

PENNSAUKEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Early Childhood Learning Center PARENT HANDBOOK

2025 - 2026



Pennsauken Public Schools has committed to a mission that will move this district forward to a level of excellence in order to equip every student with the knowledge, critical life skills, and strategies produced through education.

PENNSAUKEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Baldwin Early Childhood Center

Phone: 856-662-8464
Principal – **Dana Gery** Ext. 7501
Secretary – **Danielle McGowan** Ext. 7500

Franklin Elementary School

Phone: 856-662-6455
Principal – **Susan Galloza** Ext. 7101
Secretaries – **Tacy Pavel** Ext. 7100 & **Trena Jones** Ext. 7102

♥ Welcome to Preschool!

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As this school year begins, the administration, faculty and staff welcome you and your child to Pre-Kindergarten.

It is the first step of a joyous and never-ending adventure into a world filled with exciting and interesting things to do and learn.

This handbook has been created in hopes of making life easier for you as we progress through the year together. In it, you will find information about our policies and practices designed to foster a caring, secure, and organized environment that will enable your child to reach their maximum potential.

Educating our children must be a partnership between the home, school and community. Together, we must be dedicated to helping your child grow into a healthy, happy, academically successful student. We look forward to getting to know you and your child.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to write a note or call the school. Please be sure to notify the school office and teacher immediately if there is a change in your telephone number, work number, cell number or emergency contact number.

Educationally Yours,

Dana M. Gery

Principal of Early Childhood

THE PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

An early childhood education is important for meeting and satisfying the intellectual, linguistic, social, emotional and physical needs of young children. You may have heard the phrase, “a child’s play is his/her best work.” This captures the basic premise of developmentally appropriate practices: “students learn best while engaged in meaningful and challenging play that is facilitated by professional educators” (Steffen Saifer).

We believe young children learn through active, concrete and direct experiencing. They learn with their bodies and their senses, as well as with their minds. They learn through exploration, experimentation, problem solving, play, expressive activity in music and the arts and sensory-motor experiences. The implementation of the Creative Curriculum Program allows for a hands-on experience.

The Pre-Kindergarten Program consists of inclusion and special education pre-school classes. In addition to teachers and educational assistants, we employ speech therapists, occupational therapists, a social worker, a learning consultant and a psychologist. This team of experts services the special needs students on a regular schedule and functions as consultants for the pre-kindergarten students.

The Pre-Kindergarten Program is dedicated to the belief that children be given the opportunity to acquire essential skills that will prepare them for the elementary school program.

School Hours

Full Day: 9:05 am - 3:20 pm

Early Dismissal: 9:05 am - 1:15 pm

For a successful school experience, it is important for students to arrive and depart at the times listed above, including walkers. Doors will open at 9:05am. **No student should arrive before 9:05 am.** We will have staggered dismissal time beginning at 3:05 pm.

Absentee Call System

As an outgrowth of community concern for children's safety, the elementary schools have instituted an absentee call system. Please listen to the greeting on the answering system to choose the right option number for leaving your message.

Baldwin ECLC: 856-662-8464

Franklin Elementary: 856-662-6455

If children are absent, parents/guardians should call their child's school before 9:00 a.m.

Attendance Regulations

Preschool attendance is extremely important for your child's learning and development, and we encourage families to make it a top priority. Regular attendance helps children build routines, develop social skills, and fully benefit from the program. Please be aware that students with **18 or more total absences**, or those who are absent for **10 consecutive school days without notification**, may be **removed from the preschool program**. Additionally, **every 5 latenesses will be counted as one absence** toward the total. If your child must miss school, we ask that you communicate with the school office as soon as possible. Thank you for your support and partnership.

A student who has been absent is required to present a note of explanation signed by the parent or guardians; however, **only absences with a doctor's note will count as an excused absence for attendance purposes**. Any child absent with a contagious or infectious disease must present a doctor's note.

Students wishing to receive a legal excuse for absence on religious holidays must bring a note signed by the parent on the day before the holiday.

Punctuality is expected of all students; lateness will be recorded. If it is necessary for a child to arrive late, please call the office and leave a message.

Bus Transportation

Students eligible for bus transportation must follow the established policies and procedures adopted by the Pennsauken Board of Education.

No preschool student will be let off the bus without a parent, guardian, or other designated person at the bus stop to receive them.

Early Dismissal

If it is necessary for a student to leave during the school day, parents/guardians are required to notify their child's teacher. We ask that you notify the teacher through email and/or provide a note in the child's take home folder. If there is an emergency, please contact the Main Office directly. A parent/guardian or the parent's authorized representative, listed on the emergency/demographic form, must come to the vestibule and sign the student out. Identification is required. At no time is the parent or their representative permitted to take a student from the school, or off a bus, without having first signed the student out by coming to the main entrance vestibule.

If you specify that a certain person cannot pick up your child from school, we must have either a current restraining order or a sole residential custody decree on file in the office. If we do not have the necessary paperwork, the child may be released to the parents listed on the Birth Certificate. The principal, or her representative, reserves the right to ask for identification from anyone picking up a child.

Whenever possible, appointments for dental care and other professional treatment should be scheduled at times that do not conflict with school hours. If it is absolutely necessary to be dismissed from school early, a note signed by the parent/guardian stating time, date and reason for such request must be presented to the teacher.

For safety and security students will not be picked up after 3:00 pm, as we will be preparing for dismissal.

Only parents or authorized designees over the age of 18 should report to the office and sign for the release of the child. A yellow form will be sent home the first week of school to identify individuals who will be permitted to pick up your student. Please include their name and phone number on the form. Photo identification is required for all student pickup regardless of whether you are a familiar face to the staff. **ID MUST BE SHOWN AT ALL TIMES.**

Emergency School Closing

In the event that snow and inclement weather make driving too hazardous, schools may be closed or there may be a delayed opening. The closing will be posted by name (Pennsauken Township Public Schools) on local TV stations, as well as on Channel 19 and **phone blast**. It will also be listed on the school website, Pennsauken.net. Pennsauken Public School's closing code number is **558**.

If our code number (558) is not announced, school will be open. **PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL.** Phone lines will be needed for emergency arrangements.

Health

Although the school's prime function is learning, it is necessary that children be physically fit so that their minds will be alert and able to absorb new learning. All new entrants are required to submit a physical upon entrance to school. All children, with parental consent, are weighed, measured and given eye and ear screenings yearly. **All preschool students are required to have a flu shot by December 31.**

Following are some requirements and suggestions that promote good health and cooperation between the home and school.

1. The emergency form is **very** important. Should there be an emergency; the school has to know where to reach a parent/guardian. Relatives, neighbors, and friends should also be listed in case a parent/guardian is unable to come for a child. Please be sure that all emergency numbers are accessible and up-to-date.
2. If a child is ill for three consecutive days, a doctor or clinic note is required for the child to return to school.
3. If a child is required to take medication during school hours, the medicine must be in the original container, along with parent and doctor notes. These requirements apply to both prescription and non-prescription medications. Medications must be delivered to the nurse by the parent. Students are not permitted to transport medications.
4. If a fever develops, a child should not return to school until the temperature has been normal for a 24-hour period. Child should be fever-free for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medications such as Tylenol. During this time, resistance is low and new infections could appear if a child returns to school too soon.
5. If vomiting occurs during the night, the child should remain home until he/she tolerates a full diet without cramping or vomiting after eating. The child should be free from vomiting for 24 hours.
6. If a child receives any immunizations during the summer or school year, contact the school nurse to update the health records. Also, if a child receives a physical exam throughout the year, please send a copy to the school nurse.

Please check the website throughout the year for up to date information.

Nap/Quiet Time

The State recommends one hour of nap/quiet time daily in preschool classrooms. Please provide a small blanket and stuffed animal for your child during this time. Children will be given a cot to lay on. Bedding will be stored in large sealed plastic bags. It will be sent home at the end of each week and should be returned the following Monday washed and clean.

Meal Program (Breakfast and Lunch)

Families are asked to submit free and reduced meal applications. These applications are very important, as they now determine P-EBT money. Families that did not have an approved application in to us last year will not be entitled to EBT funding for the current year. If you have any questions, please contact our Food Service Department at 856-662-8500 Ext. 5233.

Nutrition

Pennsauken Public Schools has adopted a Nutrition Policy as mandated by the State of New Jersey and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is recognized that poor diet and lack of physical activity negatively impacts students' health and their ability to learn. This policy has clear requirements on what may be served, sold or given out as free promotion during school hours to our students.

The requirements include the following:

- No foods or beverages can have sugar as its first ingredient

- No foods may have more than 2 grams of saturated fat per serving size based on nutrition facts label
- No foods may have more than 8 grams of total fat per serving size based on nutrition facts label
- No foods or beverages classified as “minimal nutritional value” as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- No candy of any kind – including sugar free candy and gummy fruit snacks
- 100% of all beverages offered are milk, water or 100% fruit juices

Pennsauken’s nutrition policy can be read in full on the district’s website.

Due to numerous food allergies, **no food treats of any kind** can be brought in to school to be distributed to children. (The only exception is the snack provided by home, which is not shared with any other child.) If you wish to have your child’s birthday recognized in the classroom, a small birthday treat can be sent in with your child on their special day and must follow the school safe snack list (listed on our website). Parents/guardians are not invited into the classroom for birthday snacks. We do not allow balloons or flowers to be sent to the classroom. If you are sending birthday invites to school it must include the entire classroom or we will not distribute them.

Preschool Intervention and Referral Services

A Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) has been formed for our program. This committee assists teachers and families in developing strategies for working with students who have learning and/or behavior problems.

PIRT reviews student needs, recommends interventions, and evaluates the effectiveness of the interventions. The committee assists teachers in developing successful strategies for students at risk. Emphasis is on teachers helping teachers, with administrative support, facilitation, and monitoring.

Members of the committee are:

- Building Principal
- Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist
- Teacher requesting assistance
- Other professionals as needed
- Parent/Guardian

If your child is experiencing a problem in school and the teacher requests assistance from the PIRT committee, you will be asked to attend a PIRT meeting. Parents may also request assistance by reaching out to the classroom teacher.

Parent-Teacher Association

All elementary schools have an active PTA. It is hoped that you will become a member who seeks to maintain the best relationship between home and school. Newsletters will inform you concerning membership, special events and meetings.

Security Drills

Monthly drills are held to prepare all students and staff to respond to emergencies. The building principal shall conduct one security drill and one fire drill each month. Teachers and staff will guide their students and any visitors according to the drill plan. Part of the new law is the requirement that a school district provides written notification to parents/guardians following completion of a school security drill (not fire

drills) by no later than the end of the school day on which the school security drill was conducted. For more information on drills, you can visit <https://www.nj.gov/education/security/drill/Guide.pdf>. School employees are required to receive training on school safety and security drills, which are similar in duration to our fire drills. Practicing these drills will prepare school personnel on how to best respond in an emergency should one arise.

School Visitors

For the safety of your children, it is required that all visitors and parents report to the main office upon entering the building. **PHOTO ID MUST BE PRESENTED-NO EXCEPTIONS!!** Once the purpose of the visit has been established, a visitor's badge may be issued. Anyone failing to register in the office will be subject to possible arrest and/or charges being filed as per local trespassing ordinances.

Parents always have access to the school to solve immediate concerns, such as forgotten snacks, backpacks, etc. Please leave them in the security vestibule for delivery to your child. If you require a meeting with a staff member, please call or email the staff member or main office to set up an appointment.

Student Dress Code

Pre-K students are not required to wear school uniforms; however, if you wish for them to do so, it is acceptable. The K-4 uniform is a navy polo shirt with a collar and navy or khaki pants, shorts, or skirts.

For the safety of your child, shoes/sneakers should be worn to school. Flip-flops, sandals and "heelies" are not acceptable footwear.

Trips

Class trips have a definite place in the instructional program. Teachers are encouraged to take their classes on meaningful and informative trips. A permission slip signed by the parent/guardian is required for every student. No student is permitted to go on any field trip unless a permission slip is signed and returned to the teacher.

Volunteers

Thank you for volunteering your time and talents to assist the staff within our school. As you know, "many hands make light work" and you are certainly helping us. We truly appreciate your volunteer spirit.

In order to provide a fun and positive experience for you and our school community, here are some suggested tips:

- Volunteers must obtain and wear a visitor's pass available in the office.
- Please avoid visiting your child's classroom. Visitations should be planned in advance with the teacher.
- Please do not wander around the school. Classroom instruction is our priority, and we try to limit classroom interruptions.
- If you have any questions, please see Ms. McGowan in the Main Office.

How Is My Child Doing?

Conferences are scheduled each year so that parents and teachers may exchange information about the progress and needs of the children. If you desire other conferences, please contact the teacher for an appointment. Parent Teacher Conferences will be held in November. You will receive information about dates and times from your child's teacher.

Early Childhood Special Education Program

The State Legislature has mandated programs for children with special needs between the ages of three (3) and five (5) years. During the spring of each year, children are identified through a community search and given a complete evaluation by the Child Study Team (CST) to determine eligibility for classification as a "Preschool Child with a Disability." In addition, if you are concerned at any time with your child's development, you may contact the CST to discuss your concerns.

Children classified as eligible are provided a full range of related services such as transportation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and/or counseling as determined by the Child Study Team.

Each child has an Individual Education Program Plan (IEP), which specifies the areas of need, sets goals and objectives, and establishes achievement criteria. The CST, Teacher, and Parents participate together to formulate each IEP. In addition, each teacher will assess the students using Teaching Strategies Gold in the areas of Social/Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math. Progress reports are sent home quarterly and an Annual Review occurs each school year.

Students are placed in the Least Restrictive Environment to ensure success. A philosophy of inclusion is used whenever possible. Inclusion refers to the opportunities for students with disabilities to have access to and participate in activities with non-disabled peers. These interactions can take place in a variety of physical, social, and/or academic settings.

Preschool Child Study Team - Phone: 856-662-8464 Ext. 7504