

CARBONDALE



CHARGERS
BE READY
BE RESPECTFUL
BE RESPONSIBLE

Welcome to the Carbondale Area School District Pre-K Program!

We are so excited to have you and your little learner join our school family! This handbook is your go-to guide for understanding our Pre-K policies, procedures, and expectations. Keep it handy throughout the year — it will help answer questions and keep you up to date.

We can't wait to share a year of laughter, learning, and growth with you and your child. Here's to a wonderful school year ahead!

Meet the Pre K Teachers, We are looking forward to meeting you!

Mrs. Jennifer Baum:

- I have been a Pre K Teacher for 20 years, 18 of them in the Carbondale Area School District.
- A few of my favorite things are family, shopping and anything Disney!
- My favorite Disney Character is Daisy Duck.

Mrs. Maria Apolinario:

- I have been teaching for 34 years, 18 of them as a Pre K teacher in the Carbondale Area School District.
- A few of my favorite things are my daughter Katie, the ocean and music.
- My favorite book character is Pete the Cat.

Mrs. Meghan Durkin:

- I have been teaching Pre K for 20 years, 3 of them at the Carbondale Area School District.
- A few of my favorite things are spending time with my family, spending time outside, and cooking.
- My favorite children's author is Mo Willems.

Meet the Paraprofessionals:

Mrs. Rebecca Newcomb:

- I have been a paraprofessional at the Carbondale Area School District for 18 years.
- A few of my favorite things are Yankees Baseball and spending time with my kids.

Mrs. Stacey Gregory:

- I have been a paraprofessional at the Carbondale Area School District for 3 years.
- A few of my favorite things are camping, boating and spending time outdoors with my husband and four daughters.

Mrs. Danielle Nichols:

- I have been a paraprofessional with the Carbondale Area School District for 3 years.
- A few of my favorite things are being with my family and shopping.

Meet our School Staff 😊

Administration:

Superintendent: Mrs. Holly Sayre

Principal: Ms. Meg Duffy

Assistant Principal: Dr. Colleen Sullivan

PreK Guidance Counselor: Mrs. Amanda Brennan

Nurses:

Mrs. Debbie Perri, RN

Mrs. Patrice Ruddy, LPN

Social Worker: Brooke Mariano **Behavioral**

Specialist: Dorothy Hahn

Front Office Clerks:

Mrs. Kim Rosar

Mrs. Mary Carachilo

Cafeteria:

Mrs. Rosalyn Durkin

Potty Training

Readiness

Our Pre-K program asks that children be potty trained before enrollment. This means your little one should be able to use the toilet on their own including pulling pants down and up, wiping, and washing their hands. If your child is still learning, don't worry our staff will partner with you to create a plan that supports their potty-training journey.

Nurse's Office

While at school, your child may visit the nurse if they aren't feeling well or have a small bump or scrape. If warranted, you will receive a call from the nurse, and your child's teacher will follow up if more information is needed.

🔑 **Important:** Only medications authorized by a physician can be given at school. Any medication you provide must be handed directly to the school nurse (never sent in a backpack). It must be in the original container, clearly labeled with:

- Your child's first and last name
- The date

- Dosage instructions
 - A completed prescription form from the doctor
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Change of Clothing

Accidents and spills happen! Please send a **full change of clothes** — including underwear, socks, and season-appropriate items in a labeled Ziplock bag. We'll switch them out as the seasons change.

Uniform Closet

Need a uniform? We've got you covered! Call **1-844-330-2273**:

- Press 5 for Elementary School
 - Then press 3600 and leave your name, phone number, child's name, size, and items needed.
Messages are checked on Tuesdays and Fridays. The PTA will call you when your order is ready for pickup during elementary office hours.
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Daily Backpack Checks

Each evening, peek inside your child's backpack for notes, newsletters, permission slips, or other important papers.

Recess

Fresh air every day! Preschoolers go outside daily when the temperature/wind chill is above freezing and it's not raining or snowing. Please dress your child for the weather coats, hats, gloves, and sturdy shoes (like sneakers) are best for safe play.

Label Everything!

Hats, jackets, lunch boxes, water bottles you name it, it should have your child's name. Many children don't recognize their own belongings yet, so labeling helps us get items back to the right owner.

Student Health

Before starting school, all students must submit:

- An up-to-date immunization record
- A Universal Health Form completed by your child's pediatrician (submitted annually)

✍ State law requires that all children ages 6 months–5 years receive a flu shot each year, with documentation submitted by **December 31**. Without proof of vaccination, students will be excluded from the program during flu season.

If your child is sick, please keep them home. They may return when:

- They've been fever-free for 24 hours (without medicine)
- They've had no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours

Special Education & Early Intervention

We are committed to meeting the needs of all students. If your child has received Early Intervention services up to age 3 and may still need support, your service coordinator will help with the transition process to NEIU. Please arrange any necessary special education services **before** the school year begins.

Transportation

All students are eligible for transportation. You will receive your child's bus and route details before the start of school.

More information can be found on our school website under **Transportation**.

Half-Day Schedule

On district half-days:

- **Pre-K** dismisses at 12:00 pm
- **Elementary** dismisses at 12:20 pm
- **High School** dismisses at 12:40 pm

Bus times may vary slightly, so it's best to arrive early at the stop. Dates for half-days are posted on the district calendar.

Breakfast & Lunch

Children will enjoy meals in the cafeteria each day. They may bring lunch from home or choose a meal provided by The Nutrition Group. Monthly menus are posted on our website. CASD participates in the Universal Lunch Program and as such, **ALL** students receive a free breakfast and lunch.

Pre-K Celebration

At the end of the year, we'll honor our Pre-K students moving onto kindergarten with a special celebration! Details will be shared closer to the date.

Curriculum

We use **The Creative Curriculum**, a research-based, developmentally appropriate program that supports the whole child. Each day includes:

- Morning meeting
- Small group literacy & math
- Intentional play (choice time)
- Large group activities
- Gross motor time (indoor/outdoor play)
- Snacks & lunch
- Shared reading & writing

We assess growth using **Teaching Strategies GOLD**, which tracks progress in 38 objectives across all learning domains, using observations, work samples, photos, and family input. This helps teachers adapt lessons to meet each child's needs and share meaningful progress reports with families.

Remind App

Please download the Remind App on your phone. All school communication is posted to Remind.

Social Media

Please follow us on FaceBook, Instagram and TikTok at Carbondale Area School District

Parent and Family Engagement Events

Please refer to our monthly calendar for our monthly family offerings.

Why Join the PTA?

Joining the PTA is a powerful way to show you value education and your child's school community. It keeps you connected to what's happening at school, opens doors to valuable resources, and lets your voice be heard in decisions that shape your child's experience. PTA membership also strengthens community bonds, helps raise essential funds for programs and improvements, and models the importance of active involvement to your child. Please join us at our monthly meeting.

Our Collaborative Approach to Early Childhood Education

Our Pre-K program partners with both **Head Start** and **Pre-K Counts** to provide high-quality, comprehensive early learning experiences for children ages 4 to 5. Through these collaborations, we offer a nurturing environment that supports children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, ensuring they are well-prepared for kindergarten and beyond. By combining resources and expertise, we strive to meet the diverse needs of our community's families, promoting equitable access to early education opportunities.

Behavioral Concerns How CAES Implements This Approach

CAES focuses on early intervention and positive reinforcement. Teachers and staff model appropriate behaviors and language, guiding students to:

- Be safe and keep hands to themselves
 - Use kind words
 - Communicate openly with staff when something is wrong or bothering them
 - Recognizing that young children may struggle to express their feelings, CAES emphasizes understanding and patience, addressing behaviors like tantrums or lashing out with compassion and guidance.
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□ How Families Can Support at Home

Your involvement is crucial in reinforcing these practices. You can support your child's development by:

- Discussing the importance of safety and kindness

- Encouraging open communication about their feelings
- Modeling appropriate behaviors and language at home
- Collaborating with teachers to address any concerns

By working together, we can create a consistent and nurturing environment that promotes positive behavior and emotional growth.

How Our School Uses PBIS

Our school implements **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**—a research based, multi-tiered framework designed to create a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment for all students, including our youngest learners. PBIS centers on proactively teaching and reinforcing the behaviors we want to see, using consistent expectations and meaningful acknowledgments rather than relying on exclusionary discipline. Look for more information on our website and social media.

9 Essential Pre-K Tips to Help Your Child Feel Confident and Safe when Starting School

1. **Speak Positively About School**

Tell your child how exciting and fun school can be—mention playing with friends, learning new things, and spending time with caring teachers. Your confident, upbeat tone helps children trust the experience and look forward to it. Studies show that a positive mindset from parents can ease anxiety and set a tone of emotional safety.

2. **Establish Predictable Routines**

Start school-night and morning rituals early—consistent sleep, breakfast, and packing up help children know what to expect and feel grounded.

3. **Encourage Independence**

Practice skills like zipping coats, snapping shoes, and using utensils. These boost confidence and help your child feel capable and ready.

4. **Use Role-Play & Storytelling**

Pretend school drop-offs with toy figures or act out circle time. Reading about school helps children anticipate what comes next and feel more comfortable.

5. **Familiarize the Environment**

Tour the school or drive by it. Talk about places they'll go—like “Morning circle, then storytime, then snack.” This makes the unknown feel familiar.

6. **Validate Feelings and Provide Reassurance**

Let them know it's okay to feel excited *and* nervous. Acknowledge their emotions (“Being in a new place can feel weird”) and reassure them it's all part of growing.

7. **Share Calm Confidence**

Children pick up on your emotions—keeping your tone calm and assured helps them feel secure. Avoid expressing your own worries in front of them.

8. **Support Social Connections**

Arrange meetups or playdates with upcoming classmates. Seeing familiar faces at school boosts comfort and belonging.

9. **Stay Talkative and Responsive**

After school, ask open-ended questions like “What was the best part of your day?” Listen closely and respond with warmth and interest. Building trust through conversation supports emotional readiness

Dear Families,

As your children embark on their school journey, we want you to know we're here to support not just them, but your whole family every step of the way. Thank you for choosing public education and entrusting us with your child.

Transitions can bring both excitement and nerves. Please remember: you are not alone, our entire community—the staff, teachers, and fellow families, are here for you. Whether you have questions, need a listening ear, or simply want to share a moment, don't hesitate to reach out. We're committed to walking alongside you throughout the school year with care and understanding.

Principal Duffy and Dr. Sullivan

*Please refer to our District policies and Parent/Student Handbook for more detailed information.
<https://carbondalearea.org/carbondale-area-elementary/>