Ritenour School for Early Childhood Education



Family and Staff Handbook 2025-2026

RITENOUR
SCHOOL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

3580 Woodson Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63114
(314) 493-6240

School Information

Ritenour School for Early Childhood Education (SECE)

3580 Woodson Road
St. Louis, MO 63114
(314)493-6240
Fax: (314)429-3688

The Janine Milam-Haynes Early Childhood Annex

10901 St. Henry Lane
St. Ann, MO 63074

Principal
Dr. Jennifer Singleton

Secretary
Pam Doll

Social Worker
Mary Clare Monahan

Parents as Teachers
Michael Aitken

School Arrival and Dismissal Times

Full Day: 8:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m.

Arrival time for students begins at 8:15 am. Students in full-day programs are considered tardy after 8:30 a.m. and are marked as absent for the remainder of the day if picked up before 3:30 p.m. Students need to be signed in at the office if arriving after 8:30 a.m. or leaving before 3:30 p.m. Students need to be picked up by 3:45 p.m. Students not picked up by 3:45 p.m. are taken to After-Care and late fees are assessed.

Only students in full-day programs have the option to participate in before- or after-care.

Before-Care: 6 - 8:15 a.m.
After-Care: 3:45 - 6 p.m.

Half-Day Program (Monday-Thursday)
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.
12:30 - 3:30 p.m.
There is no before-care or after-care for half-day students.
Half-day students do not meet on Fridays.
Half-day PM classes will not meet on Early Release Days (9/11, 10/16, 11/20, 2/5, 4/16)

Office Hours

8 a.m.-4 p.m. (Monday-Friday)

Student Expectations

Parents, we want you to be aware of the rules and language we use for student expectations.

	Be Safe	Be Kind	Be Responsible
Hallway	Use walking feet.	Use a quiet voice.	Stick together with your class. Take care of walls and artwork.
Playground	Have safe bodies.	Take turns. Let everyone play.	Follow playground rules.
Gross Motor	Have safe bodies.	Take turns. Let everyone play.	Follow station rules.
Lunch	Use walking feet. Stay seated.	Use table manners.	Follow teacher requests. Help clean up spills.
All Setting/ Classroom	Keep hands and feet to yourself.	Take turns. Let everyone play. Use nice words.	Use listening ears. Follow teacher requests. Take care of materials.

Parent Expectations

	Be Safe	Be Kind	Be Responsible
Parking Lot	Hold hands. Use walking feet; age-appropriate car seating	Drive slowly. Follow arrows.	Stay together. Park in designated spots.
Hallway	Use walking feet; stay with your child.	Use appropriate language. Use appropriate volume/ voice.	Remind students to keep their hands and feet to themselves and use walking feet.
Classroom	Sign In/ Sign Out. Have ID available.	No cell phones.	Be on time. Read posted information. Keep updated phone numbers/pick-up info on file. Allow your child independence by having them hang up their belongings.
All Settings	Stay with your child. Be Attentive.	Interact with your child on their level. Use appropriate language.	Be a positive role model.
Home	Send your child in appropriate clothing/ shoes. Check your child's backpack regularly. Keep toys at home. Don't bring food or drinks to school.	Interact with your child on their level. Use appropriate language.	Read notes. Keep backpack in a special place. Bring required items(backpack, crib sheet for cot, blanket, small pillow/ stuffed animal for full-day students.

Vision

The Ritenour School for Early Childhood Education, together with families and the community, provides a safe, supportive environment in which young children are empowered to become productive citizens and life-long learners.

Mission

We are committed to promoting the growth and development of the whole child by nurturing and encouraging natural curiosity and positive self-awareness by developing the communication, academic, motor and social skills necessary to achieve life-long goals.

We believe that we need to:

- Know students as capable unique learners
- Respond to social and cultural contexts in which students live
- Ensure equal access to learning by meeting students where they are and enabling them to reach challenging goals
- Engage policymakers in understanding the importance of early childhood education
- View early childhood education as the shared responsibility of the school, family and community
- Give cognitive, social and emotional learning equal weight
- Provide collaborative structures that facilitate understanding different perspectives, creativity and shared decision-making

Tuition

Resident Families	
Full-Day Tuition 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.	*No Cost*
Morning Half-Day Tuition 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	*No Cost*
Afternoon Half-Day Tuition 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.	*No Cost*
Before- and After-Care Tuition	*$76/per week*
Morning Care OR After-Care Tuition	$55/per week

Before- and/or After-Care Tuition Procedures

- Tuition statements are issued weekly and are sent home with your child.
- Tuition payments are to be paid one week in advance.
- Regular delinquent tuition payments will be assessed a $25 late fee after the first week, with an additional fee of $1 per day until all payments are paid in full.
- Tuition payments that are two weeks late will result in a warning letter and may result in your child being excluded from the program until fees are paid.
- **Tuition payments are made by filling out the "PERMISSION OF USE DEBIT/VIA/MASTERCARD" form.**
    - Payments will be pulled each Thursday for the following week. If Ms. Doll is absent or there is no school, payments will be pulled the following day.
    - If a change in card or cash payment is required, arrangements need to be made with Mrs. Doll in the office before Thursday.
- There is no free vacation week.
- If your child is out sick, you are still required to pay for those days.

Curriculum Philosophy

We are committed to meeting the highest standards in early childhood education. Our program is designed to help children grow socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually through developmentally appropriate activities utilizing a constructivist approach through play. We are child-centered, play-based, and Reggio-inspired.

We believe children are capable and unique learners who each deserve equal access to a high quality early childhood education. Early childhood education is the responsibility of the school, family and community and we are passionate advocates for children and families. Learning is a developmental process that happens as children make sense of their environments and lives.

At the Ritenour School for Early Childhood Education, the growth and development of the children we serve are at the forefront of everything we do. We view our classrooms as mini-societies, diverse communities of learners engaged in hands-on activities, meaningful discussion, and reflection. All of our teachers are college graduates and certified to teach early childhood education. Our educators understand child development and guide young students through enriching activities and discussions that help them learn and grow. We believe learning happens through communication, creating, collaboration and reflection with peers and teachers.

Our teaching practices are based on evidence and research, meaningful and relevant content related to state preschool standards, objectives and goals, collaboration with families, and a social approach that honors the cultures and languages of the families we serve. We are influenced by a Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. These elements are all approached within the context of play-based learning and embedded within community.

Play-based learning can often involve "messy" play and we encourage our students to dress appropriately for indoor and outdoor play that can include a multitude of experiences (mud, paint, clay, snow, etc.).

Project Construct

Project Construct, a state-approved curriculum, is an approach to learning rooted in the belief that children learn through physical and social play and interaction with the environment. Learning is inquiry-based, guided by student interest, and developed through skilled questioning.

Our teachers guide children to build relationships of mutual trust and respect; consider the perspective of others; be curious, confident and creative; use language for a variety of reasons; know personal information; negotiate and apply rules; represent ideas and feelings through pretend play, movement, music, art and construction; develop motor skills; and develop healthy living practices.

Our curriculum emphasizes early reading skills, math readiness, social skills and artistic expression. We emphasize hands-on learning to encourage exploration and problem-solving. Children experience learning by interacting in groups of peers and through individual instruction. Teachers provide opportunities for purposeful play; they encourage children to ask questions and experiment and plan activities to nurture budding critical-thinking skills.

Daily Activities

Classroom routines may vary based on scheduling needs, but the following components are part of every child's daily schedule and routine:

- Quiet and active times
- Free-choice play opportunities
- Planned group activities
- One hour of outdoor play
- Developmentally appropriate play activities
- Regular snack and meal times
- Supervised nap times
- Toileting and handwashing times

Important School Information

Attendance

If your child is not going to be in school, please call the attendance line.
Call (314) 493-6240 and speak to the school secretary or leave a message with your child's name and reason for absence.

School Snack/Breakfast/Lunch/Treats

- Nutritious snacks will be provided to full and half-day students.
- Full-day students also will be provided a nutritious breakfast and lunch.
- Please inform your child's teacher and the administration regarding any food allergies.
- No outside food is allowed due to possible food allergies.
- Special diets or special restrictions require a doctor's order.
- Religious restrictions will need to be discussed with the principal.

School safety expectations

- Full-day families, If arriving early, please stay in lobby with your child until 8:15 am.
- Sign your child in and out.
- Use walking feet in the hallways.
- Use "inside" voices.
- Arrive at school on time (your child could miss a meaningful learning activity when late).
- Always make sure that anyone picking up your child has a valid ID.
- Classroom doors will remain locked during school hours.
- Do not leave doors propped open.
- Drive slowly and cautiously through the parking lot.

Safety

The safety of our students is a priority in every Ritenour school. For this reason, we conduct regular drills that allow staff and students to prepare for emergencies such as: fire, tornado, earthquakes or intruders. During these drills, you may not be able to enter the building at the time you arrive or you may be asked to participate in the drills if you are already in the building.

If we are made aware that a potential danger is in the area, we may initiate a "Hold in Place." "Hold in Place" means that no one can enter or leave the building until we know that the area is safe. During these times, there will be a sign on the main entrance door or you may receive an alert call or text message. You should wait in your car or return home until you are notified.

Dress Code

Ritenour students are expected to come to school and any school activity dressed in clothes appropriate for the weather and according to district policies. **Please remember Early Childhood students may get messy learning through experience and play.**

Early Childhood parents must ensure that early childhood students are dressed in clothing and shoes that will support their learning, safety and welfare.

Here are the suggested clothing and shoes for young children attending school:

- Closed-toe shoes
- Child-friendly slogans and characters on T-shirts
- Dresses, skirts, and shorts that cover the child's undergarments
- During cool and colder weather, jackets, coats, hats and gloves are necessary for outdoor play. (Please label your child's belongings with their name on the inside.)

For example, these types of clothing and shoes may cause learning and safety risks during school:

- Open-toed shoes.
- Dresses and skirts without shorts or leggings underneath.
- Over-sized jewelry or small jewelry that may cause a choking hazard for young children.
- T-shirts that have inappropriate or offensive slogans and pictures.

We try to go outside daily, so please dress your child appropriately for morning and/or afternoon outside play.

We do not go outside if the heat index is above 100 degrees or below 10 degrees with windchill.

Licensing Rules for Outside Play	
Temperature (factoring in heat index and windchill)	**Time Outside**
Above 100 degrees	Indoor Recess
90-100 degrees	5-10 minutes
32-90 degrees	Outside play without restrictions
20-32 degrees	10-15 minutes
10-20 degrees	5-10 minutes
0-10 degree	Indoor Recess

Exceptions will require a medical note.

Health of Children

Medication at school

If medication is required during school hours, the office MUST have the medication authorization form filled out by the parent and the doctor. All medication must be in the original prescription

bottle, properly labeled by a registered pharmacist as prescribed by law.

Over-the-counter medication can be administered if the school is provided a medication authorization form completed by the parent and the doctor. Medication must be delivered to and from school by the parent.

Medication forms can be found here: https://www.ritenourschools.org/programs/health-services/medical-forms.

Please give all medications and forms to the office. We do not have a general education nurse on campus.

Immunizations:
Missouri laws require all children to have up-to-date immunizations prior to the first day of school. Students enrolling in the School for Early Childhood Education must be in the process of being immunized to meet the requirements* outlined by the St. Louis County Health Department. Proof of immunizations or a reason why a child may not receive immunizations is required under the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Health and Welfare. You may request notice at initial enrollment in or attendance at the facility or upon request of whether there are children for whom an immunization exemption has been filed currently enrolled in or attending the facility.

Illness:
Children should not come to school if they have any of the following:

- 100 degree or higher fever in the previous 24 hours
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Chronic cough
- Swollen glands
- Unidentified skin rashes
- Strep throat
- Conjunctivitis – an eye infection commonly called "Pink Eye"
- Impetigo – a rash that looks like pimples
- Severe cold with fever, sneezing and nose drainage
- Contagious diseases – measles, chicken pox, mumps, roseola, COVID

If a child becomes ill or is injured during school hours, the child is seen by staff members trained in first aid and CPR. If a child is too ill to remain at school, parents are contacted immediately for the student to be picked up. In the event a parent cannot be reached the office will use emergency contact information to pick up the student. **Please make sure your contact information is updated regularly in case of illness or another emergency when the school needs to contact you.**

Behavior Expectations



School Pledge
I am safe, kind and responsible!



I keep my hands and
feet to myself.
I use a quiet voice and
good listening ears.
I am a High 5 Superstar!
High 5!
High 5!

We use Second Step as our Social Emotional Learning curriculum: https://www.secondstep.org/early-learning-curriculum.

Discipline Policy

We want all of our students to learn in a safe and nurturing environment. We also know early learners are learning to regulate their emotions. We model safe, kind, and responsible behavior and expect our students to be safe, kind, and responsible. We teach and reteach positive behavior. We believe all behavior is communication and try to understand the function of the behavior.

If a student demonstrates unacceptable behavior, we will inform and involve parents and guardians to create interventions and behavior plans. We follow district guidelines for consequences. Patterns of unacceptable behavior or serious incidents can result in additional consequences, leading to suspension or removal from the program.

Exclusionary Practices:

While exclusion from activities is generally avoided, there may be situations where temporary exclusion becomes necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of all children..

Exclusion Protocol:

1. **Short-Term Exclusion (Time-Out)**
    - If a child's behavior is unsafe or consistently disruptive, a brief, supervised "time-out" may be used as a cooling-off period.
    - The child will remain in a safe, quiet space for a few minutes to regain control, under the supervision of an adult..
    - Time-outs will not exceed 5 minutes and will be used sparingly.
    - Teachers will explain to the child why the time-out was necessary and offer support when the child returns to the group.
2. **Temporary Removal from the Group**

- If a child is consistently disruptive to the point of preventing others from learning or feeling safe, a brief removal from the group activity may be necessary.

- This will be done in a way that respects the child's dignity and allows for reflection, rather than isolation or humiliation.

3. **Behavior Plan Development**

    - For children who demonstrate persistent or serious behavior challenges, an intervention plan may be developed in collaboration with parents, counselors, and specialists.

    - The plan will include specific goals, strategies, and interventions tailored to the child's needs, and will be regularly reviewed to ensure progress.

4. **Parent/Guardian Involvement**

    - If exclusionary practices are used, parents/guardians will be informed immediately.

    - Teachers will work closely with parents to address behavioral concerns and develop strategies for improving behavior both at school and at home.

    - Continued issues may result in meetings with other support services to determine additional steps.

Exclusion from School (Long-Term)

In extreme cases of behavior that pose a serious threat to the safety and well-being of other children or staff, the child may be temporarily or permanently excluded from the preschool. This decision will not be made lightly and will involve:

- Consultation with parents/guardians.

- Discussion of alternatives, such as therapy.

- Exploration of other educational options for the child.

Criteria for Exclusion:

1. Consistent or severe physical aggression toward peers or staff.

2. Behavior that threatens the safety or emotional well-being of others.

3. Continuous refusal to comply with safety and behavioral expectations after interventions have been tried.

How can families get involved?

Your support, feedback, and involvement is a critical part of your child's success and a valued part of our school community. Here is a list of ways you can be involved and help your child(ren) do their absolute best at school each day!

- Check communication daily to ensure you are talking with your child(ren) about the learning going on in their class and so that you know important dates/information our school is sharing.
- Complete surveys to provide feedback and to help in the school decision-making process.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and work with your child's teacher to set goals and track progress.
- Share your cultural/family beliefs to increase staff/student awareness.
- Set age-appropriate boundaries for your child at home.
- Use the classroom teacher as a resource so school and home can be consistent.
- Praise your child's kind choices and new learning as often as you can.
- Read aloud with your child daily. If you just get one book in before bed, this will increase your child's success in reading and writing!
- Help your child to understand the importance of a good night's sleep and help your child get 9 to 11 hours of sleep every day.
- Ask your child's teacher if there are donations you can make to help with learning experiences in the classroom or ways you can support development at home.

When needed, our early childhood experts can provide families with referrals to other community agencies and services.

We believe in collaborating with families. Parents are an important part of our community and are encouraged to talk with their child's teacher before and after school and during regularly scheduled conferences. Our teachers are committed to providing families with information about all aspects of their child's development. Thank you for your partnership!

Here are some of our favorite resources:

Serve and Return: https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/

Types of Play: https://pathways.org/kids-learn-play-6-stages-play-development/ & https://nifplay.org/what-is-play/types-of-play/

Constructivism: https://www.nu.edu/blog/what-is-constructivism-in-education/#:~:text=Constructivism%20in%20education%20is%20a,their%20comprehension%20of%20new%20information & https://projectconstruct.org/?page_id=172

Coregulation: https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/co-regulation-helping-children-and-teens-navigate-big-emotions-202404033030