

NORFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL



School Year

2025-2026

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Norfolk Public Schools Preschool Program! We are so happy that your child will be learning and growing with us this year. Our program is designed to give every child a strong start through high-quality early learning experiences.

The years before kindergarten are very important. During this time, children build the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. Our preschool program supports children from birth to age five through the Virginia Preschool Initiative and Early Childhood Special Education.

In our classrooms, teachers use engaging lessons, hands-on activities, and play to help children grow in all areas—thinking, language, physical, social, and emotional skills. We focus on building confidence, curiosity, and a love of learning that will last a lifetime.

Preschool is often a child’s first school experience. We are proud to provide a caring and safe place where every child can explore, learn, and prepare for kindergarten success.

We look forward to working together with you to help your child learn, grow, and shine this school year!

Warmly,

**Office of Early Learning & Title I
Norfolk Public Schools**

Please note: This serves as an addendum to the Norfolk Public Schools Student Handbook.

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Program Quality

Virginia wants every child to have great learning experiences that meet their individual needs. To help make this happen, the state created the *Unified Virginia Quality Birth to Five System* (VQB5). This system looks at and helps improve the quality of early childhood programs for children from birth to age five that receive public funding.

Each year, all publicly funded early childhood programs in Virginia take part in VQB5. Each program site receives a *VQB5 Quality Profile* that shares information about how their program supports children's learning. These profiles help families, teachers, and leaders understand what makes a program high quality.

VQB5 measures quality in many ways, including how teachers interact with children and how lessons are planned. Programs may also choose to use a comprehensive curriculum that matches *Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards* to help every child learn and grow.

View VQB5 Quality Profiles at: EarlyChildhoodQuality.doe.virginia.gov

Program Overview

The Norfolk Public Schools Preschool Program serves three- and four-year-old children who meet specific guidelines set by the Virginia Department of Education and local school criteria. To take part in the program, families must live in the City of Norfolk.

Each child in the program will have experiences with:

- High-quality curriculum, such as *Creative Curriculum* and *Heggerty*, that supports active learning and early literacy skills.
- Ongoing child assessments that help teachers understand each child's progress and plan next steps for learning.
- Growth in all areas of development, including:
 - Approaches to play and learning
 - Thinking and problem-solving (cognitive development)
 - Language and literacy
 - Physical development and motor skills
 - Social and emotional skills

To learn more about our program and how to apply, please visit our website: www.npsk12.com/pre-k.

Program Operations

A strong preschool program depends on clear and effective daily routines that meet state requirements. This includes keeping class sizes small, following rules for instructional time, and keeping track of student attendance. It also covers important areas such as meals, toileting, health and safety, behavior, family involvement, and transportation.

The Norfolk Public Schools Preschool Program follows all NPS guidelines for these areas. You'll find more details in the sections below. For additional information, please see the [NPS Student Handbook](#).

Student Pick Up & Drop Off

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children arrive and are picked up on time for school. If a student is dropped off too early or not picked up at the designated time, and all efforts to contact the parent or guardian have been unsuccessful, the school will contact the appropriate authorities for assistance.

Staffing

Each preschool classroom is staffed with one teacher and one full-time teacher assistant to support children's learning and growth.

Class sizes are set to provide the best learning environment for young children. Most classes may have up to 18 students, while Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) self-contained classes may have up to 8 students.

In some cases, class sizes may increase to 20 students to meet the needs of families in Norfolk City. Staffing may also be adjusted if special education services are needed to support students.

Attendance

Why Attendance Matters in Preschool

Coming to school every day helps your child learn and grow! When children attend regularly, they get the full benefit of our preschool program and are better prepared for kindergarten. We need your ongoing partnership to help our early learners attend the full-day program and engage in learning. We encourage all of our students to attend and engage in learning consistently to build healthy attendance habits and positive learning outcomes.

If your child is absent from school for two (2) consecutive days, the principal or designee will make a reasonable effort to contact the parent or guardian. After five (5) days of absence, the attendance team will work collaboratively with the parent or guardian to develop a plan to support regular attendance. After seven (7) days and at the school administrator's discretion, if an attendance meeting is needed with a preschool family and with the Early Learning staff, please contact the Senior Coordinator of Preschool, Dr. Pamela Hatfield at phatfield626@nps.k12.va.us. The Senior Coordinator of Preschool will reach out to the school

administration to set up a date for discussion of next steps. Continued attendance concerns may result in further actions, which can include conferences or, in some cases, dismissal from the program. Because the preschool program has limited space, it is essential that each family remains committed to maintaining consistent attendance. Therefore, regular attendance in early childhood education plays a vital role in building the foundation for your child's long-term academic success, including readiness for on-time high school graduation.

Code of Conduct / Discipline / Behavior

In preschool, teachers work hard to build caring and positive relationships with every child. Classrooms are designed to be safe, welcoming, and supportive so that children can learn and grow together.

Teachers use many strategies to help children learn appropriate behavior. These include:

- Creating a positive classroom climate
- Organizing the classroom so children know what to expect
- Engaging children in fun and meaningful learning activities
- Teaching clear rules and routines
- Using direct instruction and positive reminders to guide behavior

Children are encouraged to use age-appropriate problem-solving skills to handle conflicts peacefully.

Preschool teachers and staff also work closely with families to help children who need extra support. This may include meetings with the teacher, school administration, or other support staff to create a behavior plan or a temporary modified schedule until the child is successful with behavior expectations.

When Serious Behaviors Occur

Norfolk Public Schools believes that suspending or expelling young children takes away valuable learning experiences and can have lasting negative effects. While these actions are not part of our regular preschool practices, a child may be sent home for the rest of the day if unsafe behaviors occur. A follow up meeting will occur to have a plan to support children in returning to school.

Examples include:

- Hitting another child or adult
- Biting, kicking, or spitting
- Using abusive or hurtful language

Teachers always use positive guidance and redirection first, but sometimes unsafe behavior requires immediate action to protect everyone. The safety of all children and staff is our top priority. Teachers will help children learn about safety and kindness through daily routines, relationship building, and positive interactions.

For more information, please see the *Suspensions and Expulsions* section of the [Norfolk Public Schools Student Handbook](#) and review the [Guidelines for the Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion of Young Children](#).

Toileting

Learning to use the toilet is an important part of growing up. Every child develops these skills at their own pace. A child's motor, thinking, and self-help skills all play a role in knowing when they are ready for toilet learning.

Children are expected to be familiar with bathroom routines and healthy hygiene practices, such as washing hands. However, children who are not yet toilet trained will not be excluded from our preschool program.

Children who are more independent with toileting are often better able to focus on other important preschool skills, like managing emotions, building friendships, and developing language. Toilet learning happens best when families and teachers work together and use the same expectations at home and school. This teamwork helps children build confidence and success.

If your child is not yet toilet trained, please send training pants (instead of diapers) and an extra set of clothes for use in case of an accident. There may be times when a child will need to be picked up from school to be properly cleaned at home.

Family Engagement

Parents and guardians are a child's first and most important teachers. Your involvement helps your preschooler grow, learn, and succeed! We encourage you to take part in all parts of the preschool experience. In an effort to learn more about your child, please complete the ASQ (*Ages and Stages Questionnaire*) when you receive it via email. This important tool helps teachers better understand your child's development and provide the right support from the very start.

If you have a special skill or talent, our teachers love to welcome “special guests” to share and support classroom learning. Talk with your child’s teacher about volunteering opportunities and ways to stay connected.

You can also find helpful resources at the NPS Family Welcome and Wellness Center at Grandy Village Learning Center. Materials will also be sent home to support your child’s learning outside of school.

Preschool teachers and staff may schedule home visits (or meet at another safe, private location) to strengthen the partnership between school and family.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in the two (2) teacher conferences, one in the fall and one in the spring of the school year.

Transportation

Eligibility

Some children may be eligible to ride the school bus to and from preschool. Transportation is only provided for students in the PK4 program (four-year-old preschool). Students in the PK3 program (three-year-old preschool) are not eligible for bus transportation.

Preschoolers who ride the bus will travel on a yellow school bus with other elementary students from their neighborhood. An adult (18 years or older) must be at the bus stop to retrieve the child at the end of the day or the child will be returned to the school.

Students who live more than one mile from their assigned school, or who live within one mile but must cross a major roadway, will be given a bus stop in their neighborhood.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) students have their own transportation procedures based on individual needs and special education services.

Transportation Packet

If your child qualifies for bus transportation, their teacher will give you a transportation packet. This packet includes:

- A bus lanyard for your child
- Bus passes (for families)
- Important instructions and rules

A parent or guardian must complete the packet and agree to the preschool transportation guidelines (see appendix) before your child can ride the bus.

If you need a replacement bus card or lanyard, please contact your child’s teacher.

Code of Conduct

Students are expected to follow the Norfolk Public Schools Code of Conduct for bus safety and behavior while riding the bus. Families should review these expectations together.

If a preschool student does not follow bus safety rules, they may be suspended or removed from bus transportation according to Norfolk Public Schools guidelines.

If you have questions about your child's bus or bus route, please contact the Transportation Department at (757) 892-3320.

If you have concerns about your child's behavior on the bus, please reach out to the school administration for support.

Instructional and Unstructured Time

Classroom schedules are thoughtfully designed to promote frequent, positive interactions between teachers and children that nurture the development of thinking, problem-solving, and language skills. Teachers intentionally use hands-on, active learning strategies and rich language experiences to extend children's curiosity and understanding.

Throughout the day, children will engage in meaningful conversations that include the use of rich vocabulary and open-ended questions, encouraging them to explain their thinking, make connections, and communicate their ideas. These interactions foster critical thinking and language development across all areas of learning.

In addition to structured learning experiences, the school day includes unstructured recreational time that supports the development of teamwork, social-emotional competence, and physical fitness. This balance of guided and child-initiated activities promotes self-regulation, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning.

Daily Schedule

A predictable daily routine provides children with a sense of security, helping them anticipate what comes next and feel ready to learn. While schedules may vary slightly by classroom, all follow a consistent structure that balances instructional and play-based learning.

Arrival & Breakfast: Children are warmly greeted by teachers and offered a nutritious breakfast to begin the day.

Morning Meeting: A community-building time where children practice social skills, review classroom expectations, and preview the day's activities.

Choice Time / Interest Areas: Children explore learning centers such as Blocks, Art, Dramatic Play, and Library. Teachers observe, interact, and extend learning through intentional questions and scaffolding.

Small & Large Group Activities: Engaging, hands-on experiences led by teachers to build foundational concepts in literacy, math, science, and social-emotional learning.

Outdoor Play: Daily outdoor experiences that support gross motor development, teamwork, and problem-solving through play.

Meals & Snacks: Breakfast and lunch are provided at no cost to all preschoolers. At this time, snacks are provided by families. If providing snacks is a challenge, please contact your child's teacher. (See the attached list of recommended healthy snacks.)

Rest / Quiet Time: Approximately 45 minutes of rest each day. Children who do not nap engage in quiet, independent activities.

Afternoon Meeting & Dismissal: A reflective closing of the day where children share experiences, celebrate successes, and prepare for dismissal.

Nap / Rest Time

To support each child's overall well-being and development, approximately one hour is included in the preschool day for rest and/or sleep. During this time, children are encouraged to rest quietly for at least 15 minutes. For those who do not fall asleep, teachers will offer quiet, independent activities such as reading or drawing.

A mat or cot will be provided for each child. Families are asked to send a small blanket or towel for their child to use for comfort. All bedding and mats/cots are stored separately to ensure personal items do not touch. Bedding will be sent home weekly to be washed and returned.

Rest time is flexible and responsive to individual needs. If a child becomes tired earlier in the day, staff will accommodate rest as appropriate. Likewise, if a child needs a few extra minutes to wake up, teachers will provide that grace period whenever possible.

Healthy Sleep Habits at Home

Consistent and sufficient sleep is vital to your child's health, learning, and behavior. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and VDOE Early Learning and Development Standards, preschool-aged children typically need 10–13 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period, including naps.

Establishing a regular bedtime routine at home helps children:

- Feel well-rested and ready to learn each day.
- Regulate their emotions and behavior.
- Strengthen memory, attention, and problem-solving skills.

Tips for promoting healthy sleep habits at home:

- Maintain a consistent bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends.
- Create a calming bedtime routine (such as reading, dimming lights, or playing soft music).
- Limit screen time before bed.
- Ensure your child’s sleep space is quiet, comfortable, and safe.

By working together to establish healthy sleep routines both at school and at home, families and educators can help children feel their best, focus more effectively, and fully engage in the learning experiences each day provides.

Virginia’s Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS)

[VA ELDS](#)

The Virginia ELDS describe what young children should know and be able to do by the end of preschool to be ready for kindergarten. These standards give teachers and families clear guidance on how to support children’s early learning and development. They also connect with Virginia’s quality improvement system, VQB5 ([\[add link\]](#)), which helps ensure that all early childhood programs provide high-quality experiences.

The ELDS are designed to help teachers, families, and community partners:

- Understand how children grow and learn
- Create engaging classroom activities
- Build warm, supportive teacher–child interactions

Curriculum and Instruction

Our three-year-old and four-year-old classes use a hands-on, theme-based approach that helps children think critically, make connections, and apply what they learn in meaningful ways.

We use *The Creative Curriculum*, a research-based program that encourages exploration and discovery. This approach helps children build confidence, creativity, and strong thinking skills that will last a lifetime. It supports the whole child by promoting growth in all areas of development—social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, math, and science.

In addition, we use *Heggerty*, a curriculum that provides explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and early literacy skills—helping children build the foundation they need to become confident readers.

We also use *My Music Starts Here*, which brings high-quality music learning into the classroom. Music engages children’s minds and bodies, helping boost brain development and creativity in our amazing young learners.

Together, these programs create a joyful, engaging, and well-rounded learning experience that helps every child grow and prepare for kindergarten success.

Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP)

The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) helps schools, teachers, and families understand how ready children are for kindergarten. It looks at four key areas of early learning and development: Literacy, Mathematics, Self-Regulation, and Social Skills.

- Literacy skills are measured using the *Virginia Language & Literacy Screening System – PreK (VALLS-PreK)*.
- Math skills are measured using the *Early Mathematics Assessment System (EMAS)*.
- Self-Regulation and Social Skills are measured using the *Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS)*.

These assessments give teachers helpful information about each child's strengths and areas for growth so they can plan the best support for every learner.

For more information, visit vkrponline.org.

Preschool Assessment Calendar 2025-2026

Assessment	Fall 2025	Mid-Year 2025	Spring 2025
Early Mathematics Assessment System	09/15/25 – 09/26/25	N/A	04/15/26 – 04/29/26
Child Behavior Rating System	09/29/25 – 10/03/25	01/05/26 – 01/09/26	04/30/26 – 05/06/26
VALLS: Pre-K (Language and Literacy Screener for Pre-K)	10/06/25 – 10/20/25	01/12/26 – 01/28/26	05/04/26 – 05/15/26

Ongoing Assessments

Children are assessed throughout the school year using natural, ongoing formative assessments. These include teacher observations, checklists, portfolios, student work samples, photos and videos, curriculum-based assessments, and project-based learning activities.

Families will receive baseline and progress reports three times each year—in October, January, and May—to show how their child is growing and learning.

Teachers will also hold at least two conferences with each family during the year. Families are encouraged to work with their child's teacher or school to schedule these meetings and discuss progress and goals.

Field Trips

As part of our enrichment program, classes will take part in PreK-4 field trips and PreK-3 special outreach experiences throughout the school year. Teachers will share information about each trip with families as plans are made.

Parents and guardians are welcome to join as chaperones, if space permits. Parents are encouraged to communicate with their student's school and/or teacher for specific field trip information. Chaperones may be responsible for their own admission fees and transportation. For safety reasons, siblings may not attend field trips.

Sample Attendance Letter

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Daily school attendance is important for young children—even in preschool. When preschoolers attend the Norfolk Public Schools full-day preschool program regularly, they develop consistent routines, build social and problem-solving skills with peers, and strengthen early literacy and math skills. We encourage you to partner with us to ensure your child attends school each day and benefits fully from the program.

According to our school records, _____ has been absent on _____ occasions this school year. We are concerned about these absences and would like to schedule a meeting to discuss the importance of daily attendance, learn more about the reasons for your child's absences, and determine how we can support you and your child in improving attendance.

According to the Norfolk Public Schools Student Attendance Policy and Regulation (JED & JED-R), parents/guardians and school staff must work together to ensure that children attend the full-day preschool program. After two (2) consecutive days of absence, the principal or designee will make a reasonable effort to notify a parent/guardian in writing, specifying the dates of absence. When absences reach a total of fifteen (15) consecutive days, the child will be dropped from the class roster. Parents may request an administrative review by the school principal in cases of extenuating circumstances.

An attendance meeting has been scheduled for _____ at _____. We look forward to partnering with you to ensure your child has a successful preschool experience.

Sincerely,

Principal

Transportation Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

If you are receiving this letter, it is possible that your child is eligible for transportation to and from school.

Transportation is provided on a yellow school bus consisting of other elementary aged students from your neighborhood. Any student that resides more than a mile from his/her zone school or within a mile involving a major roadway will be assigned a bus stop in the neighborhood. Information on the location and time of the stops available on the NPS website under Transportation - Find Your Bus Stop. As per NPS transportation procedures, families who reside within approximately one mile of your zone school provide their own transportation to and from school. You can find more information, including estimated bus stop locations, by visiting [Find Your Bus Stop / Overview](#).

If your child is eligible for transportation and you choose to have your child ride the school bus to and/or from school, please note the following, non-negotiable procedures:

1. Transportation is only provided for students in the "PK4" program (four-year-old preschool). Students in the PK3 program (three-year-old preschool) are not eligible for transportation.
2. Your child's teacher will provide you with a transportation packet if your child is eligible to ride the bus. Inside this packet will be further instructions and four bus "passes." You will complete the information on the passes (bus number, bus stop) using a permanent marker.
 - a. Your child will wear one of the bus passes around his/her neck using the lanyard and plastic case provided. This allows the bus driver (and any future substitute bus driver) to know exactly who your child is and ensure that he/she is on the correct bus and exits at the correct stop.

- b. The remaining four bus passes are for you to pass out to those designated by you to pick up your child at the end of the school day. Those receiving the bus pass must be over the age of 18 and must have the physical pass with them when they pick up the child(no pictures on cell phones.)

- i. Students should be accompanied at the bus stop in the morning by an adult.

- ii. No child will be allowed off of the bus in the afternoon unless an adult with a pass is present. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

- iii. Preschool students will not be allowed off the bus with an older sibling under 18. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

- iv. If no one over the age of 18 with a pass is at the bus stop to meet your child, he/she will be returned to the school and you will be contacted so that you can pick him/her up there. Should this happen more than two times, transportation privileges will be removed and you will have to provide transportation for your child to and from school.

- c. If these procedures are not convenient to your family's particular situation, please know that it is not a requirement that your child ride the bus. You have the option to provide transportation to and from school using your own mode of transport.
- d. Please note that transportation cannot accommodate any requests for alternate bus stops. This includes bus stops that vary from morning to afternoon or bus stops that change day-to-day.

3. Students are expected to follow the Code of Conduct as it pertains to bus safety and behavior while on the bus. If a preschool student does not follow bus safety rules, they can be suspended and/or expelled from the bus as outlined by NPS policies on this matter.

Please contact NPS's Department of Early Learning/Title I at 757-628-3944 if you are in need of any clarification on preschool transportation or have any questions. Please contact your child's teacher if you have any questions about the bus pass process, bus stop information, or whether your child is in House A or House B.

Your signature below indicates that you have read this letter and agree to the terms as described. Please give this signed copy to your child's teacher for his/her records.

I have read the information regarding preschool transportation and agree to the terms and agree to the terms as outlined.

Child's Name: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Intentionally Left Blank

**Preschool Family Handbook
Agreement Form**

Please read the following statements, sign this form, and return just this form to your child's teacher.

I have received and read the Preschool Family Handbook provided by Norfolk Public Schools' Office of Early Learning & Title I, and agree to follow all expectations, procedures and policies.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Preschool Child's Name: _____

Preschool Teacher's Name: _____

Preschool Name: _____

Date: _____



Revised 12/1/2025

Tab 2

