation Manual](#) to view a searchable version with policy links.