

KCS | KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

PRESCHOOL

Parent Handbook 2025-2026

Thank you for your interest in preschool in Knox County Schools. This is an exciting first year in your child's school career. Our goal is to prepare your child for kindergarten and have fun while learning.

We are pleased to provide you with important information regarding our program. These materials in this handbook include information regarding:

- Mandatory Preschool Attendance Policy and Behavior Practices
- Summary Child Care Licensing Information
- Personal Safety Curriculum
- Child/sex Abuse Detection Awareness
- Connect 4 Learning Curriculum Introduction
- School Information

You will need to complete and sign the **Parent Assurances** page. We have to keep this information on record for compliance for our licensing inspections. While you will be given a Summary of Standards for Child Care licensing requirements, the detailed document is available in your child's classroom. You may also access TDOE Rules and Regulations at: <https://www.tn.gov/sbe>.

Please remember our program is a 6 hour day. The specific start time and dismissal time may vary slightly from school to school due to the traffic pattern for that school. This information should be included in the school specific info. No transportation is provided and must be arranged by the family.

There are opportunities for family engagement throughout the year. This will be communicated at each school. Some activities may be for your family as provided by the entire school and some may be Pre-k specific activities. You will have on-going opportunity to collaborate and conference with your child's teacher. You or your designee must sign your child in each morning and sign out each afternoon. Anyone picking up your child must be on the approved list for pick-up. We cannot release a child to anyone without your explicit approval.

The personal safety instruction may vary from school to school regarding when it is taught and the curriculum materials used. The TDOE states: *The personal safety curriculum shall include a Department-recognized component on the prevention of child abuse, based upon Department curriculum guidelines. The program may choose terminology and instructional methods for this curriculum with a goal of providing clear, effective and appropriate instruction to the children in personal safety, including the prevention of child abuse. The personal safety curriculum used by the program shall be made available to the parents and legal guardians for review.* Your teacher will keep you informed and will let you view the materials if you request it. Another available resource is found at Kid Central TN: <https://www.kidcentraltn.com/article/how-to-protect-children-and-identify-and-address-child-sexual-abuse>

Helpful links: Kid Central TN: <https://www.kidcentraltn.com/> Early Childhood Standards: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/standards/tnelds/std_tnelds_4yo_2018.pdf.

Thank you!

Dr. Beth Lackey
Early Childhood Director
865-594-1529

Preschool Attendance Policy

Your child's potential for growth and development is maximized through consistent participation in a high-quality environment. Establishing consistent attendance routines in pre-k and kindergarten will increase chances of success in all future school experiences and will decrease chances your child will drop out of high school. Our goal is to establish healthy school habits as soon as school is introduced. Therefore, it is very important that your child attends pre-k on a regular basis. With this in mind, Knox County Schools, in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education and the KCS School Board, has adopted a pre-k attendance policy to go into effect December, 2023 (*see Policy J-120*).

Excused Absences:

We understand that children may miss some days of participation due to illness. Absences due to illness will be considered an **excused** absence.

The following are acceptable reasons for an excused absence:

1. The child is ill;
2. Illness of an immediate family member;
3. The child contracts a communicable disease (virus or flu);
4. Death in the family;
5. Extreme weather conditions;
6. Religious Observances;
7. Military deployment of a family member, *see Board Policy J-120*

Required Procedures:

1. Please communicate with your child's teacher when your child is absent.
2. A doctor's excuse is required after **three (3)** consecutive days of absence.
3. If you have questions or concerns about your child's attendance, or if you anticipate an ongoing attendance issue, please contact **your child's teacher** or Beth Lackey, *Early Childhood Director* at 865-594-1529.
4. If a child has **four (4)** or more consecutive absences– or **four (4)** or more absences within **one (1) month**– the site-level administrator will contact you to determine the child's participation status. The site-level administrator will document attempts to contact you and the outcome of those attempts and/or communications.
5. ***Parents are limited to 10 Parent Excuse Notes.***
6. If the child misses **five (5)** or more days in a **three (3)-month period**, the site-level administrator will contact the family to develop an attendance plan.
 - a. The attendance plan will be designed to help the family establish regular attendance or, if necessary, to plan for alternative services. The attendance plan will be developed by the family and appropriate school personnel, including, but not limited to; the child's primary pre-k teacher, the site-level administrator, the IEP team (if applicable), and additional staff serving the school and family. The plan must:
 - i. Identify the reasons for absences;

- ii. Include a specific plan and date for establishing regular attendance or alternative services that meet the child's educational goals;
 - iii. Include documentation of services and student's outcomes to determine effectiveness of the attendance plan.
7. Every effort will be made to ensure your child has access to a quality school program. However, VPK seats are limited and are made available through a state grant. **A child, who has more than five (5) unexcused absences per month, or ten (10) unexcused absences in one school year, may be terminated from the program for failure to follow the attendance policy.**
8. Because the seats are limited, your child's spot may be filled as soon as he/she is withdrawn. Future eligibility for the terminated child to re-enter the program will depend upon vacancies after a 30-day waiting period and a parent conference to establish faithful, binding Home/School Compact.

Tardies:

In order to be counted **present** on **any and all attendance records**, students in pre-k **MUST** attend school for a time period of **at least 50%** of their scheduled day. Students who attend **less than half** of their scheduled school day shall be recorded as absent **on any and all attendance records**.

Pre-K Behavior Practices

Our preschool teaching staff provides a safe, nurturing and consistent learning environment for our students. Four-year olds need modeling, patience, and calm support to help them develop necessary self-regulation skills. We provide positive behavior supports to teach social, communication, and emotional regulation skills. We reinforce clear expectations and model strategies for self-calming and conflict resolution. We have regular communication with the family to ensure we work as a team towards success for our students.

In using a positive approach, the following behavior management techniques are utilized:

- Set up the classroom environment to prevent problems.
- Encourage the children.
- Communicate to children using positive statements.
- Communicate with children on their level.
- Talk with children in a calm quiet manner.
- Reason with and set limits for the children.
- Explain unacceptable behavior to children.
- Give attention to children for positive behavior.
- Apply rules consistently.
- Model appropriate behavior.
- Provide alternatives and redirect children to acceptable activity.
- Give children opportunities to make choices and solve problems.
- Help children talk out problems and think of solutions.
- Listen to children and respect the children's needs, desires and feelings.
- Provide appropriate words to help solve conflicts.
- Use children's literature and discussion to work through common conflicts.
- Use social stories to teach self-regulation and communication skills.

Conferences will be scheduled if there is an on-going issue that requires the school and the family to work together to create solutions. One of the goals of our program is to support children and families in development of social and emotional tools and to prepare children for success in Kindergarten.



2025-2026 Knox County Schools Calendar

Thursday, July 31	First Day for Teachers (School Based In-Service Day)
Friday, August 1	Systemwide In-Service Day (PreK-12)
Monday, August 4	Administrative Day (Teacher Work Day)
Tuesday, August 5	Systemwide In-Service Day (½ Day School-based); Administrative Day (½ Day Teacher Work Day); 6 th and 9 th Grade Orientation
Wednesday, August 6	Administrative Day (Teacher Work Day)
Thursday, August 7	First Day for Students (½ Day)
Monday, September 1	Labor Day Holiday (Knox County Schools Closed)
Friday, September 5	End 4½-weeks Grading Period
Wednesday, September 17	Constitution Day (Knox County Schools Open), Half-Day for Students
Monday, October 6 - Friday, October 10	Fall Break
Tuesday, October 14	End First 9-weeks Grading Period
Tuesday, November 4	Systemwide In-Service Day (PreK-12) (Student Holiday)
Thursday, November 13	End 4½-weeks Grading Period
Wednesday, November 19	Half-Day for Students
Wednesday, November 26 - Friday, November 28	Thanksgiving Holidays (Knox County Schools Closed)
Friday, December 19	Half-Day for Students; End Second 9-weeks Grading Period; End First Semester
Monday, December 22 – Friday, January 2	Winter Break
Friday, January 2	Systemwide In-service Day (½ Day School-based); Administrative Day (½ Day Teacher Work Day)
Monday, January 5	First Day for Students after Winter Break (Full Day)
Monday, January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Knox County Schools Closed)
Wednesday, January 28	Half-Day for Students
Thursday, February 5	End 4½-weeks Grading Period
Monday, February 16	Systemwide In-Service Day (PreK-12) (Student Holiday)
Monday, March 9 – Friday, March 13	Spring Break
Tuesday, March 17	End Third 9-weeks Grading Period
Wednesday, March 25	Half-Day for Students
Friday, April 3	Holiday (Knox County Schools Closed)
Monday, April 20	End 4½-weeks Grading Period
Tuesday, May 5	Systemwide In-Service Day (School-based)
Thursday, May 21	Last Day for Students (½ Day); End Fourth 9-weeks Grading Period; End Second Semester
Friday, May 22	Administrative Day (Teacher Work Day) – Last Day for Teachers
Friday June 19	Juneteenth Holiday (Knox County Schools Closed)

Calendar Summary

- 180 Instructional Days*
- 4 Administrative Days
- 2 Unscheduled In-Service Days
- 1 Unscheduled Parent-Teacher Contact Hours Day
- 6 Scheduled In-Service Days
- 10 Vacation Days

**In accordance with T.C.A. § 19-6-3001 – 177 student instructional days plus 3 days accumulated under daily 7-hour schedule.*
 Note: This calendar allows cancellation of up to 8 instructional days due to inclement weather or serious outbreaks of illness before any make up days will be required.

Dear Families,

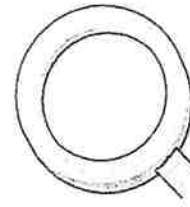
Welcome to an exciting year of learning! We are using a prekindergarten curriculum called Connect4Learning® and want to share an overview with you. This unique curriculum uses research-validated and classroom-tested literacy, science, social-emotional, and mathematics foundations. There are six interdisciplinary units of study to engage children in their learning.

Connect4Learning® combines teacher-directed instruction with multiple daily opportunities for children to play, explore, and create. Connect4Learning prepares children for kindergarten and lifelong learning.

The daily routine includes four lesson types starting with a Welcome and Read-Aloud lesson that engages children in high-quality stories and nonfiction books. The Connect lesson is a time for introducing new concepts while making connections to learning that has already occurred. The Small-Group time allows a teacher to work with a few students in a hands-on lesson designed to develop children's skills. Finally, Fast Facts includes a variety of key math and literacy concepts in a quick and engaging format. Learning activities

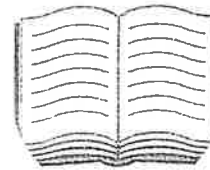
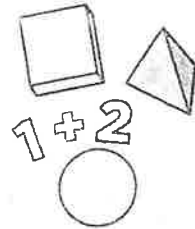
are listed

Connect
4Learning®



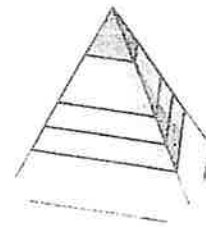
**Connected
Science
Experiences**

**Engaging
Math**



**Authentic
Literacy**

**Social-
Emotional
Development**



Letter D

centers, planned transitions, and child-directed learning complete the remainder of the curriculum day.

Letters will be sent home for each of the six units so that you can understand the learning that is happening in the classroom. You can support that learning by asking your children daily about what they are doing in the classroom and by looking for opportunities to build on that learning at home. Of course read books with and to your children. And don't forget to share important information with us about your children's activities at home and out in the community.

We are excited to watch your children grow and learn throughout the year. With your help and support, this will be a fantastic year filled with high-quality educational experiences and a lot of fun for everyone.

Sincerely,

Bill Lacky

Connect
Learning



Preventing Child Sexual Abuse



What You Can Do

To prevent child sexual abuse, it is important to keep the focus on adult responsibility, while teaching children skills to help them protect themselves. Consider the following tips:

- Take an active role in your children's lives. Learn about their activities and people with whom they are involved. Stay alert for possible problems.
 - Watch for "grooming" behaviors in adults who spend time with your child. Warning signs may include frequently finding ways to be alone with your child, ignoring your child's need for privacy (e.g., in the bathroom), or giving gifts or money for no particular occasion.
 - Ensure that organizations, groups, and teams that your children are involved with minimize one-on-one time between children and adults. Ask how staff and volunteers are screened and supervised.
 - Make sure your children know that they can talk to you about anything that bothers or confuses them.
 - Teach children accurate names of private body parts and the difference between touches that are "okay" and "not okay."
 - Empower children to make decisions about their bodies by allowing them age-appropriate privacy and encouraging them to say "no" when they do not want to touch or be touched by others, even in nonsexual ways.
 - Teach children to take care of their own bodies (e.g., bathing or using the bathroom) so they do not have to rely on adults or older children for help.
 - Educate children about the difference between good secrets (such as birthday surprises) and bad secrets (those that make the child feel unsafe or uncomfortable).
- Monitor children's use of technology, including cell phones, social networking sites, and messaging. Review contact lists regularly and ask about any people you don't recognize.
 - Trust your instincts! If you feel uneasy about leaving your child with someone, don't do it. If you are concerned about possible sexual abuse, ask questions.
 - If your child tells you that he or she has been abused, stay calm, listen carefully, and never blame the child. Thank your child for telling you. Report the abuse right away.

Remember: You can help protect your children from sexual abuse by being active in their lives and teaching them safety skills.

Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

The following may indicate sexual abuse and should not be ignored:

- Unexplained pain, itching, redness, or bleeding in the genital area
- Increased nightmares or bedwetting
- Withdrawn behavior or appearing to be in a trance
- Angry outbursts or sudden mood swings
- Loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing
- Anxiety or depression
- Sudden, unexplained avoidance of certain people or places
- Sexual knowledge, language, or behavior that is unusual for the child's age

This tip sheet was adapted using information from Prevent Child Abuse America, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the Enough Abuse Campaign, and Stop It Now. At www.preventchildabuse.org, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.



**Standards for School-administered Child Care, Chapter 0520-12-01
SUMMARY**

Program Organization and Administration, 0520-12-01-.05

- A Child Care Center must have an adequate budget. General liability, automobile liability, and medical payment insurances must be maintained on all properties and vehicles owned or operated by the program.
- Children's files must include a complete application, an official immunization record (exceptions do apply), and health history.
- On-going parent communication is expected. Programs must provide a parent handbook with the policies, procedures, and the TDOE requirements, chapter 0520-12-01. It is expected that parents sign for receipt of the policies and requirements, and this would be kept in the child's file. All parents shall be given a pre-placement visit opportunity.
- Parents must have access to all areas of the center when their child is present.
- The parents must receive an educational program regarding child abuse detection, reporting and prevention.
- A written plan must be in place for the release of each child, this should include individuals who are allowed to pick up the child at the end of the day or any given time by the parent.
- Children must be signed out of the program by the legal guardian. Staff may require to see a person's identification when releasing a child from the program.
- Injuries and incidences will be reported to the parent as soon as possible or at the end of the school day. This shall be documented in the child's file.
- Staff records must be kept on each employee that includes educational background, reference checks, TBI check, in-service training, physical exams and performance reviews.
- If the center provides transportation, the driver should be appropriately licensed, have a drug screening on file, and certificate of CPR/First Aid, there must be liability insurance and the children must have adequate space and supervision. Transportation provided by the center or under center authorization shall comply with state law.
- Programs must have the current Certificate of Approval posted where parents and visitors can easily see it, along with the Department of Human Services childcare complaint number and the Department of Children's Services Child Abuse Hotline number.
- No smoking must also be posted in a conspicuous manner.
- A copy of the state board rules (chapter 0520-12-01) must be maintained in a central space and available to all staff and parents.

Program Operation (Supervision), 0520-12-01-.06

- Careful supervision of each group is expected at all times and suited appropriately for each age grouping.
- Adult:child ratios and group sizes must be followed.

Single-age grouping chart:

AGE	GROUP SIZE	ADULT:CHILD RATIO
Infant (6wks-12 m)	8	1:4
Toddler (11m-23m)	12	1:6
Two (2) years old	14	1:7
Three (3) years old	18	1:9
Four (4) years old	20	1:13
VPK, 619, PDG	20	1:10

Multi-age grouping chart:

AGE	GROUP SIZE	ADULT:CHILD RATIO
Infant – 18 months	8	1:4
18 – 36 months	16	1:8
3 – 4 years old only	20	1:10
3 – 6 years old*	24	1:13

*Not including first grade children

- Group sizes must be maintained in the classroom, but classes may combine while outdoors, in common dining areas, or common napping areas.
- Each group must have their own space. Infants cannot be group with children older than 30 months; a separate area must be provided for infants and toddlers.
- At naptime, ratios may be relaxed for groups (except for infants and toddlers).
- A written playground supervision plan is required.
- Field trips requires adult:child ratios to be doubled. Swimming has a separate ratio chart and the life guard is not included in the ratio.

Staff, 0520-12-01-.07

- All programs must have a director and enough teachers and staff to meet the required ratios for adequate supervision.
- Staff must be physically, mentally and emotionally stable to work with children and have knowledge of early childhood behaviors and development.
- Preschool directors, teachers and assistant teachers must be 21 years of age.
- All new staff must complete 2 hours of orientation before assuming duties and receive annual instruction in early childhood topics that are required in this chapter section.
- The program must maintain written documentation that each employee has read the full set of all applicable rules.
- A copy of the entire rules must be maintained and readily accessible to all employees.
- All staff must have a criminal background check upon hiring and must be cleared before assuming duties. A new fingerprint sample is required every 5 years for all employees.
- A director shall be responsible for the day-to-day operations, shall be physically present in the facility for at least half the hours of operation, be at least 21 years of age, and follow the qualification guidelines listed in this chapter section.
- An assistant director may be designated in charge when the director is absent.
- All directors, assistant directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and other staff working directly with the children must have 30 hours of professional development training. At least 6 hours of this professional development must be in developmentally appropriate literacy practices.

Program, 0520-12-01-.09

- Educational activity must be developmentally appropriate for the age and ability of the children enrolled. (See TN-ELDS for Birth-48 Months and TN-ELDS for 48 month-Kindergarten)

- Any technology used by the children must be reviewed by staff, approved by parents, and shall not exceed 2 hours per day.
- Children shall not be left in restraining devices (swings, car seats, high chairs, etc.) for periods longer than 30 minutes.
- Children should have opportunities to play together and also alone when they choose to do so.
- Personal safety must be taught each year for children ages 3 through school age.
- Outdoor play must be provided for all ages who are in care for more than 3 daylight hours, weather permitting (temp ranges 32-95 degrees).
- Behavior management and discipline must be reasonable and age appropriate. Spanking or other corporal punishment is not allowed. Timeout must be based on the age of the child and take place in an appropriate location.
- Children shall not be in care for longer than 12 hours in a day.
- Routines such as snack, meals, and res shall occur at approximately the same time each day.

Health and Safety, 0520-12-01-.10

- A first aid kit must be on the premises and a comprehensive first aid chart or list must be available.
- There must a staff member present at all times who has a current certification in CPR and first aid training.
- A written plan to protect children during disasters is required. Drills must be practiced and documented each month. At least one drill must be practiced during extended care hours.
- Smoking and the consumption of alcohol are not allowed on the premises of a child care program.
- Firearms are not allowed on the premises or in a vehicle used to transport children.
- Kitchen knives or other potentially hazardous tools must be kept inaccessible to children.
- Staff's personal belongings must be kept inaccessible to children.
- Emergency contact numbers must be listed and posted near all telephones.
- Conduct regular morning health checks of each child and notify parents immediately when a child is sick or injured.
- Medication may not be given to any child without the written consent of the parent/guardian.
- Safe sleep practices for infants must be followed:
 - Infants places on their back to sleep, in a crib or pack 'n play with only the sheet. Soft bedding for infants is not allowed.
 - No swaddling or wrapping in a blanket.
 - Infants must be touched by a teacher every 15 minutes to check breathing and body temperature.
 - Infant room teachers must have SIDS and safe sleep training before reporting for duty.
- Hand washing and diapering procedures must be followed to minimize the spread of germs in the classrooms.
- Developmentally appropriate equipment that is in good repair and easily cleaned is required. All manufacturer's safety instructions must be followed.
- Electrical cords and outlets should be inaccessible to the children.
- Children must have a place to store their belongings that minimizes the spread of germs.
- Each child must have their own napping equipment (2" thick mat or cot; sheet or cover for the mat; and a coverlet for their body)
- All staff must report reasonable suspicions of child abuse to DCS hotline number or local law enforcement. Annual training for this is required.

Food, 0520-12-01-.11

- Children will receive meals based on the amount of hours spent in the program.
- Food should not be forced or withheld from children.
- Infants must be held while bottle feeding and bottles may not be heated in the microwave.
- Special diets and instructions must be provided in writing.

- A menu must be posted each week. Changes to the meal must be documented before the meal occurs.
- Teachers and children must wash hand when handling and eating food.
- All eating surfaces must be washed with soapy water and sanitized before eating and after eating.
- Children must be seated at appropriately sized tables and adults must closely supervise them while eating.
- Milk must be placed in the refrigerator immediately after it is served. All formulas remaining in bottles after feeding must be discarded.
- Highchair manufacturer's restraints must be used.
- Food must be properly handled and stored to protect from it contamination.
- Milk and perishable food must not sit on the table longer than 15 minutes before being served.

Physical Facilities, 0520-12-01-12

- All facilities must pass an annual fire inspection and health inspection.
- A working telephone is required.
- A minimum of 30 square feet of usable indoor play space for each child is required.
- The area must be clean and safe for the children to use.
- A minimum of 50 square feet per child is required outdoors.
- The outdoor area must be fenced.
- Outdoor play equipment must be age appropriate for the group of children.
- Outdoor equipment must be placed to avoid injury and have a proper amount of resilient surfacing material to cushion a fall.
- The outdoor playground must be properly maintained with a written playground maintenance plan. A pre-play inspection is required before children play outdoors.
- Drinking water shall be provided in all occupied rooms.
- Adequate temperature must be maintained in all classrooms.
- Classroom pets must be kept in a clean cage and kept away from food storage or food preparation areas.

Transportation, 0520-12-01-13

- All transportation laws must be followed at all times and are defined in State board of education Pupil Transportation Rule 0520-01-05-.01 (2).
- Liability insurance coverage is required on all vehicles.
- 15 passenger vans are strictly prohibited.
- Proper child passenger restraints are to be used when transporting children in passenger vehicles.
- All school bus drivers must be properly licensed, have received a background check through the department, complete an annual physical and mental exam, complete annual school bus driving training, and complete CPR certification.
- Adult monitors in addition to the driver may be needed to properly supervise children while in route.
- Passenger logs must be kept and inspection of vehicles at the end of the route is required to insure no child is left inside.

Care of Children with Special Needs, 0520-12-01-14

- When children with special needs are enrolled, all reasonable and appropriate efforts shall be made to provide those children equal opportunity to participate in the same program activities as their peers.
- Adaptations to the environment shall be directed toward normalizing the lifestyle of the child with a disability by helping him/her become independent and develop self-help skills.
- The program shall inform parents of any specialized services available from the program, and if the program is aware of any specialized services available through third parties, shall additionally inform the parent of such services.

- Governing agency shall develop policies and procedures, in accordance with 0520-01-09 .23, governing personnel authorized to use isolation and restraint, training requirements and incident reporting procedures.

School-Age Before and after School Programs 0520-12-01-.15

- All staff shall be 18 years of age.
- Professional development training hours are required: 18 hours for directors and 12 hours for staff.
- Ratio for Kindergarten-12 years old is 1:20 and for 13 years and older is 1:30.
- Ratio and group size requirements when pre-k is enrolled in the program

AGE	Group Size	Adult: Child Ratio
Including 3 year olds	15	1:10
Including 4 year olds	20	1:12

**COMPLAINT HOTLINE: (LONG DISTANCE) 1-800-462-8261
(NASHVILLE AREA) 615-313-4820**