



Unity Drive Pre-K/Kindergarten Center

Family Handbook

2025-2026



Unity Drive Pre-K/Kindergarten Center

Middle Country Central School District
8-43rd Street
Centereach NY 11720

Dr. Roberta A. Gerold, Superintendent
James G. Donovan, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Beth Rella, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Business
Jonathan Singer, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

September 2025

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to Unity Drive Pre-K/Kindergarten Center! It is with great excitement that I welcome you to the school. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be the principal of Unity Drive School and to share these wonderful first school experiences with you and your children.

On behalf of the entire staff, I extend the invitation to you to become an active member of our school family. We believe that cooperation and communication between home and school not only strengthens our educational partnership, but is also key in creating a successful learning environment.

This Parent Handbook is one of the tools we use to improve communication between home and school. It describes our school's general organization and operation, answers some frequently asked questions, and contains current information you may need during the year. Please keep this handbook for future reference. It is also available on-line on our school page.

One of the ways to develop a strong partnership with families is through active participation and involvement in our PTA. We have a strong partnership with our PTA. These hard-working volunteers make many of our activities possible! Their efforts support field trips, our cultural arts events, our book fairs and holiday boutiques as well as our Pick a Reading Partner Program (PARP). I encourage you to join these enthusiastic volunteers and be a part of our many family involvement activities. No matter how much, or how little, time a parent or guardian has to share, any involvement is always welcomed.

We look forward to a year filled with the excitement of learning as children explore new experiences with curiosity and eagerness!

Sincerely,

Denise Ferrera
Principal

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Arrival and Dismissal - Kindergarten

Attendance/Absence

Unity School's Hours of Operation are as follows:

Bus Arrival: 9:10 – 9:20

Walker Arrival: 9:10 – 9:20

PM Buses depart 3:30-3:45

Walker Dismissal 3:30-3:45

The main office closes at 4:30 p.m.

The likelihood of school success is strongly linked to participation in school which is linked to consistent attendance and arriving on time. It is very important for children to develop habits of punctuality at an early age. Your child is considered late after 9:20. If you expect your child to be late or absent, please be sure to notify the school before 8:30 a.m.

Please remember to call the attendance office (631) 285-8763 when your child is going to be absent. You can leave a message on the attendance voicemail. If we do not receive a call the attendance secretary will call you to get a reason for the absence as per our district policy. Written absent notes are required. When your child returns, please send in an absence note stating the reason child has been absent. The note should be addressed to the teacher and dated. It must include your child's full name, the date(s) of absence, the reason for the absence and be signed by the parent/guardian.

Good, consistent attendance is essential for school success. Whenever possible, please make appointments outside of school hours. We also ask that vacations are scheduled so that children are not missing school time.

Early Arrival

Doors for arrival will open at 9:10 a.m. We are unable to accept students before 9:10 a.m.

Early Pickup

If it is necessary due to an emergency to pick your child up early, please call the main office. In the case of a doctor's appointment, please send in a note with your child with date and time of early pickup. Please include the full name of child and person picking up. To sign your child out early, please come to the front door and let the greeter know why you are here. **As always, picture I.D. will be required.** Due to the need to dismiss approximately 300 students in an orderly fashion, we cannot release children after 3:00 pm. At that point you will need to go to the walker door for pickup. **We request that early dismissals be limited to necessary situations only.**

Picking Up Students

When picking up students, please park in the side lot and walk to the Main Entrance. For safety, please **do not park in the BUS CIRCLE.**

Communication

The school will make every effort to keep parents fully informed, with regular PTA meetings, newsletters, monthly calendars, Connect Ed phone calls, emails, texts and notices. There is also the district website, in addition to the Unity Drive School webpage, which contains recent news, announcements and student activities and achievements.

If you have a question or concern for your child's teacher, call the school and the teacher will return your call as soon as possible. A teacher **cannot** be called from their classroom to take calls during the school day. You can also write a note to the teacher to receive a response. It is a good idea to call the school to let the teacher know that you have sent a note in with your child. Occasionally children do not remember to give the notes to the teacher.

A list of supplies is posted on our webpage. A welcome letter is provided by each teacher as well. Go to www.mccsd.net and click on Schools at the top right, then on Unity Drive Pre-K/Kindergarten Center, then click on Faculty & Staff and then Kindergarten Teachers.

Please label **everything** with your child's name and teacher. Every teacher will require that your child bring a "back pack" to school each day. This back pack should be of sufficient size to carry home projects, lunch or snack boxes, chrome book, etc.

Connect Ed / PowerSchool

Middle Country uses a computerized data base for student data and automated calling software (Connect Ed). Throughout the year you may receive phone calls to give you important and possibly emergency information. This is an effective way for the school to give our families information in a timely manner. Connect Ed texts and emails are also ways we communicate so please be sure we have an updated cell phone and email address on file.

Report Cards

Report cards describing your child's progress are completed by teachers three times a year. Parents/guardians may access their child's Report Card on the Parent Portal. User names and passwords have been mailed to parents. A formal Parent/Teacher Conference is scheduled in December.

Additional conferences can be arranged as needed by contacting your child's teacher.

School Contact Numbers

Unity Drive School Office	285-8760
Special Education	285-8850
Transportation	285-8880
Central Registration	285-8890
Emergency Hotline	285-8088
Before/Aftercare (Scope)	360-0800x162



Class Placements

Classes are balanced using a variety of criteria. Although we try to honor family requests, this cannot be guaranteed. Information regarding class placements will be mailed in August and will also be available in the parent portal.

holidays with special activities, song, games, etc. as food-based celebrations are not permitted.

Latex Balloons are not permitted in school. Oversized Balloons are not permitted in classrooms. We will not accept or distribute goody bags of any kind.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Middle Country Central School District is committed to promoting safe and healthy learning environments where students are secure in their pursuit of educational success, free from the distracting incidence of violent behavior by others in their school setting. These acts include bullying, threats, intimidation, disruptive behavior in class, the carrying of weapons, fighting, physical assaults, or other behaviors that impede learning. Please refer to the Code of Conduct which may be accessed on the school district website.

Emergency Contact Cards

At the start of each school year, the parent/guardian is requested to fill out a card listing the people who have transportation and will be able to be responsible for your child if there is an emergency and you cannot be reached. It is requested that these cards be filled out, signed and returned promptly. If any of your phone numbers change during the year, please contact the main office immediately.

Homework

Homework varies from class to class, but all homework is directly related to classroom instruction.

Emergency Drills

In addition to evacuation and bus safety drills, Unity Drive School will practice the following drills described below. You will be given two weeks' notice of all drills.

Birthdays

Please make arrangements according to the celebratory policy in place in your child's classroom. We encourage the celebration of birthdays, seasons, and

- **Early Dismissal**: In May, a five-minute early dismissal drill.
- **Lock-Down**: When a lock-down drill is announced, all classroom doors are locked; students, faculty and staff are not permitted to come and go from the

classroom. The perimeter of the building is also secured and checked. No one is permitted to come into or go out of the building and the lock-down remains in effect until an all-clear is given.

Emergency School Closing

In the event of any unanticipated school emergency, the District emergency phone line and/or Connect-Ed will carry a recorded message. This message will explain the nature of the emergency and will provide specific instructions for parents/guardians. Connect-Ed is a system that will allow the District to call, text and email parents in the community with important information. If you do not wish to be contacted in this manner, please notify the principal in writing. It will also be posted on the website.

Please do not call the school or transportation department. It is imperative that telephone lines be available for communication between the schools, transportation and emergency response teams.

Please call the Emergency hotline number: 285-8088 for additional information.

Field Trips

To ensure the success of the many activities offered, the school relies on volunteers. Family member participation in field trips and special events is greatly appreciated and we try to give each parent a chance to participate. When on an outing, volunteers are reminded that the teacher has primary responsibility, and are asked to always defer to them when in doubt.

The use of tobacco products, vaping or alcoholic beverages during field trips is prohibited.

Siblings may NOT be taken on field trips since they may detract from a chaperone's ability to supervise the other children. If you are unable to attend without bringing a sibling, please do not volunteer.

Health Services

The goal of the School Health Services Program is to help each student obtain and maintain an optimal degree of physical and mental health so that they may benefit to their fullest capabilities. To achieve this goal requires the close cooperation and open communication between the parent/guardian, and school nurse, principal, teachers, physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists and social services.

School Nurse

The nurse keeps a daily health service log. Each time your child visits the nurse the date, time and reason for the visit and what action was taken is recorded.

Your child must not attend school if they are not well, have a fever, or have had one within the previous 24 hours, **without fever reducing medicine.** If your child develops a fever or is sick during the day, you will be contacted immediately and will be asked to make the necessary arrangements for your child to be taken home. Please let the nurse know if your child has been exposed to an infectious condition such as chicken pox, flu, strep throat, lice, fifth disease, COVID, etc.

Please contact the school nurse in relation to all medical concerns and allergies.

Accidents

In the case of an accident/serious injury/serious illness:

- Parents/Guardians will be contacted immediately by the school nurse.
- If parents/guardians cannot be reached, the phone numbers indicated on the "Emergency Contact" card will be called.
- If neither parents/guardians nor the emergency contact person can be reached, EMS will be dispatched and staff will accompany the student.



Need for Medication in School

If your child needs to take medication while at school, the following three requirements must be met or medication cannot be given:

1. Dated doctor's note with medical practitioner's signature stating:
 - a) Name of medication to be given with specific dosage required in school
 - b) Time to be given
 - c) Length of time to be given
 - d) Reason medication was prescribed
2. Medication must be in **original container with pharmacy label**. Over-the-counter medication must be in the **original unopened container**.
3. Note from parent/guardian (signed) giving the school nurse permission to administer the medication.

All medications must be brought to the nurse by an adult.

Immunizations

As per New York State Education Department, immunizations are required. Please check with your family physician or our school nurse.

Physical Examinations

New York State Education Department requires all children attending schools in grades Pre-K, K, 2, 4, 7, and 10 to have current medical examinations. We urge you to have your family physician conduct this examination. If we do not receive an updated medical examination form completed by the child's physician by mid-October, arrangements will be made to have your child examined by the school physician.

Breakfast/Lunch/Snack

Children's health and ability to perform well in school is greatly influenced by the kind of food they eat. For that reason, a healthy breakfast and a complete hot lunch with milk is offered to students.

Monthly menus are available on the district's website which includes changes/substitutions. Children may bring their own lunch. Glass bottles and soda are not permitted in school. For more information about school lunch, call 285-8190. For snack information, please contact your child's teacher. Remember, all classes are allergy aware. Please be mindful of this when choosing meals/snacks to send in from home.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Personal electronic devices such as Smart watches, cell phones and iPads are not permitted in school. If brought to school the items will be turned off and sent home. We are not responsible for lost/damaged personal electronic devices (including air tags). Please refer to district cell phone policy.



Messages to your Child

If your child forgets something at home, please bring the item to the main entrance and we will ensure the item(s) reach your child. We are unable to let you go to the classroom or bring your child to you during the school day.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

The Unity Drive School Parent Teacher Association is an organization whose primary concern is children. Parents, together with the principal and teachers, strive to provide programs, services and opportunities that benefit the children of Unity Drive School. In order to keep parents informed of what is happening in our community; PTA remains involved with our school board, administration, and other PTA units. This valuable information is passed on to parents at monthly PTA meetings.

Meetings are generally held on the second Tuesday of the month and all are welcome. Your participation and support are greatly appreciated.

Parking/Student Drop-Off/ Pick- Up

Your cooperation in safe driving and parking on school property and in the school area is required. Please do not block the driveways or pull into the active bus lane. When dropping a child off in the morning, use the side parking lot. The front circle is for **BUSES ONLY**.

Remind your child regularly of parking lot hazards and have them be consistent in the routines.

- Walk, do not run; always look both ways before crossing the driveway.
- Hold children's hands at all times.
- Be aware of others.
- No playing at any time in the parking lot.
- Observe all parking and traffic signs and regulations.
- Be courteous and polite.
- Do not leave children in the car.

Publicity

As per the **District's Internet and Public Relations Policy**, we may photograph students at school for use in various news articles, publications and/or school websites. Unless we receive written notification to the contrary from the students' parent/guardian, we will allow them to participate in these activities.

Under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, you may choose not to have information, pictures or video of your child(ren) published. If you wish to exercise this right, please notify the principal in writing at your earliest convenience. This declination will be in effect for the present school year only.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of the entire school community are of prime importance. Students, staff and parents are responsible for following procedures outlined to ensure safe conditions. If unsafe conditions or practices are observed, they must be reported immediately to the principal or office.

We are committed to ensuring the safest possible environment for all members of our school community. In addition to our building level school safety plan.

The school has additional safe school practices that further enhance campus security, including a security guard, security cameras which monitor entrances and the property in general. Visitors (including parents/guardians) are required to sign in and wear visitor passes. You will be asked to sign out and return the visitor pass when you leave.

Visitors to the Building

Visitors are always welcome at Unity Drive School. When visiting, you must sign in at the front desk when you enter the building. School personnel are requested to stop visitors in our hallways to determine their business. This policy is for the protection of our students. Photo ID is required to enter the building.

Parents/guardians with a particular situation pertaining to the release of their children to other adults

should contact the office each year to notify staff of their needs. Copies of custody papers and court orders relating to the exclusion of a non-custodial parent will be kept on file in the main office.

Transportation

Notice of bus number/letter, pick up and drop off times are mailed to you in August and are available through the parent portal. Transportation can be reached at 285-8880.

The following regulations are to be adhered to by families and students to ensure safety and comfort on the bus:

- Be at the bus stop ten minutes prior to stop time.
- Any request for changing of bus routes, must be sent to Transportation in writing.
- Eating and drinking on the bus are prohibited.
- Always respect the private property of others on the bus, and at the bus stop.

Students need to:

- Remain seated and keep your head and arms inside the windows.
- Talk quietly.
- Always follow the requests of the bus driver.
- Remain in your seat with seatbelt on at all times.
- Be considerate of everyone on the bus.



UNITY DRIVE KINDERGARTEN CENTER
Denise Ferrera, Principal
2025 - 2026

Middle Country Central School District

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Unity Drive PTA

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Corresponding Secretary – Joann Kenny