LEARNING • EQUITY • COMMUNITY

ST. JOSEPH

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Mark Twain Early Learning Center HANDBOOK

2025-2026

Dear Families,

Welcome to the St. Joseph School District! The early childhood teachers and staff are excited to get to know your family and to help your preschooler learn and grow. We hope that we can answer some of your questions with this handbook, but please know that this is just the beginning of communication between home and school. Your child's education will benefit as we learn to exchange ideas with one another.

If you have questions or concerns at any time during the school year, please reach out.

Julie Coon
Principal-Mark Twain ELC
St. Joseph School District
816-671-4270
juliecoon@sjsd.k12.mo.us

The SJSD Early Learning Center follows policies included in the SJSD Parent and Student Handbook (Grades PreK-12). Please go to the link below for more information:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/17IONmFmR78wTCa5FziXT8L7FU_y5qDi4m63ljFXGm88/edit?usp=sharing

Receipt of these handbooks is acknowledgement of the recipient's responsibility to know and abide by the policies and procedures listed within the handbooks.

St. Joseph School District

Vision

Creating a climate of achievement in partnership with an engaged community

Mission

Preparing students for success in a complex and changing world

Values

- *Learning*
- *Equity*
- *Community*

Mark Twain Early Learning Center
705 S 31st Street
St. Joseph, MO 64507

Half-Day Preschool:

Schedules vary by class: M-TH or M-F

Morning Session	7:45-10:45 AM
Afternoon Session	11:50-2:50 PM

Full-Day Preschool: (must be toilet trained)

Monday through Friday	7:45-2:50

SJSD Early Childhood Education Commitments

- The SJSD early childhood program is committed to providing experiences in an increasingly inclusive environment.

- The SJSD early childhood program recognizes that learning in the preschool years is unique and developmental. The staff begins by working to understand individual preschooler's development, strengths, needs, and interests.

- SJSD early childhood educators are committed to providing learning experiences that allow preschoolers to learn actively, thoughtfully, and socially in an environment that is safe and allows for mistakes.

- SJSD early childhood educators honor parents/guardians as 'first teachers' and are committed to working together to help the children in our care learn and grow.

Preschool Programs

Peer programming:
Our district determines children eligible for peer placement programming by identifying preschool children most at risk of failing to meet the state's academic achievement standards based on multiple criteria. Children must participate in a district screening and be 4 years of age before August 1 to qualify as a peer. Peers may be placed in a full day or half day classroom, based on availability.

Special Education programming: Young students who have identified developmental delays may be eligible to attend classes that provide early childhood special education. These children, age 3 through pre- kindergarten, demonstrate a need for Individualized Educational Programs. We offer a variety of classrooms with ECSE staff, and children are placed in classrooms based on their strengths, needs, and goals.

- A birth certificate or other approved legal document, giving proof of the child's birthdate, must be presented at registration. Registration materials must be complete before a child enters SJSD preschool.
- Children must be immunized according to state regulations before the first day of school.
- We also require proof of residency in the St. Joseph School District attendance area in order to register your child for one of our preschool programs.

Showing up in Preschool Matters!

Early education is so important to long term school success! At preschool, your child will build skills in literacy & math. They will learn to solve problems and make friends. They will become stronger and gain control of motor tasks. But your preschooler will only gain these benefits if they attend regularly.

Some absences are unavoidable. Children who are showing signs of illness SHOULD stay home from school. If you are having difficulty getting your child to school because of something besides sickness, please reach out to us. If we see that your child is frequently absent, we will reach out to you to find out if we can help.

Please try to schedule appointments and vacations around these **important dates, 2025-2026**:

- Tuesday, August 19: First day of Preschool
- Monday, September 1: No School
- Friday, September 19: No School
- Friday, October 24: Early Dismissal
- October 28-29 Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Friday, October 31 & Monday, November 3: No School
- November 26-28: No School, Thanksgiving Break
- December 22-January 5: Winter Break
- Monday, January 19: No School
- February 13-16: No School, Presidents Day
- Friday, February 27: Early Dismissal
- March 3-4: Parent/Teacher Conferences
- March 6-13: Spring Break
- Friday, April 3: No School
- Tuesday, May 20: Early Dismissal/Last Day of Preschool

Car Transportation

<u>Arrival Utilizing the Circle Drive:</u> (blue arrows on map)
If you are bringing your child to school and choose to utilize the circle drive, enter the circle drive from the south. Vehicles that are not in the circle drive will form a line on the east side of 31st Street. (blue arrows). If you are the first vehicle in the arrival line, pull to the stop sign/red line on map. **Please do not get out of your vehicle.** ELC staff will assist children from vehicles in the circle drive. **Do not** let your child out of the car without an ELC staff member present. Once the first set of cars is unloaded, they will pull away and the next set of cars will pull up to be unloaded. **Do not attempt to go around cars in the drop off line at arrival.**

<u>Dismissal Utilizing the Circle Drive:</u> (blue arrows on map)
For dismissal, enter the circle drive from the south. If you are the first vehicle in the dismissal line, pull to the stop sign/red line on the map. **You will need to walk to the front door and meet your child for dismissal with your pickup sheet.** You may exit the circle drive once your child is in your vehicle. Be cautious as you exit the circle drive, as other vehicles will still be loading students.

<u>Arrival/Dismissal Utilizing the Parking Lot:</u> (yellow arrows on map)
If you are bringing your child to school or picking up after school and choose to utilize the parking lot, you will need to park in the lot and then walk your child to the front door or pickup your child from the front door with your pickup sheet. (yellow arrows)

Doors will open at 7:40 for the morning session and 11:45 for the afternoon session.

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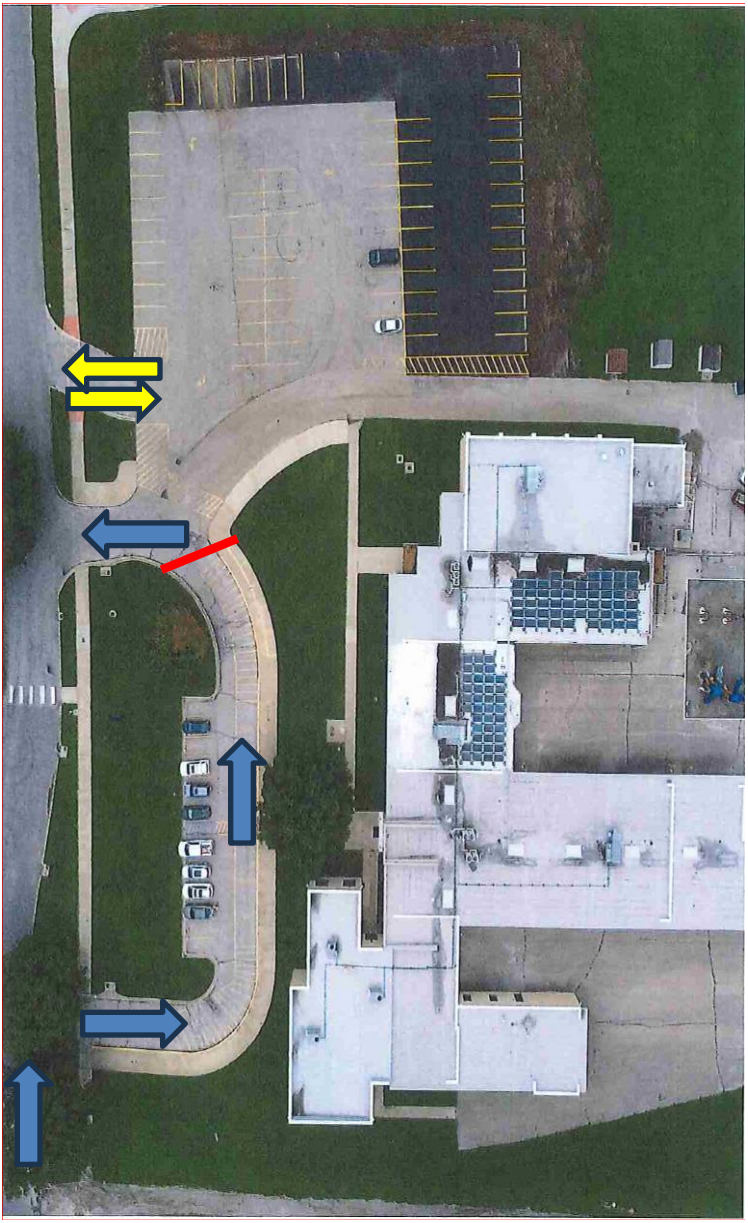

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Bus Transportation

The St. Joseph School District is offering bus transportation to all preschoolers with First Student. To facilitate this process, children will be placed in classrooms according to their drop off/pick up address.

- If there is a change in transportation information, this must be communicated directly to the school.

- If your child does not ride the bus for three consecutive days, regardless of the reason, you must contact First Student at 816-273-0041 to reinstate bus service.

By accepting a placement in preschool, you are signifying acceptance of our arrival/dismissal procedures.

SJSD Early Childhood Program

The **Emerging Language & Literacy Curriculum** (ELLC) prepares preschoolers for success in kindergarten and gives them a strong foundation in oral language and literacy. This program not only addresses all developmental domains with theme-based units, children's literature, multisensory activities, scaffolded instruction, and parental involvement but also creates an engaging environment with activity and play-based learning.

Sample Daily Schedule

7:45 **Family Style Breakfast** (self-care, conversation, counting, learning about nutrition)

8:15 **Opening/Group Meeting** (discussions, planning the day, movement & music, shared reading & writing)

8:45 **Learning Centers/Choice time** (creating, building, experimenting & investigations, cooking, puzzles & games, pretend play, independent reading & writing)

9:45 **Read-Aloud** (story, conversation, literacy)

10:00 **Outside/Gross Motor** (group games, environmental math,
exploration & experimentation, movement, socialization)

10:30 **Closing/Group Meeting** (discussions, reflections on the day, distributing items/newsletter, music & movement)

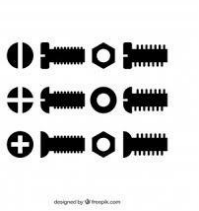
Conscious Discipline®

The SJSD early childhood program follows the Conscious Discipline approach to integrate social emotional learning, discipline, and the growth of self-regulation in children. Self-regulation is so very important for learning. Conscious Discipline training helps SJSD teachers work with children to develop self-regulation skills. Our teachers use Conscious Discipline's five-step process and 'Feelings Buddies' in the classroom to help children reach self- regulation.

Here are the five steps:

- I Am: the child recognizes that he is triggered and finds a safe space.
  For young children, sometimes the 'safe space' is the teacher.
- I Calm: the child begins to calm herself and identifies the feeling she is experiencing.
- I Feel: The child selects an appropriate Feeling Buddy, names the emotion, and works to help the Buddy regulate his emotion. The child develops positive self-talk.
- I Choose: The child chooses a strategy to make himself feel better.
- I Solve: The child identifies some lifelong problem-solving skills.

When you visit your child's SJSD preschool classroom, be sure to check out the Feeling Buddies.



Nuts & Bolts

What to wear & bring to school:

- Your preschooler should wear casual clothes that may get messy with paint or clay.
- Send your child to school with a jacket or coat if it is chilly. We may go outside (even for just a bit) when it is over 20 degrees.
- Shoes should be comfortable and safe. Please do not send your child to school in flip flops or high heels.
- Please put your child's name on hats, gloves, coats, and backpacks.
- Please do not send toys to school with your child. We do not want a special toy to become lost or broken.
- Please send an extra set of clothes to school to be kept in your preschooler's backpack/cubby.

Birthday Treats:
We cannot have birthday parties at school, but we want to celebrate your preschooler's special day! Please chat about treats beforehand with the teacher.

Being Safe:

- When picking your child up early, you must sign him/her out from the school's office.
- We will have regularly scheduled safety drills, such as fire drills, at preschool.
- In case of accident or illness, we may call home. Please make sure that we have current contact information and multiple, current emergency contacts.

Family Involvement:
Family Involvement activities will be planned throughout the school year to engage your family in preschool learning on a regular basis.

Parents As Teachers

Parents are a child's first and most influential teachers. Parents As Teachers helps families lay a strong foundation for a child's future success in school.

P.A.T. Services:

- Personalized home visits can start before a baby is born! A certified parent educator, specially trained in child development and eager to help families give children a great start, provides home visits. The SJSD Parents As Teachers program prioritizes children Birth-3 Years for this service.

- Group meetings with other parents provide opportunities where families can share parenting experiences, gain new insights, and talk about topics that interest them.

- Regularly scheduled play groups.

- Periodic screenings are conducted to better understand your child's strengths and needs. This is especially important if you suspect developmental delays.

- A referral network helps families find special services, if needed, that are beyond the scope of PAT.

For More Information,

Contact: 816-671-4018