



Early Learners Becoming Leaders of Tomorrow!

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HATTIESBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. Robert Williams, Superintendent

Hope Mikell, Director

301 Mamie St.

Hattiesburg, MS 39401

601-582-5078

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dr. Delores McNair, President

Yolanda Morris, Secretary

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Early Learning Collaboratives

The Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 established Mississippi's first state-funded, voluntary Pre-K program on a phased-in basis. The purpose of the act is to provide funding to local communities and to establish, expand, support, and facilitate the successful implementation of quality early childhood education. The Hattiesburg Public Schools has chosen to make an investment in our youngest children by creating the Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative to provide such a vital service in our community.

The Importance of Pre-K

A child's early years lay the foundation for long term academic achievement. Research has proven that early childhood education and family involvement are two of the most powerful predictors of educational success. While children receive high quality experiences within the classroom, we also desire to equip parents with resources to support their children at home.

The Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative

Our collaborative provides an opportunity for children around the HPS community to get a head start and come to kindergarten prepared for school and ready to learn! The Hattiesburg Public Schools has partnered with Pearl River Valley Opportunity Head Start and five local childcare centers to form the Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative. We are committed to increasing school readiness and family involvement by providing high quality experiences for preschool aged children in our district through the collaborative. Our early learning collaborative is able to serve 329 preschoolers. Enrollment is voluntary. All 20 HELC classrooms in the collaborative are provided with the same resources, assessments, high-quality curriculum, and experienced teachers. We are dedicated to ensuring that Hattiesburg preschoolers are ready to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative is staffed with a leadership team that consists of a director, project supervisor, educational specialist, counselor and dual language educator.

Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative does not discriminate in its program or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, age or genetics.



MOTTO:

Early Learners Becoming Leaders of Tomorrow!

HELC MISSION:

The mission of the Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative is to collaborate with early childhood education agencies to develop a partnership with families and the community to educate early learners in a supportive and enriched environment, which benefits their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

HELC VISION:

The Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative is a collective teaching and learning community that develops early learners into productive students who are focused and adaptive lifelong learners.

GOALS:

1. **Academic Success:** ALL early learners demonstrate K Readiness and/or showing growth in all academic and developmental areas.
2. **Effective and Committed Staff:** EVERY classroom is led by caring, supportive, and highly effective staff.
3. **Positive School Climate and Culture:** ALL sites are safe, supportive, and welcoming.
4. **Family and Community Engagement:** ALL families and the community are informed, connected, and contribute to the success of our students and schools.
5. **Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainable Resources:** ALL collaborative resources support the full implementation of the strategic plan.



HATTIESBURG EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Hattiesburg Public Schools

301 Mamie
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601-582-5078
hope.mikell@hattiesburgpsd.com

Therah's Childcare Center

216 S. 21st Ave.
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601-554-9929
ntherah@yahoo.com

PRVO Head Start

100 W. Front St.
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601-582-0689
asimon@prvo.org

T.J's Learning Center

1903 Acadia St.
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601-545-3080
thomascasey37@yahoo.com

Smart Start Community School

412 Killingsworth Dr.
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601-545-9299
smartstartcommunityschool@gmail.com

Tunjia's Little Ones Child Development Center

104 N. 39th Ave. Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601-336-8435
tunjiaslittleones@gmail.com

USM's Center for Child Development

3400 Morningside Drive
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
601-266-5294
angel.herring@usm.edu



REQUIREMENTS FOR PRE-K

- Students entering Pre-K must reach the age of four on or before September 1 of the current school year.
- Students should live in the attendance zone of the school for which he/she is applying.
- Parents provide prompt transportation to and from sites.
- Transportation is not provided to and from HELC Public School Locations, PRVO Public School Locations, or Childcare Centers, it is the responsibility of the parent.
- Program participation is voluntary; however, once enrolled, students are expected to arrive on time and follow HPS attendance policies.
- Students must be fully potty-trained to participate in the program (PRVO exception).
- Parents are expected to attend at least three parent trainings/teacher conferences throughout the year.

VERIFICATION OF STUDENT RESIDENCY

The Mississippi State Board of Education requires that all school districts verify a student's residence to determine whether the student may legally attend a school in the district. The definition of student residence for school attendance purposes is that the student physically resides full time, weekdays/nights and weekends, at a place of abode located within the limits of the school district. The Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative School Public School Sites must verify the residence of each student to be enrolled. Post office box numbers are not acceptable for verification purposes. A street address/name must be provided. Any student whose residence is not cleared through the district using the proper procedure as adopted by the state board will be denied enrollment. When questions arise regarding a student's legal residence, the school may request additional confirmation of the information to meet the requirements of state law.

Residency Verification Procedure: Except for those students who have been legally transferred, each student must establish his/her residency in the following manner:

Students Living with Parent(s) or Guardian(s): The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of a student seeking to enroll must provide the Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative/school with at least two of the items numbered 1 through 10 below as verification of their address, except that a document with a post office box as an address will not be accepted.

1. Filed Homestead Exemption Application form
2. Mortgage documents or property deed
3. Apartment or home lease
4. Utility bills



5. Driver's license
6. Voter precinct identification
7. Automobile registration
- *8. No Affidavits unless special circumstances (Director or Superintendent approved) - personal visit by a designated Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative staff or school district official*
9. Any other documentation that will objectively and unequivocally establish that the parent or guardian resides within the school district
10. Certified copy of filed petition for guardianship if pending and final decree when granted: Student is living with a legal guardian and a certified copy of the Court Decree (or petition) if pending, was received declaring the district resident to be the legal guardian of the student and further declaring that the guardianship was formed for a purpose other than establishing residency for school district attendance purposes.

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WHAT TO EXPECT IN OUR CLASSROOMS

Classroom Setting and Teaching Methods: Pre-K classrooms have learning areas or “centers” set-up in the classroom, and each is supplied with books, materials, and learning activities. Typical learning centers in a Pre-K classroom might include math, blocks, reading, art, science, dramatic play, writing, and music. The learning centers are designed to promote various development skills in the follow areas:

- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Science
- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Creative Expression

The Pre-K classroom has ample space to accommodate individual, small, and large group instruction. The Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children provide the basis for instruction in the Pre-K classroom. Teachers interact with children and move about the classroom to facilitate learning experiences. You can find a copy of a daily schedule posted in the classroom. The Pre-K schedule allows for daily story times, outside time, rest time, instruction in the learning centers, and in large and small groups.



Assessments: Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative uses the following assessments:

- *Brigance Early Childhood Developmental Screener*- provides a snapshot of a child’s development at a particular point in time. Educators use the screening to identify potential developmental delays and giftedness and to plan for interventions.
- *MKAS*- The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment provides parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school.
- *STAR Early Literacy*: The collaborative uses this assessment throughout the year to measure both early literacy and early numeracy in a single assessment.

Curriculum: Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative uses *Mississippi Beginnings Curriculum* - a research- and evidence-based comprehensive curriculum that is designed to prepare children for kindergarten, with emphasis in early literacy, and is aligned with the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three-Year-Old Children and the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children. Mississippi Code Annotated §27-103-159 defines “evidence-based program” as “a program or practice that has had multiple site random controlled trials across heterogeneous populations demonstrating that the program is effective for the population.” Additionally, the curriculum contains thematic units of activities and ideas designed to provide children the opportunities and experiences needed to master the performance standards in the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three-Year-Old Children and the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children.

The Collaborative also teaches Heggerty Phonemic Awareness.



2025-2026

Hattiesburg Public Schools

Academic Calendar (Board Approved 2.11.25 Corrections)

July 2025							Student Days - 0	Teacher Days - 4
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Jul 4	District Holiday-Offices Closed
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			Jul 28-31	Professional Development

January 2026							Student Days - 18	Teacher Days - 19
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Jan 5	Professional Development
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Jan 6	Students Return
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Jan 19	MLK Holiday
25	26	27	28	29	30	31		#January 5th Weather Make Up Day

August 2025							Student Days - 21	Teacher Days - 21
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Aug 1	First Day for Students
3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
31								

February 2026							Student Days - 19	Teacher Days - 20
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Feb 16	Professional Development/Student Holiday
22	23	24	25	26	27	28		#February 16th Weather Make Up Day

September 2025							Student Days - 21	Teacher Days - 21
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Sep 1	Staff and Student Holiday
1	2	3	4	5	6			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27		
28	29	30						

March 2026							Student Days - 17	Teacher Days - 17
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Mar 12	3rd Term Ends
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Mar 16-20	Spring Break
22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
29	30	31						

October 2025							Student Days - 18	Teacher Days - 18
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Oct 3	1st Term Ends
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Oct 6-10	#Fall Break
12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
26	27	28	29	30	31			

April 2026							Student Days - 21	Teacher Days - 21
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Apr 3	Good Friday Holiday
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				

November 2025							Student Days - 15	Teacher Days - 15
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	Nov 24-28	Thanksgiving Break
30								

May 2026							Student Days - 15	Teacher Days - 16
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	May 21	60% Day/4th Term Ends
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	May 22	Professional Development
31							May 25	District Holiday-Offices Closed

December 2025							Student Days - 15	Teacher Days - 15
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		
1	2	3	4	5	6			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Dec 19	2nd Term Ends
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Dec 19	60% Day For Students/2nd Term Ends
28	29	30	31				Dec 22- Jan 6	Christmas Break

June 2026								
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		
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						
							Total Student Days	180
							Total Teacher Days	187

Term	Ending	Progress Reports	Report Cards	Student Days
1st Term	October 3	September 2	October 14	45 Days
2nd Term	December 19	November 11	January 13	45 Days
3rd Term	March 12	February 3	March 24	45 Days
4th Term	May 21	April 21	TBD	45 Days

Student and Staff Holidays	Summer Programs (tentative)
End of Nine Week Term	Progress/Report Cards
Professional Development	60% Days

#Weather Make-Up Days: JAN 5th and FEB 16th

Additional make-up days due to unscheduled closure of the schools shall be set at the discretion of the Hattiesburg Public Schools Board of Trustees to meet state requirements.



LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY

HELC Sites	Start Time	Dismissal
PRVO W.H. Jones	7:45	2:00
Smart Start Community School	8:00	3:00
Therah's Child Care Center	8:00	3:00
Tunjia's Little Ones Development Center	8:00	3:00
T.J.'s Learning Center	8:00	3:00
USM's Center for Child Development	8:00	3:00
Hawkins Elementary	8:00	3:00
Grace Christian Elementary	8:00	3:00
Rowan Elementary	8:00	3:00
Thames Elementary	8:00	3:00
Woodley Elementary	8:00	3:00



ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is a component of a child's academic success. Children who do not attend on a regular basis, are routinely late, or routinely leave the program early may be disenrolled. In addition, children who are late, leave early, or are absent for ten consecutive days without a medical or other reasonable explanation must be disenrolled from the program.

- 3 unexcused absences = a parent phone call
- 5 unexcused absences = a face-to-face parent conference and a reminder of the policy
- 8 unexcused absences = a parent meeting with the guidance counselor and school administrator
- 10 unexcused absences = possible disenrollment from the Pre-K class, Meeting with HELC Director

Excused Absences: The following will constitute a valid excuse for temporary non-attendance, provided satisfactory evidence of the excuse is provided to the school:

- Personal illness; or
- Serious illness in the family; or
- Death in the family; or
- Special permission of the principal/director (obtained in advance in person by the parent or legal guardian).

Excused absences are granted once the written notes from parents/guardian or medical/dental excuses are received by the school or childcare center. These written notes must be received on the day of return to school if the absence is to be excused. After 3 excused absences per nine weeks based on parental notes, a doctor's excuse will be required for excusing an absence. According to Mississippi Law, a student shall be counted present for average daily attendance record keeping purposes if he/she is present for 63 percent of the day (or 208 minutes, approximately 3.5 hours) any portion of the regular school day in grades K-12. Tardies and early dismissals will be considered when determining perfect attendance and exemption status.

Unexcused Absences: The principal/director can make exceptions when extreme circumstances arise. An unlawful or unexcused absence is an absence during the school day that is not due to a valid excuse.

Any student who has accumulated 10 or more unexcused absences during the school year will be reported to the Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative Pre-Kindergarten Program Director (**Hope Mikell**) and will be subject to disenrollment from the program (see Disenrollment Policy and Process).



BEHAVIOR

The Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative Pre-K program is based on the belief that children learn self-discipline and behavior that will result in cooperation, sharing, following directions, listening, and showing respect for themselves and others.

Staff Responsibilities: It is the staff's responsibility to help children learn this behavior. The Pre-K staff will respond to challenging behaviors as follows:

- Be proactive.
- Teach social and problem-solving skills, implement a caring classroom community, and emphasize and teach desired skills.
- Provide the child with constructive alternatives to disruptive behavior.
- Document challenging behaviors and strategies implemented.
- Discuss repetitive behavior problems with the child's parents.
- Principal or Director may request that parents come to school and pick up a child when his/her actions are dangerous to self or others.

Parental Responsibilities: It is the parent's responsibility to respond to a child's behavior problems in the following ways:

- Teach the child self-discipline and respect for authority.
- Be available for conferences.
- Cooperate with school personnel and the Pre-K staff for the benefit of the child.

Children may be disenrolled from the Pre-K Program if they are hurting themselves or others and/or are chronically disruptive to the extent that they are not benefiting from the Pre-K program. Disenrollment of a child for behavior reasons is the last step taken after all other attempts to help the child within the program have been exhausted (see Disenrollment Policy and Process)



TOILET TRAINING AND PROCEDURE

Our Pre-Kindergarten program is designed for students who are comfortable taking care of their own toileting needs. For this reason, all children are required to be toilet trained before they enter school. The following is a list of our school's readiness criteria:

- Consistently recognize when he/she needs to go to the bathroom.
- Have the ability to wait to use the toilet.
- Pull down pants and sit on the toilet without assistance.
- Use toilet paper correctly and understand how to clean themselves adequately.
- Pull pants back up with no assistance.
- Flush the toilet.
- Wash and dry hands after using the toilet.

Children in all Pre-K classes are expected to be able to completely potty independently. Pre-K classrooms are not equipped with a diaper changing table/station or diapering supplies. It would be helpful to dress children in clothing that is easy to manage so that toileting is not difficult for the child. Pull-up diapers are not acceptable under-clothing.

Any child who has an accident will be removed from the classroom discreetly and escorted to the bathroom by a teacher or assistant. In case of an occasional accident at school, a child needs to be able to clean him/ herself up with minimal assistance. If not, parents (or a designated adult) will be asked to come to the school in a timely manner to assist the child. ***Please make sure your child has a clean set of extra clothes at school at all times.*** Students who cannot routinely adhere to the toileting policy may be subject to disenrollment from the program.

DRESS CODE

- Uniforms are not required
- Please make sure your child wears the appropriate undergarments daily
- Pull-Ups are not allowed
- Clothing that exposes a Pre-K child's back, spaghetti straps shirts or dresses should not be worn to school
- Shorts and skirts should be an appropriate length
- Wear closed toe shoes daily
- Rubber sole shoes are preferred



FOOD SERVICES AND SNACKS

Breakfast and lunch are available for Pre-Kindergarten students through the cafeteria. Please contact the cafeteria manager at your child's school for more information. Students may bring healthy snacks with them daily.

DISENROLLMENT POLICY

The Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative Pre-Kindergarten program seeks a solid partnership with families as a basis for their children's success within our program. Because we accommodate a wide range of individual differences, it is only on rare occasions that a child's/family's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for either a short term or permanent basis. We will do everything possible to work with you to avoid a child's disenrollment from the program.

The Hattiesburg Early Learning Collaborative Pre-K Program reserves the right, as circumstances may arise, to discharge a child from the program at the discretion of the Pre-K Director, the Principal, and Childcare Director. Parents will be consulted at any point where a child's behavior is at issue or there is a learning need the school is unable to meet. Every effort will be made to avoid disenrollment.

The following are some reasons why we would have to disenroll a child or family from the program. Some examples of such instances include:

Behaviors:

- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Ongoing uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts
- Destruction of property
- Excessive aggressive behaviors, such as temper tantrums, biting, spitting, etc.
- Unable to adhere to toileting requirements. •
- Toilet Training • Failure to routinely adhere to the toileting policy. •
- Excessive toileting accidents that exceed 10 times or more within a school year, will result in disenrollment from the Pre-K program. •
- Persistent public toileting.

Attendance:

- 10 or more unexcused absences
- Frequent tardies or early dismissals



Parental Actions

- A parent/guardian is physically or verbally abusive or intimidating to the program's staff, children, or anyone else at the school.
- Potentially dangerous behavior by a parent or child.

Disenrollment Procedure: Disenrollment may take place for any of the reasons listed. Disenrollment will only take place when all other options have been exhausted (immediate suspension and extended suspension). Disenrollment requires prior approval from the Pre-K Director.

The following procedures will be used in each situation:

- The school will contact the Pre-K Director the same day of the incident.
- The school will provide documentation for disenrollment
- The school will prepare all documentation of behaviors and strategies used to address concerns.
- The documentation must state the behavior, how often the behavior occurs, the interventions used, and the child's response to the interventions.
- The school must schedule a conference with the child's family to discuss strategies and options. This conference will be documented.
- Parents will be notified via phone and letter of the final decision regarding disenrollment.

IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION

An immediate suspension for up to two (2) days can be made at any time the Pre-K provider/principal determines a child is causing harm to himself/herself or others; or a child is unable to successfully participate in program activities. Programs can implement immediate suspension (up to two days) and a maximum of three occasions per child. Prior approval from the district office is not needed; however, the program's Pre-K Director/Coordinator must be notified that such action has been taken. If all three immediate suspensions have been used and a child is a danger to self, peers, or staff; the child may be sent home for the day with a plan for the child's successful return.

EXTENDED SUSPENSION

An extended suspension (i.e., more than two days and/or more than three incidents of immediate suspension) requires prior approval from the Pre-K Director (Hope Mikell). The building level Principal must contact Hope Mikell to discuss requests for extended suspension.



The following information is needed to request an extended suspension:

- Reason(s) extended suspension is being requested and the length of the extended suspension
- Attempted interventions to help the child, including any immediate suspension information
- All documentation of written correspondence and meeting notes showing ongoing involvement with the parents
- Behavioral and instructional observations of the child supporting the extended suspension request
- Documentation of consultation of the school system special needs personnel (behavior interventionist , HELC Counselor)
- All extended suspension requests including supporting documentation should be sent via email to the Pre-K Coordinator/Director (**Hope Mikell, hope.mikell@hattiesburgpsd.com**).

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Orientation: A parent orientation of the program will be scheduled during the summer before Pre-K starts. Parents will be notified via mail of the orientation date. The orientation will include more specific information about the curriculum and general program information. Attendance at orientation is mandatory.

Parental Involvement: Whenever possible, families should actively participate in the Pre-K program and maintain open communication with the Pre-K program staff. Research shows that active family participation in children's learning experiences contribute to success in school. Volunteering in the classroom is highly recommended, because it helps children and is informative and rewarding for families. Contact your child's teacher or principal to find out about opportunities to volunteer your time, talents, and experiences in your child's classroom.

Family-Teacher Conferences: A minimum of three family/teacher conferences will be offered to families during the school year. During these conferences the teacher will discuss your child's progress by providing information about your child's performance in regards to the Mississippi Standards for four-year-olds.



TIPS TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL

Talk with your child: Describe objects, activities, emotions, behaviors, and surroundings to your child. Ask him many questions and give them opportunities to ask questions too.

Read every day: Reading books, labels, street signs and other words increases your child's vocabulary and his ability to identify letters. Try to visit the local library whenever possible!

Encourage creativity: Children are more likely to be good problem-solvers when they can use play and their imagination to express themselves.

Give choices: Even small choices can help build your child's confidence and independence.

Model positive problem-solving: Use positive words to resolve any conflicts. Help your child understand how his actions affect others.

SUPPORTING HELC

Individuals or corporations may make a contribution to support our Early Learning Collaborative and be eligible to receive a state tax credit for the donated amount. These donations help ensure a high-quality early learning experience for 329 children in our area. For more information visit the Mississippi First website at www.mississippifirst.org or contact Hope Mikell at (601) 582-5078 or at hope.mikell@hattiesburgpsd.com