MINNETONKA COMMUNITY EDUCATION

EXPLORERS

Junior Explorers Parent Handbook
School Year 2025-26

This handbook includes important contact information, terms and conditions for enrollment and program policies for parents and guardians.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Junior Explorers
Minnetonka Community Education Center
4584 Vine Hill Road
Excelsior, MN 55331

Fax: 952-401-6805
Website: www.minnetonkacommunityed.org/explorers

Main Office Staff

Kim Carlson, Executive Director	952-401-5043
Molly Bahneman, Coordinator	952-401-6830
Sarah Davis, Junior Explorers Site Supervisor	952-401-6825
Jenny LaRiviere, Junior Explorers Assistant Site Supervisor	952-401-6825
Lindsey Anderson, Program Specialist	952-401-4159
Kris Fasnacht, Billing and Enrollment	952-401-6832
Caterina Cicogna, Billing and Enrollment	952-401-6838
Dorothea McCabe, Early Childhood Office Assistant	952-401-6812
Tina Broas, Child and Family Behavior Specialist	952-401-6820
Briana Hunt, School Counselor	952-401-6820

WELCOME TO JUNIOR EXPLORERS!

We are excited you have chosen Minnetonka Community Education's Junior Explorers childcare. Junior Explorers offers preschool childcare for children ages 3 - 5. Junior Explorers offers all day care from 6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

During the summer childcare is offered for children 33 months (3 years old by 9/1/2026) through 4 years old by (9/1/2026).

MINNETONKA SCHOOL DISTRICT MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

MINNETONKA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The mission of the Minnetonka School District is to ensure all students envision and pursue their highest aspirations while serving the greater good. In a community that transcends traditional definitions of excellence, we use learning and teaching as tools to value and nurture each person, inspire in everyone a passion to excel with confidence and hope, and instill expectations that stimulate extraordinary achievement in the classroom and in life.

JUNIOR EXPLORERS CHILDCARE OBJECTIVES

- Offer a safe environment where children are encouraged to pursue their own interests, develop friendships, and grow in confidence, independence and respect for themselves and others.
- Provide opportunities for children to build positive and enriching relationships with trusted adults.
- Create opportunities for children to learn and explore through play.

BILLING AND ENROLLMENT

Enrollment Policy
Enrollment is open to all children age 3 (by September 1) through age 5.

During the summer childcare is offered for children 33 months (3 years old by 9/1/2026) through 4 years old by (9/1/2026).

Enrollment is on a first come, first served basis. During the school year, a minimum enrollment of 2 days per week is required (days cannot be changed from week to week) for a minimum of 4 consecutive weeks. During the summer program, a minimum enrollment of 2 consistent days per week is required throughout the summer. Additional days can be added as drop in days if space and staffing allow.

A child is enrolled in the program when:

- Online registration is complete, including payment of the registration fee. You will be contacted by email with the approval of your registration contract and the confirmation of your start date.
- All prior Community Education accounts are paid in full.

Permanent Change in Schedule
Schedule changes are requested online at www.minnetonka.ce.eleyo.com. Schedule changes will be accommodated on a space available basis. An email will be sent to confirm that your request has been received. A second email will be sent when your request has been approved.

A ten-business day notice is required when withdrawing from Junior Explorers. Withdrawal requests can be made online at www.minnetonka.ce.eleyo.com. Please note that the registration fee is non-refundable should you choose to remove your contract.

School Year Program Schedule Changes
All schedule changes will take effect after ten business days. Schedule changes made with less than ten business days' notice will not be approved. There is a $10 charge for each request for change to your child's schedule.

Summer Program Schedule Changes
Families will have the opportunity to make schedule changes to their summer enrollment up until the established deadline. Changes will be approved on a space available basis and are subject to our standard change fee of $10 per request. No change requests will be accepted after the deadline date.

Add-a-Day
Currently enrolled children have the option of attending Junior Explorers on days for which they are not currently enrolled. Care is available on a space available basis, and requests must be received at least 24 hours in advance. Please contact the Site Supervisor at 952-401-6825 to initiate the Add-a-Day process.

Vacations
A $75 holding fee per week for student vacations will be approved with a 5-business day notice, with a maximum of 2 weeks' vacation during the school year.

Billing & Payment Policy
Fees are charged based on the days and program components you are registered for, not on attendance (*see Enhanced Sick Policy* on our website for exceptions). You will not receive credit for late arrival or early pick-up, nor for when children leave Junior Explorers to participate in other activities.

An email will be sent mid-month indicating that invoices are ready to be viewed online. The monthly fees will be charged to the credit card or checking/savings account we have on file 7 days after the monthly invoice has been generated.

A $15 fee will be added to your account if your credit card is declined for any reason. Please update your account online or notify the Billing and Enrollment office of new account numbers *before* your card expires, or of any changes in your account. Past due accounts will be sent to collections and may incur legal fees.

Year-end tax statements can be accessed online. Our Federal Tax Identification number is **41-6001402**. This is the number you need to complete your childcare expense forms.

If you are enrolled with your employer in a Flex Benefit Plan, forms will be signed only after payment has been received. Please contact Kris Fasnacht at 952-401-6832 or kristi.fasnacht@minnetonkaschools.org if you have any questions.

Junior Explorers does not offer scholarships. Financial assistance may be available to qualifying families through the county in which you live. Please contact Kris Fasnacht for more information.

Data Privacy
Records concerning your child, including enrollment forms, health records, observation records and all other information about your child are confidential and will only be accessible to you, billing and enrollment staff, the Program Manager, Junior Explorers staff tasked with the care of your child and your child's teachers and/or a person designated by the school or state to review our records for certification purposes.

We must have an Explorers childcare contract, through our Eleyo registration system for every program participant. It is important that all information on file, especially phone numbers and authorized pick ups, be kept current. Please regularly review your Eleyo account to keep information accurate.

PROGRAM HOURS AND OPERATION

School Year Program:
6:30 am - 6:00 pm. Monday-Friday. We begin offering care the first day of school and conclude on the last day of school. Your childcare contract includes only days when school is in session.

> **Non-school Days**
> Offered on most non-school days from 6:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. These days offer a variety of activities and field trips (when permitted). These days are not a part of your contract, there is a separate registration for non-school days. Your registration for non-school days must be approved in order to attend. Here you will find the 25-26 Non-School Day Registration Information.
>
> **Early Releases and Late Starts**
> These days are not a part of your contract, there is a separate registration for Early Release or Late Start. Your registration for these days must be approved to attend.

Summer Program:
Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. The summer program dates will be communicated in January of each year.

Holidays:
Fees are not charged on days Junior Explorers is scheduled to be closed.

Unplanned School Closure:
When weather or other emergencies lead to a change in the school schedule, the following practices will be in place:

> **Unplanned School Closures:** On school closure days, the Superintendent will determine if Junior Explorers childcare is open or closed.

Should Junior Explorers remain open, students registered for childcare on these days can attend. Students should bring lunch from home.

If school is cancelled and your child attends Junior Explorers on these days, you will be charged the non-school day rate. If your child does **not** attend Junior Explorers on these days, you will still be charged the scheduled rate per your contract.

When weather conditions lead to any of the above situations, announcements will be made on radio station WCCO-AM and on TV stations KSTP and KARE 11. Please listen for these announcements when the weather is questionable.

Delayed Start: When the school opening is delayed by an hour or more, Explorers will be open at the regular time (6:30 a.m.). You must be registered to attend morning Explorers on the day school is delayed to utilize services.

Early Dismissal: When weather related emergencies lead to an early school dismissal, Junior Explorers will remain open until parents or guardians have picked up all children. Please make every effort to pick up your child as soon as possible when school is dismissed early due to bad weather. You must be registered to attend after preschool Junior Explorers on the day school is dismissed to utilize services.

DROP OFF AND PICK-UP

Sign in and sign out

All children must be signed in on an iPad upon arrival and signed out on an iPad upon departure.

Release of Children

Your child will be released only to people listed as authorized pick-ups. Staff are required to ask for identification from anyone unfamiliar attempting to pick up a child. If an unauthorized person attempts to pick up your child, you will be contacted. If you cannot be reached, your child will be held until you or your emergency contact person arrives. If you want to authorize additional adults to pick up your child please update your child's profile in Eleyo.

Copies of legal documents regarding child custody must be provided to the program office before any staff person can actively prevent non-custodial parents from picking up their child.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Junior Explorers closes at 6:00 p.m. All children must be picked up no later than 6:00 p.m. according to the time on our attendance iPad. If an emergency delays you and you are going to be late picking up your child, make plans for someone you have designated as an authorized pickup to pick up your child on time, and call the program staff immediately.

In the event that your child is still at the program after closing and we have not heard from you, we will take the following steps (in order):

1. Attempt to reach you on your home, work or cell phone number.
2. Call the people you listed as authorized pickups for your child.
3. If you are more than 30 minutes late, the police will be contacted for assistance.

A late fee of $10 is charged for each 5 minutes (or portion thereof) that parents are late picking up a child.

- 1 - 5 minutes late - $10
- 6 - 10 minutes late - $20
- 11 - 15 minutes late - $30
- 16 - 20 minutes late pm - $40
- 21 - 25 minutes late pm - $50
- 26- 30 minutes late - $60

After the third instance of late pick up, childcare services may be suspended or terminated.

Absences *School Year Only*
We take our responsibility to care for your child very seriously. Daily fees apply, even if absent (see *Prolonged Illness* for exceptions).

If your child will not be attending the program because of a scheduled appointment, or other planned absence, please call 952-401-6825. If your child is ill, when you call the school to report the illness or pick up your child from school, also call Junior Explorers before his/her normal arrival time.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Medication
In accordance with state regulations, the Junior Explorers program must maintain its own supply of medication for students who may need it during program hours. While we will continue to receive support from our building health staff when available, it is essential that Junior Explorers is fully prepared to administer health support independently.

A written order signed by the licensed medication prescriber and the parent/guardian is required for all prescription medications. Such orders must be renewed annually or whenever medication dosage or administration changes. A signed Community Education Medication Form along with the medication in the original prescription container must be turned into staff.

Prescription medication must come to school in the original container, marked with the student's name, and must be administered in a manner consistent with the instructions on the label. All medication administered, will be documented. This includes the name and dose of medication, time of administration, and the name of the individual who administered the medication. Medications are stored in our medicine lock box.

Toileting

Children under the age of 4 do not need to be toilet trained to be in Junior Explorers. Families must supply all diapering materials. All diapering supplies should be labeled with the child's first and last name.

We require the following diapering materials*:

- A large pack of diapers or pull ups**
- A self contained container of wipes.
- Diaper cream as needed (over the counter medication form required for use)
- If your child is in underwear, you do have the option to bring in diapers or pull ups for body break if needed.

*Staff will let families know via SeeSaw when a refill of diapering supplies is needed.

**If choosing pull ups, please bring the pull ups with velcro on the side as this helps staff with changing.

Children must be fully toilet trained by age 4 to enroll in Junior Explorers. We define toilet trained as having the ability to inform an adult that they need to use the bathroom, pulling pants up/down, wiping independently and cleaning hands after using the toilet.

Our staff will encourage children to use the restroom as needed. Parents are asked to provide a change of clothing in case of accidents.

Accidents and Injuries
If a child has an accident the staff person working with the child will notify the parent with an accident report. If a serious accident occurs which might need medical attention, the staff will contact you immediately so you can take your child to the doctor or dentist.

In an emergency where immediate medical attention is needed, the staff will call 911 and then immediately contact you. After 911 has been called, it is up to the paramedics to decide what to do. If they decide your child needs emergency treatment, they will take the child to the nearest emergency medical facility, and you will be responsible for medical charges. We will stay on the phone with you to help make the decision whether to transport the child or not.

Air Quality
Junior Explorers uses the Outdoor Air Quality Guidance for Schools and Child Care to determine outdoor activity duration. If the air quality falls under the orange category (unhealthy for sensitive groups), Junior Explorers will limit outdoor activities and take additional breaks. If the air quality falls under the red or purple category (unhealthy or very unhealthy), Junior Explorers will cancel or reschedule all outdoor activities. Junior Explorers staff monitor the air quality on an app on the site cell phone called 'EPA AirNow'.

Heat Index
Junior Explorers uses the 'OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool' app to determine outdoor activity duration. If the heat index falls into the 'warning' category, Junior Explorers will take extra outdoor precautions that include taking additional breaks, seeking out shaded

areas, and extra water breaks. If the heat index falls into the ‘danger’ category, Junior Explorers will cancel or reschedule outdoor activities.

Food Allergies
If your child has a food allergy, parents must bring your child’s Allergy Action Plan to the site on their first day of care. A Community Education Medication Form will also need to be filled out for any necessary medication administered. We are a peanut/treenut free program. Please do not bring snacks that include peanuts and/or tree nuts. If there are specific allergies in your child’s classroom you will receive additional information from their teacher.

BEHAVIOR AND STUDENT CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

Junior Explorers recognizes that individual responsibility and mutual respect are essential components of a successful childcare experience. All students are entitled to learn and grow in a setting that promotes respect of self, others, and property. Proper student conduct is necessary to ensure the safety and respect of all students and to create an atmosphere where students can relax, explore individual interests, develop friendships, and grow in confidence.

BEHAVIOR AND STUDENT CONDUCT MANAGEMENT

Junior Explorers strives to establish and maintain a behavior guidance system that reinforces positive behaviors. Junior Explorers has established behavior and student conduct expectations. These expectations take into consideration the needs of each individual student along with what is developmentally appropriate in an effort to create a harmonious group childcare experience.

- Staff will explicitly teach and explain the routines and rules of the program along with expected student behaviors
- Staff will act as positive role models
- Expectations will be consistently enforced and behavior management tactics will be logical and age appropriate, such as redirecting to other activities or limiting choices

Junior Explorers will regularly evaluate the program's ability to meet each student's needs. Behavior that does not meet our standards will be addressed accordingly. The decision of the type of consequence in a particular case is at the discretion of the staff involved in collaboration with the Site Supervisor and/or the Junior Explorers Coordinator. Below are the steps taken if a student is experiencing difficulty following the behavior and student conduct expectations in the program.

1. Staff will talk with the student about the behavior and re-teach the needed behavior expectations
2. Parent contact or conference
3. Loss of student privileges, including participation in field trips or special events
4. Referral to support services or community resources
5. Suspension or dismissal from Junior Explorers
6. Other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate

Expectations for Students

- Students will show respect for themselves, the school, peers, and their belongings by following our building motto of “Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Helpful”
- Students will follow the rules of the program and adhere to staff directions
- If a student has a problem or concern, they will ask for help from a staff member
- Students will keep the environment safe and clean and will be respectful of property
- Students are expected to treat all members of the Junior Explorers community, and others who visit our community, with respect

Bottom Line Behaviors
The following behaviors are considered bottom line behaviors and may result in a student being dismissed immediately for the day from Junior Explorers. *If a student is sent home, the parent/guardian or an authorized pick up person is expected to arrive within 30 minutes.*

- Abusive or inappropriate language/profanity
- Defiance/disrespect/insubordination/non-compliance
- Leaving building/school grounds (eloping)
- Harassment/bullying
- Fighting/hitting/kicking/choking
- Possession of Weapons
- Property damage/vandalism
- Theft

*Depending on the severity and frequency of the behavior additional consequences may include suspension/termination of care from the program.

Termination of Care by the Program
If Junior Explorers leadership determines that our program is not meeting the needs of a student, we reserve the right to terminate the care arrangement on a timeline that is in the student’s best interest.

As a Parent/Guardian You Agree To:

- Partner with my student and Junior Explorers staff to support a safe community that all children can learn and thrive in
- Encourage my child to be the best that they can be and maintain a positive attitude
- Reinforce the behavior expectations for student conduct at Junior Explorers with my student
- Display appropriate behavior while I am visiting the Junior Explorers community

COMMUNICATION
At Junior Explorers, we value open communication with parents and encourage you to be involved. A survey will be conducted annually to gather feedback on the program. Results received will help to make improvements to our program.

If you have questions or wish to talk to someone about your child, do not hesitate to call the Site Supervisor. Special conferences can be scheduled at any time staff or parents feel there is a need.

The staff will make every attempt to notify parents via phone or by written note whenever a situation arises that we feel you should be aware of. We request that parents keep the staff informed of your needs, concerns and feelings.

If an injury occurs at Junior Explorers, parents will be notified both verbally and with a written form. Minor scrapes and bruises handled at Junior Explorers and which need no further attention will be reported to you on a form called a Tier 1 injury form and given to you when you pick up your child(ren).

ABOUT EXPLORERS

Certification
Junior Explorers is a certified childcare program through the The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) which requires us to maintain specific staff-to-child ratios to ensure the safety and well-being of every child.

Staff
Site Supervisors are experienced professionals with degrees in child development, education, or recreation. All staff are involved in on-going staff development training. Background checks, first aid, CPR, concussion training and blood borne pathogen training are also required of staff. The target adult to child ratio is 1:10.

Student Supervision
Children are always supervised by staff. As a site team, staff work together to know the whereabouts of all the children. Staff will spread out to ensure all children are being supervised. A tracking system is utilized to ensure all children are accounted for throughout the day.

Mandated Reporting
Staff are legally required to report an instance of observed or suspected child abuse or neglect. That includes reasonable belief that an authorized pickup is under the influence.

Additional Student Support
When parents indicate that their child has an IEP or PBSP during the registration process, the Site Supervisor will request further information from the child's case manager and family regarding the student's needs in a childcare setting.

Outdoor Play
In the summer, children are required to wear sunscreen. A sunscreen permission slip must be signed. In extreme heat, appropriate precautions will be taken to limit the activities of children. The children will have the choice to spend some time outside every day and should be properly dressed for the weather. We will not play outside on extremely rainy days or if the temperature is 0 degrees or reaches -10 degrees below with the wind-chill. Children must have appropriate outdoor clothing to play outside.

See Health and Safety section for details on program modification due to air quality or heat index concerns.

Breakfast, Lunch & Snacks
A breakfast snack is provided for children who arrive at Junior Explorers before 8:00 a.m. An afternoon snack is provided at the beginning of afternoon programming.

On non-school days and in the summer, children must bring lunch and a beverage. Families have the option to elect to purchase milk as a lunch beverage for their children during summer programming. There is a $5.00 one-time charge for the entire summer. Breakfast and snack are provided.

Transportation
Transportation to and from Junior Explorers will be done by the parents, emergency contact or those designated for Authorized Pick-Up. District 276-contracted bus company will provide field trip transportation. The appropriate emergency vehicle will provide emergency transportation. Children may never be transported by staff in personal vehicles for any reason. This policy is for the protection of each staff person and for reasons of liability.

Contact with Staff Outside of Junior Explorers
If Junior Explorers staff have any contact with Junior Explorers children outside of Junior Explorers, parents must understand that staff are doing so as an individual, not as a member of Junior Explorers. Minnetonka Public Schools is not responsible for protecting staff liability in such relationships with children. Examples of such activities would be babysitting, housesitting, taking kids to ball games, etc

Pets/Animals in the Program
Minnetonka Public Schools does not generally permit students, staff and visitors to bring dogs and other animals/pets into school district locations. However, exceptions to this rule are permitted as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or as otherwise permitted in our District guidelines.

On occasion, Junior Explorers may have presentations from outside organizations involving animals. You will be notified in writing if any animals will be present in the program for any reason.

Thank you for choosing Minnetonka Community Education Junior Explorers for your childcare needs. We look forward to working with you and your child.