

RANKIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT



KINDERGARTEN HANDBOOK

2026 / 2027

**Rankin County
School District**

**Kindergarten
Parent Handbook**

**2026 ~ 2027
School Year**

Dear Kindergarten Parents,

Welcome to the Rankin County School District. Beginning kindergarten is such an important and exciting milestone for your family, and we are truly honored to be part of your child's journey.

What makes RCSD special is our people. Our teachers, staff, and administrators genuinely care about every student who enters our schools. Your child will be supported by a team that believes in building strong relationships, creating a safe and welcoming environment, and helping each student discover their unique strengths.

Kindergarten is a year filled with growth. We are committed to helping your child grow academically, socially, and emotionally while laying a strong foundation for future success.

We also believe that education works best when schools and families partner together. We look forward to staying connected with you throughout the year and encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher or principal whenever you have questions.

Thank you for trusting Rankin County School District with your child. We are excited about the year ahead and grateful to walk alongside your family during this special time.

Sincerely,



Shane Sanders
Superintendent of Education
Rankin County School District



Brandon
Florence
McLaurin
Northwest
Pelahatchie
Pisgah
Puckett
Richland

**Rankin
County
School
District**

TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY & GOALS

PHILOSOPHY

The kindergarten program of the Rankin County School District is adapted to the needs and interests of the five-year-old child. The kindergarten experiences should aid in the development of the whole child—physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and intellectually. A vital part of the kindergartner's success in school depends upon the background experiences established at home. A continued sharing between home and school in the growth of each student is a necessary component for a successful program.

ACADEMIC GOALS

- To develop foundational literacy skills, including phonological awareness, letter recognition (uppercase and lowercase letters), phonics, vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and early writing skills;
- To develop early mathematics skills, including counting to 100 by ones and tens, number recognition, number sense, comparing quantities, understanding basic addition and subtraction concepts, identifying shapes, and recognizing patterns;
- To build foundational science understanding through observation, questioning, exploration, and hands-on investigation of the natural and physical world;
- To develop an understanding of basic social studies concepts, including

community roles, citizenship, rules, geographic awareness, and respect for diversity;

- To strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving skills through inquiry-based learning and purposeful play;
- To develop the ability to follow multi-step directions, complete tasks independently, and demonstrate readiness for first-grade academic expectations.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GOALS

- To help each child become comfortable in a classroom setting;
- To help each child gain independence, confidence, and self-control;
- To help each child develop communication skills;
- To help each child expand their world of people, experiences, and skills;
- To promote interaction, cooperation, and understanding among the school, parents, and the community;
- To help the child develop a positive self-concept;
- To help the child develop initiative, creativity, independence, and motor coordination through the constructive use of materials;
- To help the child increase the skills involved in physical coordination;
- To provide the child with an atmosphere favorable for learning and growth;
- To help the child develop trusting relationships;

CURRICULUM

READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS

Children enter school with different interests, experiences, and needs. In order to better meet the needs of individual students, the Rankin County School District has adopted a Structured Literacy approach to instruction. The Structured Literacy approach emphasizes explicit and systematic teaching of all components of literacy. These components include both foundational skills (e.g., decoding, spelling) and higher-level literacy skills (e.g., reading comprehension, written expression). The Structured Literacy approach ensures the instructional sequence begins with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements and progresses methodically to more difficult concepts.

Students will participate in oral and written reading activities daily, as well as participate in various high-quality whole and small group literacy activities. The complexity of instructional activities will increase over time as the children begin to develop strong reading skills.

Writing will also play an important role in a kindergarten's day. Students will begin with writing letters while connecting them to the sounds they make, and will progress to writing words and sentences by the end of the year. The writing process, coupled with evidence-based writing strategies, will be used to help students make the transition from group to independent writing.

The literacy program includes an assessment component that helps teachers identify the developmental levels of the students. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Universal Screener, an MDE-approved screener, provides teachers with valuable information on the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student so the teacher can design lessons that meet the needs of each child. This assessment will be administered three times a year: August, at the beginning of school, December at midyear, and May, at the end of the school year. Your child's school will provide you with the cut scores for the beginning, middle, and end of the year in order to keep you informed of your child's progress. If your child does not meet the beginning of the screener cut score, she or he will be given a diagnostic to pinpoint where the teacher should provide needed support for your child.

Parent conferences will be scheduled to explain the results of the aforementioned assessments. Student progress on the development of concepts about print, letter, and sound recognition, and reading behaviors will be tracked and shared at each meeting.

MATHEMATICS

The kindergarten program is based on the premise that students learn through doing. Students are actively engaged in hands-on activities with a variety of materials. They are encouraged to inquire, explore, and experiment during math instruction. The

kindergarten class becomes a laboratory for students to make predictions, draw conclusions, analyze situations, and learn through movement related to math. The district's evidence-based math materials help students form a firm foundation for mathematical reasoning, calculation, and problem solving.

STANDARDS-BASED REPORT CARDS

Rankin County School District uses a standards-based report card for all kindergarten students. This report card provides information on a student's developmental abilities and progress in attaining learning standards in reading, language arts, and math. The standards are derived from the College and Career Readiness State Standards, which have been adopted by the Mississippi Department of Education, and grades reflect where a child is performing in direct relationship to these standards. Growth is determined by daily observation of oral and written work as well as formal and informal assessments.

Since academic success and skill development occur at different rates for all students, this reporting procedure will give an accurate representation of your child's growth. Additionally, your understanding of what is expected of your child and how he or she is progressing towards the learning goals will provide opportunities for meaningful conversation between you, your child, and your child's teacher.

Student progress will be reported in terms of mastery of the standards. Please refer to the district grading policy for specifics concerning grading. You can expect your child to matriculate through the standards based on the content being covered and the difficulty of the material associated with the content.

A mark of EXCELLENT (E) means that a student is exceeding grade level expectations. A mark of SATISFACTORY (S) means that a student is performing on grade level. A student might begin the year with a NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (N) in some categories of reading, writing, and mathematics. A mark of UNSATISFACTORY (U) means a student's progress is not adequate for the age level; the student's performance level is in the failing range. However, it is our expectation that all students will perform at satisfactory or above by the end of the academic year. This means that kindergarten students must master 70% of the reading and math standards.

Standards blacked out on the report card for a specific term indicate that a particular topic has not been addressed at that point in the year.

KINDERGARTEN STANDARDS ASSESSED

The skills listed here are those considered necessary for the successful completion of kindergarten. Children that master these skills may be considered ready for first grade. The

kindergarten program fosters and encourages readiness – but it cannot be forced. Each child must be allowed to grow and mature at his/her own rate. Pressure on the very young can actually disrupt the learning process.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading Standards: Foundational Skills

Print Concepts

- Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

Phonological Awareness

- Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.

Phonics and Word Recognition

- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

Fluency

- Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

Reading Standards for Literature and Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details

- With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.
- With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

- With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
- With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

Craft and Structure

- With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.
- Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.
- Recognize common types of texts.
- Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.
- Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.

Integration of Knowledge Ideas

- With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story/text in which they appear.
- With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.
- With prompting and support, identify reasons an author gives to support points in a text.
- With prompting and support, identify similarities and differences between two texts.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Writing Standards

Text Type and Purposes

- Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate an event or events in chronological order, including a reaction to what happened.
- Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces.
- Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts that include information about the topic.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.
- With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including collaboration with peers.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Participate in shared research and writing projects.
- With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Comprehension and Collaboration

- Participate in collaborative conversations; listen to others with care, speaking one at a time.
- Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details.

- Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- Describe familiar people, places, things, and events; with prompting and support, provide additional detail.
- Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.
- Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

Language Standards

Conventions of Standard English

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing and speaking.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.
- With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
- Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading, and being read to, and responding to texts.

MATH

Counting and Cardinality

- Count to 100 by ones and by tens; (0-25) (-50) (-75) (-100).

- Count forward beginning from a given number within the known sequence.
- Write numbers from 0-20. Represent the number of objects with written numerals 0-20.
- Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities.
- Count to answer “how many?” with 1-20 items arranged in a line, circle, or array.
- Count to answer “how many?” with 10 items scattered.
- Identify whether the number of objects in one group is “greater than”, “less than”, or “equal to” the number of objects in another group.
- Compare two numbers between 1 and 20 presented as written numerals.

Operations and Algebraic Thinking

- Represent addition and subtraction with objects, fingers, mental images, drawings, sounds (e.g., claps), verbal explanations, expressions, or equations.
- Solve addition and subtraction word problems within 10 involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, and taking apart with unknowns in all positions by using objects or drawings to represent the problem.
- Decompose numbers less than or equal to 10 into pairs in more than one way.
- For any number from 1-9, find the number that makes 10 when added to the given number.
- Fluently add and subtract within 5.

Number operation in Base Ten

- Compose and decompose, by a drawing or an equation, numbers from 11-19 into

ten ones and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, or nine ones.

Measurement and Data

- Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight.
- Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common to see which object has “more of” / “less of” the attribute and describe the difference.
- Classify objects into given categories.
- Count the number of objects in each category and sort the categories by count.

Geometry

- Describe objects in the environment using names of shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, hexagons, cubes, cones, cylinders, and spheres).
- Describe position of objects using terms “above”, “below”, “beside”, “in front of”, “behind”, and “next to”.
- Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.
- Identify shapes as two-dimensional or three-dimensional.
- Analyze and compare two- and three-dimensional shapes.
- Model objects in the world by building shapes from manipulatives and drawing shapes.
- Compose simple shapes to form larger shapes.

Social Development

- Obey school/class rules.
- Demonstrate self-control.
- Complete activities.

- Follow directions promptly and willingly.
- Work independently.
- Listen attentively.
- Participate in group activities.
- Work cooperatively without disturbing others.
- Use materials properly.
- Accept responsibility for his/her actions.

Physical Development

- Run, jump, hop, and climb.
- Catch/bounce/throw a ball.
- Control pencils/scissors.
- Button, zip, and tie.
- Participate in physical activity.
- Follow rules/safety practices.
- Demonstrate proper use and care of equipment.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO: BE INVOLVED

AT SCHOOL

- Join the PTO and attend all meetings.
- Volunteer to go on field trips.
- Help with class parties.
- Read to the class.
- Volunteer to speak to the class about your job and wear your work uniform if you have one.
- Collect objects and materials for projects.
- Attend Parent Nights to learn about instructional practices utilized at school.

AT HOME

- Encourage regular attendance.
- Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep.
- Have a good healthy diet, including a good breakfast.
- Take a real interest in the things your child brings home from school.
- Read to your child (fairy tales, adventure stories, alphabet picture dictionary, nursery rhymes, and poetry).
- Please put your child's name on all clothing.
- Help your child at home to learn to do the following tasks:
 - » hang up coats and sweaters and identify his/her own garments;
 - » handle small amounts of money;

- » manage buttons, zippers, buckles, and shoe laces;
- » take turns listening and talking;
- » know simple safety rules, (not running inside buildings, using scissors properly, and behaving on a bus);
- » know how to use the restroom unassisted and be able to wash and dry hands;
- » take turns in games, on swings, and on slides; and
- » assign simple responsibilities to teach the importance of following instructions from an adult.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

- The child must be 5 years old on or before September 1 of the year he/she enters kindergarten.
- The child must have a certified birth certificate (long form).
- The child must have an immunization form obtained from a doctor or health department.
- Proof of residency is required for enrollment at each RCSD school. Residency forms are available online and at each school.
- In alignment with Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten students are expected to be fully potty-trained and be able to take care of their personal needs themselves.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CLOTHING/POSSESSIONS

Students should be dressed neatly and appropriately. Boys and girls are permitted to wear shorts. All possessions should be labeled with the child's name. Please send a change of clothing. Do not send toys to school, even for show and tell.

PARENT CONFERENCES/SCHOOL VISITATION

Your child's teacher will welcome any concerns or questions about your child and will be willing to talk with you about these. Arrange an appointment with the teacher in advance so both of you will have time to talk. Please do not confer with the teacher in the pupil's presence or during kindergarten work hours. Classroom visitors are welcome, but must report to the principal's office before visiting.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are observed and may be announced during the school day. Parents may send classroom refreshments for afternoon snack time but are asked not to stay. Make all arrangements in advance with the teacher. There will be no gifts and no school birthday parties can be allowed.

HEALTH/SAFETY

As a protection to the children, any child with an illness should be kept at home. If a child appears ill and the teacher feels it advisable, the parent

may be asked to come for the child. Parents should inform the teacher if the child has been exposed to any contagious diseases. All precautions will be taken to prevent accidents. First aid will be administered for minor injuries. Parents and doctors will be contacted whenever necessary. Be sure to complete the emergency form provided to you by the school.

MESSAGES

All messages must be written and signed by the parent or teacher. Do not send an oral message by your child. Emergency messages should be called into the office and will be relayed appropriately. Send a note if your child has been absent.

REPORT CARDS

A report card will be sent home at the end of each nine-week period. Parents or teachers can request a conference to discuss a child's progress. Teachers will schedule at least two conferences with you during the year. Please try to attend.

MEDICATION

Medications will only be administered to children by the school if the medication is in its original container and is a prescription drug. Parents must sign the appropriate form provided by the school before prescription drugs can be given.

OUR SCHOOLS

Each kindergarten teacher holds a standard elementary teaching certificate issued by the State Department of Education. The schools where kindergarten is being held in the Rankin County School District are as follows:

Rouse Elementary School

151 Boyce-Thompson Drive
Brandon, MS 39042
Phone: 601-825-5437

Northwest Elementary School

500 Vine Drive
Flowood, MS 39232
Phone: 601-992-0924

Steen's Creek Elementary School

300 Highway 469 N.
Florence, MS 39073
Phone: 601-845-5724

Oakdale Elementary School

171 Oakdale Road
Brandon, MS 39047
Phone: 601-992-5442

McLaurin Elementary School

2693 Star Road
Florence, MS 39073
Phones: 601-845-2127

Pelahatchie Elementary School

213-B Brooks Street
Pelahatchie, MS 39145
Phone: 601-854-8060

Flowood Elementary School

102 Winner's Circle
Flowood, MS 39232
Phone: 601-992-6277

Pisgah Elementary School

125 Tori Bowie Lane
Brandon, MS 39047
Phone: 601-829-2937

Highland Bluff Elementary School

5970 Highway 25
Brandon, MS 39047
Phones: 601-992-5168

Puckett Elementary School

6382 Highway 18
Puckett, MS 39151
Phone: 601-825-6140

Northshore Elementary School

110 Northshore Parkway
Brandon, MS 39047
Phone: 601-992-5279

Richland Elementary School

200 Spell Drive
Richland, MS 39218
Phone: 601-939-4375

Bring Everyone's Strengths Together!

We will all intentionally focus on empowering our students to reach their maximum potential by embracing opportunities and challenges while cultivating a tradition of distinction in education.



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