



PRE-K COUNTS FAMILY HANDBOOK


Governor Mifflin School District

Cumru Elementary School

601 Philadelphia Avenue, Shillington, PA 19607



'25-'26
SCHOOL YEAR



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WELCOME TO PRE-K COUNTS AT GM!

OUR PHILOSOPHY

It is essential that children's first experiences are robust ones, steeped in activities that develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, a deep understanding about themselves in a social society, and age-appropriate content. - *Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood, 2014*

***The Governor Mifflin School District Pre-K Counts Program is committed to...
engaging children, educating parents, and initiating success in school.***

WHAT IS PRE-K COUNTS?

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is a state-funded preschool program for 3 to 4 year olds whose families meet the state income requirement of at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. This program is being offered to residents of the Governor Mifflin School District through a grant awarded to the district by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

FAMILY ASSURANCES

I understand that my child's eligibility for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) is subject to the program's two-year participation limit. My child must be at least three years old by the kindergarten cutoff date set by the school district where we live to assure compliance with receiving only two-years of PKC programming.

Once my child reaches the age required to enroll in kindergarten in the public school district where we live, I understand they will no longer be eligible for PA PKC funding.

I understand that my child's enrollment is contingent upon meeting the eligibility criteria, including income verification and prioritization based on risk factors.

I understand that the PA Pre-K Counts (PKC) program is an educational program with attendance requirements. I agree to ensure my child's regular attendance and to notify the program in case of absences. My program's PA Pre-K Counts hours of operation are: **9:00 AM-2:30 PM**

I understand that the PA Pre-K Counts (PKC) program is secular (non-religious) in nature and will not include religious instruction.

I understand that once an enrollment start date is confirmed, the child's PA Pre-K Counts enrollment status may be shared with other OCDEL-funded programs, such as the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) or Early Intervention, to ensure proper coordination of funding and services.

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

The Governor Mifflin School District expects all students to attend school daily. Regular attendance is essential for students to achieve academic standards and maintain consistent educational progress. We encourage cooperation and communication among parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators to uphold attendance laws and enforce district policies.

A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed practitioner of the healing arts. Failure to provide an excuse from a licensed practitioner of the healing arts will result in an unexcused absence.

To prevent chronic absenteeism, the school will send regular attendance letters, provide attendance improvement plans, and schedule a Student Attendance Improvement Conference with a family member/guardian.

All attendance information will be recorded in Skyward. For any questions or support regarding attendance, please contact Kristen Gerhard Pre-K Counts Coordinator.

Why is attendance at school so important?

A child enrolled in a PA Pre-K Counts classroom is considered full-time and must attend each school day, arrive on time, and stay for the full instructional day (5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year). Students most successful at school miss fewer than 10 days per school year (1 day per month). Consistent attendance at school will help your child grow socially, emotionally, and academically. We encourage your family to develop strong expectations for your child's attendance at school. Our suggestion? Track your child's attendance so you know exactly how many days he/she has missed.

Excused Absences

Excused absences are defined as those absences when a student is prevented from attending for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons. These can be further defined as illness, family emergency, death of a family member, health or dental appointments, fire, natural disaster, or other extenuating circumstances deemed as excused by the program. The PA Pre-K Counts regulations does not allow for excused absences for vacations or trips. Any days missed due to vacations or trips will be

considered unexcused absences, and will count towards truancy according to PA Pre-K Counts guidelines. If families have significant need for their child to miss school, the Governor Mifflin

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES (CONT'D)

Pre-K Counts program will work with the family on solutions to stay within the attendance requirements of the program to keep unenrollment as a last resort.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are any absences that are not included in the above definition of excused absences. Students enrolled in a Governor Mifflin Pre-K Counts classroom are considered full-time and must attend each school day, arrive on time, and stay for the full instructional day (5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year). Any days missed due to vacations or trips will be considered unexcused absences.

What if my child has frequent absences?

If your child accumulates **three unexcused absences**, a notification letter will be sent home. If your child accumulates **six unexcused absences**, you will be requested to attend a conference to discuss your child's attendance. A team consisting of Pre-K Counts and Governor Mifflin staff members will work with the family to provide support, resources, and a plan in order to promote regular attendance.

Please note: Children who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10% unexcused absences over the course of the school year (more than 18 days total) and have not responded to program support must be dismissed from the Governor Mifflin Pre-K Counts program and replaced with an eligible child from the waiting list or who is recruited from the community.

SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

The Governor Mifflin School District's Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program provides individual, high-quality, educational services in a least restrictive environment to all children. A child enrolled in a PA Pre-K Counts classroom is considered full-time and must attend each school day, arrive on time, and stay for the full instructional day (5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year). Governor Mifflin's Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program utilizes a positive approach that incorporates research-based practices while addressing social and emotional development. The Governor Mifflin School District understands that children may demonstrate behavior(s) that require additional support and guidance to prevent suspension and expulsion from the Pre-K Counts program. The Governor Mifflin School District believes in a collaborative approach within a comprehensive process to facilitate each child's learning, growth and success in all areas of their development. Governor Mifflin's Pre-K Coordinator, as well as Pre-K Counts Lead & Assistant Teachers work collaboratively with children, peers, parents/guardians, family members, outside agencies, specialists and district personnel to support each child's growth and development.

Governor Mifflin's Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program encourages positive behavior supports by:

- Establishing a program that is suitable for the ages and needs of the children.
- Teaching age appropriate behavior management.
- Establishing rules and routines that encourage behavior which is respectful of self, others and the

environment.

- Using strategies and techniques which teach children how to productively navigate the classroom and interact with peers, staff and classroom visitors.
- Offering positive reinforcement and modeling to encourage appropriate behaviors and promote a positive self-image.

If your child's behavior requires more intensive support, it is essential that parents/guardians and Pre-K Counts staff work together. Therefore, you can expect the following:

- Pre-K Counts staff will begin communication that identifies the concern.
- Pre-K Counts staff will collect information to determine the cause of the behavior.
- Pre-K Counts classroom staff will implement strategies for support to assist the child in demonstrating appropriate behavior.
- A conference will be held to discuss next steps in our shared efforts to support the child.

If there is an IEP currently in place you can expect the following:

- Pre-K Counts staff will follow the above steps, in addition to the following:
 - Pre-K Counts staff will contact the agency that provides the child's EI services.
 - Pre-K Counts staff will speak to the IEP team/EI about what they are seeing as a means to determine whether the IEP is capturing all it should.
 - If an OCDEL approved transition plan is in place for a child with an existing IEP, and the agency responsible for coordinating the transition plan can not meet the needs of the child, the child should return to their least restrictive learning environment.

If there is no IEP currently in place you can expect the following:

- Pre-K Counts staff will follow the above steps, in addition to the following:
 - *Pre-K Counts staff will work with the family to ensure appropriate referrals are made.

Please note: If a family chooses to receive services that occur outside of the Pre-K Counts classroom and prohibit them from meeting the minimum attendance requirements and an exception is not granted by OCDEL, the child will no longer be eligible for PA Pre-K Counts services and may be unenrolled to open a spot for other eligible families.

Termination of Enrollment

The Governor Mifflin School District reserves the right to terminate an enrollment including, but not limited to:

- If an OCDEL approved transition plan is in place for a child with an existing IEP, and the agency responsible for coordinating the transition plan can not meet the needs of the child, the child should return to their least restrictive learning environment.
- If the agency responsible for coordinating services in a child's IEP cannot meet the needs of the child within Governor Mifflin's PA PKC program, the child should return to their least restrictive environment.
- If challenging behaviors persist and cannot be resolved after implementing all steps of the Suspension & Expulsion prevention and intervention procedures, the child may be unenrolled from the program.
- Failure to update required forms, including viable emergency contact information.
- Habitual Late Student Arrival and Pick-Up.
- Any additional violation of GM PA PKC procedures.

CALENDAR & HOURS

Our Pre-K classes run Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM from Monday, August 18, 2025 through Friday, May 22, 2026 (pending snow make-up days) except as noted on our Pre-K Counts Calendar. Our Pre-K Counts Calendar and District Calendar are in the rear of this handbook and on our district website. Students are expected to attend each instructional day in its entirety.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Student Drop-Off occurs between 9:00-9:15 AM each day. **We ask all parents/guardians not to arrive prior to 8:50 A.M or 2:20 PM.**

Mrs. Davis' Classroom

Drop off & Pick Up Location: We ask that you drive up School Lane from Governor Mifflin Intermediate School and park in the half circle by the playground. Please pull all the way up; there are numbers along the fence to guide you. If the half circle is full you may wait in your car, in the right hand lane that flows into the half circle. Families will not be invited to assist children out of car seats and cars unless your car is safely inside the half circle and parked at a number (#1-6).

Drop-Off Procedure: At 9:00 AM, Mrs. Davis and/or another Pre-K staff member will invite you to assist your child out of the car and into our care. For safety reasons, please wait for a staff member before letting your child out of their car seat and out of the car.

Pick-Up Procedure: At 2:30 PM, Mrs. Davis and/or another Pre-K staff member will walk your child to you so that you may safely escort them into your car, and into their car seats.

Miss Fonte's Classroom

Drop off & Pick Up Location: We ask that you drive up School Lane from Governor Mifflin Intermediate School and park in the right hand lane in front of the playground.

Drop-Off Procedure: At 9:00 AM, Miss Fonte and/or another Pre-K staff member will invite you to assist your child out of the car and into our care. For safety reasons, please wait for a staff member to arrive before letting your child out of the car seat and out of the car.

Pick-Up Procedure: At 2:30 PM, Miss Fonte and/or another Pre-K staff member will walk your child to you so that you may safely escort them into your car, and into their car seats.

Miss Vitabile's Classroom

Drop off & Pick Up Location: We ask that you drive up School Lane from Governor Mifflin Intermediate School and park in the half circle by the playground. Please pull all the way up; there are numbers along the fence to guide you. If the half circle is full you may wait in your car, in the right hand lane that flows into the half circle. Families will not be invited to assist children out of car

seats and cars unless your car is safely inside the half circle and parked at a number (#1-6).

Drop-Off Procedure: At 9:00 AM, Miss Vitabile and/or another Pre-K staff member will invite you to assist your child out of the car and into our care. For safety reasons, please wait for a staff member before letting your child out of their car seat and out of the car.

Pick-Up Procedure: 2:30 PM, Miss Vitabile and/or another Pre-K staff member will walk your child to you so that you may safely escort them into your car, and into their car seats.

Late Drop-Off/Tardy Student

Students that do not arrive by 9:15 AM will need to enter the building with the adult providing transportation at Cumru Elementary's main office. The child will be noted as tardy, but marked present for attendance purposes. An adult signature will be required when a student arrives late to school. It is important to note that minutes are monitored and recorded as unexcused absences. If/When a child's accrued tardy minutes equal a half or whole day, they are allocated as unexcused absences.

Late Pick-Up

Students that are not picked up by 2:45 PM will need to be secured by an approved family member or other adult in Cumru Elementary's main office. The child will be noted as a late pickup and an adult signature will be required to release the child.

PLEASE NOTE: We will only release a child to a parent or legal guardian. Any changes require prior written notification by the parent or legal guardian. Please inform your teacher of any changes in your child's transportation home.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Governor Mifflin's Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program follows the procedures of the Governor Mifflin School District in relation to health and wellness. These policies may be reviewed by scanning the QR Code or by visiting bit.ly/GMSDSchoolHealth.



What if my child becomes ill in school?

You will be notified and expected to pick up your child at the nurse's office as soon as possible. **The teacher must have your daytime phone number and a valid emergency contact number on file at all times.** Please notify the teacher immediately if changes are made to your contact information.

What if my child will be absent, arriving late, or leaving early?

Call Cumru Elementary at 610-775-5081 and leave a message with the automated system.

A note must be sent to school for each absence, tardiness, or early dismissal. **This is required in addition to the phone call.** When a student is absent from school for less than three days, the

HEALTH & WELLNESS (CONT'D)

district requires that a written excuse be given to their teacher upon their return to school within three days of an absence. All absences are recorded as unlawful/unexcused until a note is received.

The excuse should contain the following information:

- Date the note is written
- Student's name
- Date(s) of absence
- Reason for absence
- Parent/Guardian signature

When a student is absent for three or more consecutive days, a doctor's note is required when the student returns to school. Please forward a doctor's note to school within three days in order for an absence to be excused. Your physician may fax a note to the school; if so, please fax using your school's fax number. (Cumru Fax: 610-685-0404) If a doctor's note is not received, the absence will remain unlawful.

SCHOOL DELAYS & CLOSINGS

In the event of school closings or delays, Pre-K classrooms will follow the district schedule for closings and delays. Announcements will be made on local radio and TV stations, the district's messaging service Skylert, and will be posted on the district website.

2-Hour Delay Schedule: Students should be dropped off between 11:00-11:15 A.M. Mrs. Davis' and Miss Vitabile's students should wait in the half circle by the playground for assistance. Miss Fonte's students should wait at the front gate of the playground for assistance. **We ask all parents/guardians not to arrive prior to 10:50 A.M. on delayed start days.**

Early Dismissal Schedule: The early dismissal schedule for the Pre-K Counts classroom will be announced pending weather circumstances. **Parents are responsible for providing transportation home.**

ONLINE LEARNING

Our Pre-K Counts program is in-person. However, if the Governor Mifflin School District moves to online learning, so will our Pre-K program.

At that time, your child will be provided with an online learning backpack which includes the technology necessary to virtually meet with their class and teachers. It will also contain the materials needed for at home learning activities. Children are required to attend the full virtual session just as they are expected to attend an in-person school day.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM PRE-K

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is designed to provide opportunities for your child to engage in a wide variety of activities that are aligned with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. You'll find learning areas with books, blocks, math materials, areas for dramatic play, and science materials that invite your child to explore new concepts and ideas. It might look and feel like play to your child, but all activities are designed to purposefully and appropriately build your child's readiness skills for the years ahead.

The Daily Schedule

Each part of the day is planned to meet specific skills in the PA Early Learning Standards. Your child will participate in large group activities, small group instruction, and independent time every day. The day also includes time for movement and outdoor activities, breakfast, and lunch. The daily schedule is posted in the classroom, and you may also request a copy from the teacher.

The Curriculum

Our curriculum is ***The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Sixth Edition*** and is aligned to the PA Early Learning Standards. We also instruct using ***Learning Without Tears, Get Set for School***. Both curriculums include instruction and exploration in early literacy concepts such as letter/sound recognition, phonological awareness, concepts about print, listening comprehension, and pre-writing skills. The curriculum also includes lessons to develop early math concepts in number and shape recognition, counting, patterning, sorting and classifying, and topics in science and social studies.

Meal Times

Pre- Counts children will be served a nutritious breakfast and lunch. All meals are provided at no cost to the family. **Please make the teacher aware of any food allergies that may be a concern during meal times.**

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Governor Mifflin's Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program recognizes that student wellness and proper nutrition are related to students' physical well-being, growth, development, and readiness to learn.

Classroom teachers make every effort to make each child's birthday feel special and important. Parents and students may not distribute any invitations to private or personal parties at school. The delivery of food, balloons, gifts, flowers, etc., is not permitted to students during the school day. Individual classrooms may recognize this special day within their own setting and without food or individual treats from home. Treats brought in for birthdays and unannounced celebrations will not be distributed and will be sent home.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS (CONT'D)

However, you are always welcome to make a contribution on behalf of your child's special day by contributing toward a class and/or school need (such as a book for the class or school library).

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

How can I help my child adjust to school?

Your preschooler will be excited to show you the new skills that they are learning in school. Help foster their growing independence by...

- Marking EVERYTHING with your child's name: coats, hats, all loose clothing, notes to teacher and staff. Help your child recognize their name on the items they bring to school.
- Encouraging your child to tie, button, and zipper without help.
- Choosing clothing options a preschool child can easily manage. Your child should be able to put on or take off items such as boots, mittens, belts, and jackets with limited assistance.

How can I be involved in my child's education?

No matter your child's age or grade, family involvement is critical to your child's success in school.

Volunteering: We welcome parents to participate in their child's education by volunteering at school! Volunteers must get the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (Act 34) and Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151). The Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Check (Act 114), which includes fingerprinting, isn't mandated by the Commonwealth for volunteers who sign an Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form that assures the volunteer did not commit any reportable crimes in the past.

Current clearances must be less than one year old for anyone who hasn't volunteered in the district previously. School volunteers who have been a PA resident for ten years or longer, are required to sign a Volunteer Affirmation form. If you have not been a PA resident for 10 years, you must complete the Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Check (Act 114).

All necessary clearance forms are available at:

<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/>

Progress Reports and Conferences: The teacher will be collecting observations and work samples of your child's development throughout the school year. Your child may also be assessed on their growing skills in literacy, math, and social development. This information is used to plan lessons that meet your child's interests and abilities.

You will be asked to attend a parent-teacher conference in February to review your child's work and discuss progress toward their learning goals. The Governor Mifflin School District also works closely

with the Berks County Intermediate Unit to provide early intervention services on an as needed basis. Choosing clothing options a preschool child can easily manage. Your child should be able to put on or take off items such as boots, mittens, belts, and jackets with limited assistance.

ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

School-Sponsored Events

Join Pre-K parents, children, and our professional staff for exciting and engaging learning opportunities! Parents, children and teachers work side-by-side doing hands-on activities in reading, math, and science. Take home a book, materials and supplies, and ideas for extending learning at home. Stay tuned for more details!

Mifflin Community Library

Check out the Mifflin Community Library at www.berks.lib.pa.us/smi, or in person, to explore books, resources, learning activities, and special story time events.



Pre-K Counts will follow the Governor Mifflin School District Calendar with the exception of dates marked with "PK" or "FIP." Pre-K students will receive full-day, in-person instruction on the dates denoted with "PK" and flexible, remote learning on days marked "FIP" unless otherwise communicated by our Pre-K Counts Coordinator, Mrs. Kristen Gerhard.



GOVERNOR MIFFLIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

2025-2026 School Calendar

JULY 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

AUGUST 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SEPTEMBER 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

OCTOBER 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	★	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBER 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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9	10	11	12	◆	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

DECEMBER 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	FIP	FIP	24	25	26
28	29	30	31			

JANUARY 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

FEBRUARY 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	◆	26	27	28

MARCH 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUNE 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July 2025
 ■ Holiday - Independence Day 7/4

August 2025
 ■ New Teacher Orientation 8/5-7; 8/11
 ■ In-Service Day 8/13; 8/14
 First Day for Teachers 8/13
 ■ First Day For Students 8/18
 ■ In-Service Day 8/29

September 2025
 ■ Holiday - Labor Day 9/1

October 2025
 ■ In-Service Day - PM Half Day for Students 10/10
 ■ In-Service Day 10/13
 ★ End of Quarter 1 10/22
 ■ In-Service Day - PM Half Day for Students 10/31

November 2025
 ◆ End of Trimester 1 11/12
 ■ In-Service Day 11/24; 11/25
 Parent-Teacher Conferences 11/24; 11/25
 ■ In-Service Day 11/26
 ■ Holiday - Thanksgiving 11/27; 11/28

December 2025
 ■ Holiday - Thanksgiving 12/1
 ■ In-Service Day 12/22; 12/23
 ■ Holiday - Winter Break 12/24-31

January 2026
 ■ Holiday - New Years Day 1/1
 ■ In-Service Day 1/2
 ★ End of Quarter 2 1/9
 ■ Holiday - MLK Jr. Day 1/19

February 2026
 ■ In-Service Day 2/13
 ■ Holiday - Presidents Day 2/16
 ◆ End of Trimester 2 2/24

March 2026
 ■ In-Service Day 3/13
 ★ End of Quarter 3 3/18

April 2026
 ■ In-Service Day 4/1; 4/2
 ■ Holiday - Good Friday 4/3
 ■ Holiday - Easter Monday 4/6

May 2026
 ■ In-Service Day - PM Half Day for Students 5/22
 Last Day K-11 (tentative) 5/22
 Graduation 5/22
 ★ End of Quarter 4 5/22
 ◆ End of Trimester 3 5/22
 ■ Holiday - Memorial Day 5/25
 ■ In-Service Day 5/26
 ■ Snow Make-Up Day* 5/27-29

PLEASE NOTE: *Due to the unpredictable nature of Pennsylvania winters, staff and students are cautioned against making firm vacation or travel plans for the indicated snow make-up days. Snow make-up days do not affect graduating seniors; these days are to be made up by staff and K-11 students only.

