

Hazel Crest School District 152 ½



PreKindergarten Parent Handbook

Hazel Crest School District 152 ½ General Information

Hazel Crest School District 152½ serves the communities of East Hazel Crest, parts of Markham, Hazel Crest, and a portion of South Harvey (refer to map). There are currently 1,180 students enrolled in two schools: Barack H. Obama Learning Academy and Jesse C. White Learning Academy. The district is an active member of the community. We are committed to high standards and providing well-rounded educational opportunities for students and families. In addition, the district serves the larger community through programs and access to the building facilities.

Mission - Maximize student achievement and personal growth by fostering a unique path to greatness.

Beliefs - We believe student achievement and personal growth is improved when:

- Strong school, home, and community partnerships are cultivated.
- Rigorous and relevant instruction, along with high expectations is the norm.
- Research, data, and educational best practices drive decision-making.
- A culture of mutual respect and empathy is established.
- A safe, clean, secure, and inviting atmosphere is maintained.

Pre-Kindergarten Philosophy

At Hazel Crest School District 152.5, we believe that early childhood education is the foundation for lifelong learning, development, and success. Our Pre-Kindergarten program is designed to provide a nurturing, inclusive, and dynamic environment that supports the growth of the whole child—emotionally, socially, intellectually, and physically. We are committed to fostering a love of learning by recognizing and valuing each child's unique abilities, interests, and cultural backgrounds.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
1223 173rd Street, East Hazel Crest, IL 60429

BARACK OBAMA LEARNING ACADEMY

16448 Park Ave, Markham, IL 60428

JESSE WHITE LEARNING ACADEMY

16910 Western Ave, Hazel Crest, IL 60429

STAFF

There is one teacher and one paraprofessional in every classroom. Every preschool teacher is professionally qualified and dedicated to the education and development of each child enrolled in the program. Teachers keep current in teaching methods through training and attendance at educational seminars throughout the year.

Administrator (and Title) at Barack Obama Learning Academy	Administrator (and Title) at Jesse White Learning Academy
Darren Jones - Principal	Jayda James - Principal
Rebecca Winston - Administrative Assistant to Principal	Kimberly Myles - Administrative Assistant to Principal
LaTonya Johnson-Haynes - Assistant Principal	Lashawn Stewart - Assistant Principal
Michelle Marsalis - Assistant Principal	Erica Parks - Assistant Principal
Javette Evans - School Secretary	TBD - School Secretary

Teachers at Barack Obama Learning Academy	Teachers at Jesse White Learning Academy
Kim Rogge - Teacher	Morgan Owens - Teacher
Angela Martin - Teacher	Corey Harding - Teacher
	Monica Williams - Teacher

Dear Pre-Kindergarten families,

Welcome to our Preschool for All program! We look forward to meeting and getting to know both you and your child. We have an exciting year planned, full of engaging studies, hands-on activities, field trips, and new experiences. This handbook will be a great reference for you throughout the school year. The following pages outline our curriculum and daily routine, classroom policies, as well as events and field trips.

School Hours

8:00 am - 2:45 pm

Important Dates to Remember

PreK Screenings	August 18 - 21, 2026
First Day of School	August 24, 2026
Holiday - Labor Day (No School)	September 7, 2026
Teacher Institute Day (No School)	October 2, 2026 [TBD]
Holiday - Columbus Day (No School)	October 12, 2026
Parent-Teacher Conferences (No School)	October 28, 2026 [TBD]
No School	November 19, 2026
Thanksgiving Break	November 23-27, 2025
Teacher Institute Day (No School)	December 18, 2026 [TBD]
Winter Break	December 21, 2025 - January 5, 2026 ⁷
Teacher Institute Day (No School)	January 4, 2027 [TBD]
Holiday	January 18, 2027
No School	February 12, 2027
Holiday - President's Day (No School)	February 15, 2027
Holiday - Casimir Pulaski Day (No School)	March 21, 2027
Professional Development for PreK Teachers (No School for PreK students ONLY)	Thursday, March 4, 2027 Friday, March 5, 2027
Teacher Institute Days	Thursday, March 19, 2027 [TBD]
Spring Break	March 29 - April 5, 2027
Last Day of School	May 28, 2027

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE PROCEDURES.

The Preschool For All Program is a full day program, which is in session Monday through Friday. It is imperative that your child arrive on-time for each session and uphold consistent school attendance. Students who arrive late to the program will lose valuable instructional time and may disrupt the learning processes, which are beginning within the classroom. If a student is experiencing frequent unexcused absences, the parent/guardian will be contacted to develop a plan to improve program attendance. It is expected that parents/guardians arrive promptly for student dismissal. Supervision is not available after school hours. If late pick-up becomes a chronic problem, the proper authorities will be notified.

ATTENDANCE.

As your child begins school, it is important to remember that **early childhood is a critical time for growth and development**, and **consistent attendance** plays a key role in ensuring that your child receives the full benefits of our curriculum. Each day in Pre-K is packed with activities that foster social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. **Missing school can lead to gaps in learning and make it harder for your child to connect with their peers, engage with the lessons, and build the foundational skills they will need for kindergarten and beyond.**

Please be sure to call the school each day your child is absent. We will be looking for your child each day and want to know that he/she is in your care, if not in school. Absences can be reported by calling, (708)

EMERGENCY CLOSING.

Preschool may be cancelled due to inclement weather during the school year. We follow the Hazel Crest School District 152.5 weather guidelines. If the school district is closed due to inclement weather the HCSD Preschool will also be closed. For up-to-date information on school closings, you may contact the district office at (708)335-0790, listen to the local radio or TV stations or check the school website: <https://www.sd1525.org/>.

TRANSPORTATION.

Door-to-door transportation is provided to students that live within the district boundaries. This can be set up upon completing the online registration process. Parents are responsible for providing transportation when they live outside of the district boundaries.

In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, our school district ensures that children experiencing homelessness have equal access to preschool education, including transportation services. If your family is experiencing homelessness, your child has the right to continue attending their school of origin and may be eligible for transportation assistance. Our district will work with families to arrange transportation that supports educational stability and consistent attendance. For more information or assistance, please contact the district's Homeless Liaison.

CURRICULUM.

Our preschool program uses the Creative Curriculum. Inside the classroom, the Creative Curriculum creates an atmosphere in which children feel safe, feel emotionally secure, and have a sense of belonging. It describes activities and teaching strategies that are challenging, yet within the children's reach. It also suggests giving choices and a role in determining how they learn.

This curriculum helps children acquire social competence and the skills they need to succeed as learners. Creative Curriculum discusses the characteristics and experiences that make each child unique. It offers strategies for building positive relationships, helping children develop self-regulation, and responding to challenging behaviors. It shows teachers how to guide children's learning during daily routines and everyday experiences. It also explains the role of assessment in learning about each child, following children's progress and planning.

The curriculum explores the benefits of working with families as partners in the care of their children. The curriculum touches on how partnerships are built by exchanging information on a daily basis, involving families in all aspects of our program, communicating in respectful ways, and working through differences in ways that sustain the partnership and the benefit of the children.

The Creative Curriculum helps teachers be intentional about the experiences that they offer while still having the flexibility to respond to the changing interest and abilities of the children. Our daily routine and picture schedules give preschoolers a sense of control over the events of the day by planning a consistent daily routine that enables the children to anticipate what happens next. Central elements of the preschool daily routine include greeting time, small and large-group times, and large motor/outside time.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM GOALS.

1. Multimodal Teaching & Learning Strategies

- Foster autonomy and decision-making skills by allowing children to choose activities that align with their individual interests, sparking curiosity and critical thinking.
- Integrate play-based learning into the daily routine, allowing children to explore academic concepts through hands-on, interactive activities in areas like art, blocks, and sensory play that reflect their individual learning styles and developmental needs.

2. Developmentally Appropriate Practices

- Provide activities and materials that cater to the developmental stage of each child, ensuring experiences are challenging yet achievable.
- Foster a learning environment where children feel safe and supported as they grow at their own pace, providing opportunities to explore, problem-solve, and practice new skills.

3. Social-Emotional Growth

- Help children develop empathy and respect for others through collaborative group activities and teaching strategies that focus on cooperation and conflict resolution.
- Promote positive interactions with peers and adults through activities that strengthen communication skills and encourage positive relationships.

4. Inclusive and Respectful Environment

- Create a classroom environment where every child feels valued and included by reflecting diversity in materials, books, and cultural activities.

- Integrate inclusive teaching strategies that meet the varied developmental and linguistic needs of all children, ensuring equitable learning opportunities.

5. Partnership with Families

- Establish regular communication with families through newsletters, conferences, and informal check-ins, to provide updates on their child's progress and well-being.
- Support families with strategies and resources to continue their child's learning at home, ensuring that the home and school environment work together to promote growth.

SUPPLIES NEEDED.

Your child will enjoy a classroom filled with wonderful supplies and equipment!

DAILY ROUTINE/ SCHEDULE.

Time	Class Schedule
7:20-8:00 am	Breakfast
8:00-8:05 am	Arrival (5 minutes)
8:05-8:30 am	Table Activities (25 minutes)
8:30-8:45 am	Large Group (15 minutes)
8:45-9:45 am	Choice Time/Small Group (60 minutes)
9:45-9:55 am	Clean-Up (15 minutes)
9:55-10:10 am	Read Aloud (15 minutes)
10:10-10:55 am	Gross Motor (45 minutes)
10:55- 11:00 am	Hand Washing (5 minutes)
11:00 -11:30 am	Lunch (30 minutes)
11:30-11:45 am	Clean-up and Bathroom (15 minutes)
11:45-1:00 pm	Nap (75 minutes)
1:00-2:00 pm	Choice Time (60 minutes)
2:00-2:20 pm	Afternoon Rug (20 minutes)
2:20-2:30 pm	Afternoon Activity and snack (10 minutes)
2:30-2:40 pm	Gross Motor(10 minutes)
2:40-2:45 pm	Pack-up and Dismissal (5 minutes)

MEALS & SNACKS.

Students in our full-day programs will receive lunch and a snack. Snacks and meals are planned in accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) guidelines. Meals and snacks are designed to provide healthy foods for the students. If your child has a food allergy or special dietary restrictions due to medical or religious reasons, please let your child's teacher know prior to the start of school. Food allergies or medically necessary dietary restrictions must be documented by a licensed physician.

FIELD TRIPS.

As part of our commitment to hands-on learning and exploration, our Pre-K class participates in monthly field trips. These outings are designed to enhance our curriculum and provide students with real-world experiences tied to classroom themes. Parents will receive advance notice of each trip, including details on the location, date, time, and any special instructions. Permission slips must be signed and returned prior to each trip.

To ensure the safety of all students during field trips, some children may require additional supervision. If a child has behavioral needs that may impact their safety, the safety of others, or their ability to participate successfully, a parent, guardian, or designated adult may be required to attend as a one-to-one (1:1) chaperone.

The need for a 1:1 chaperone will be determined by program staff and administration. Families will be notified in advance. If a 1:1 chaperone is required but not available, the child may not be able to attend the field trip.

SCHOOL UNIFORM.

Tops	Correctly sized white or light blue button down or polo shirts. Short or long sleeve with collar. (NO T-Shirts)
Bottoms	Navy blue or black uniform pants or shorts. (No blue jeans) - NO SAGGING
Shoes	Black or blue shoes.
Belts	Black or blue.
Sweaters	White or navy blue, button down or pull-over sweaters or blazers. NO HOODIES

****Parents to provide an extra change of clothes**

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT.

1. Stay Informed

- Parents are encouraged to regularly check and review all school communication, such as newsletters, emails, flyers, and notices, to stay up to date on important information regarding their child's learning, school events, and policies.

2. Open and Timely Communication

- Parents are encouraged to contact the teacher or school staff if they have any questions, concerns, or need clarification on any aspect of their child's education. Whether by email, phone, or in person, it is important to initiate communication as soon as concerns arise.

3. Provide Information About the Child

- **Share Important Information:** Parents should provide teachers with any relevant information about changes in their child's life, health, or routine that may impact their behavior or learning. This includes any medical conditions, family changes, or personal challenges the child may be facing.

4. Reinforce School Expectations at Home

- **Encourage Homework and Learning at Home:** Support your child in engaging in educational activities, and setting aside time for learning. Foster a positive attitude toward learning and encourage curiosity outside of the classroom.

5. Stay Engaged with the Child's Progress

- **Review Reports and Assessments:** Parents should regularly review their child's report cards, assessments, and feedback from the teacher to monitor their academic and social progress. Ask questions if there is anything you do not understand or want further explanation about.

PRESCHOOL SCREENING, ENROLLMENT, AND WAITING LIST PROCEDURES.

Families interested in enrolling their child in the Preschool for All Program must complete the district's Preschool Screening Sign-Up Form. After registration, families will be contacted to schedule a preschool screening appointment.

The district uses the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Fourth Edition (DIAL-4), a nationally recognized screening tool designed to assess a child's developmental skills in areas such as motor, language, cognitive, and social-emotional development. Screening results, along with family interview information and other eligibility criteria, help identify children's strengths and determine eligibility for Preschool for All services.

Because Preschool for All is designed to serve children who may be at risk of academic difficulties, enrollment priority is based on Illinois State Board of Education eligibility requirements and identified risk factors. When the number of eligible children exceeds available preschool openings, a waiting list will be established. Children on the waiting list will be prioritized according to program eligibility criteria and identified needs. As openings become available, families will be contacted regarding enrollment opportunities.

The district maintains a waiting list throughout the school year and reviews enrollment opportunities as vacancies occur.

HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY & LANGUAGE SCREENING.

As part of the enrollment process, families complete a Home Language Survey. When the survey indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the home or by the child, the district may conduct an English language proficiency screening in accordance with Illinois requirements.

The district maintains written screening procedures and records of screening results for students who are screened. Screening results are used to determine whether a child may benefit from English Learner services and supports. If the Home Language Survey indicates that screening is not required, the survey is maintained as part of the student's educational record.

Families will be informed of screening results and any recommended language support services.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES.

Our PreK Program is based on the belief that children learn self-discipline and behaviors that will result in cooperation, sharing, following directions, listening and showing respect for themselves and others. It is the adult's responsibility to help children learn these behaviors. In classrooms, this is accomplished by providing activities that encourage children to actively engage in learning, along with consistent rules and consequences for behavior.

Families will be responsible for promoting appropriate school behavior by:

- Teaching and discussing the purpose of classroom and school rules.
- Attending conferences concerning the child.
- Being an active member of the child's support team.
- Responding appropriately to school reports by praising and encouraging positive behavior and discussing areas that need improvement.
- Providing the school with the names and phone numbers of persons who may care for the child if it is necessary that he/she leave during the school day due to illness or behavior the staff cannot safely manage.

Staff will make every effort to assist children in correcting any unacceptable behavior through redirection, reminders of expected conduct and parent conference. Staff will help your child develop self-control and assume responsibility for their own behavior based on four overall rules:

- A child may not disturb or hurt others, verbally or physically.
- A child may not damage school or park district equipment.
- A child may not place themselves and / or others in dangerous situations.
- A child must respect and follow staff direction.

Our preschool program is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for all children. In addition, our staff uses positive behavior supports, family engagement, individualized interventions, and access to student support resources to address challenging behaviors. Behavior interventions will be benchmarked and monitored, and families will be actively involved in creating a plan for the child's safety and success. We do not expel or suspend children from the program due to challenging behaviors. We believe that all behavior is a form of communication and an opportunity for growth. When behavioral concerns arise, our approach includes:

- Working collaboratively with families
- Providing developmentally appropriate support and interventions
- Consulting with behavioral and mental health specialists, if needed
- Developing individualized behavior support plans

Note: Behavior interventions are strongly considered in exceptional circumstances where a child's behavior poses a serious safety risk to themselves or others, and only after all appropriate interventions have been attempted and documented.

SPECIAL SERVICES.

The referral and evaluation process for PreK students in school-based programs is designed to ensure children receive the support they need for their development. If a parent or teacher has concerns about a child's academic, social-emotional, or developmental progress, they can refer the child for evaluation. After obtaining parent consent, a team of professionals conducts a comprehensive assessment that may include standardized

tests, observations, and interviews. The evaluation covers areas such as language, motor skills, cognitive abilities, and social-emotional development. If the child is determined to need additional support and qualifies for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed to provide tailored services and accommodations.

Parents are actively involved throughout the process, with opportunities to participate in meetings to review evaluation results and contribute to the development of the IEP. The child's progress is continuously monitored, and the IEP is adjusted as needed to ensure the child receives appropriate support. This collaborative approach aims to provide children with the resources and services necessary for a strong educational foundation.

HEALTH SERVICES.

Keep child home if:

- Fever of 99 degrees or higher • Sore throat • Upset stomach • Vomiting • Skin rash or sores • Diarrhea • Excessive Coughing • Headache • Severe cold with sneezing and ear, eye, or nose drainage • Lice is present and until treated • Flushed face Keep child home 24 hours after symptoms (including fever) are gone.

Report all communicable diseases to the school nurse's office.

- ***MEDICATION AT SCHOOL.***

In order for medication to be administered at school, you must communicate with the nurse and complete the "Authorization to Administer Medication" form before medication is administered at school.

- ***INJURY.***

For any child who is injured and requires more than basic first aid, the following steps will be taken: Attempt to contact parent/guardian. Attempt to contact emergency contacts listed on emergency form. If necessary, the child will be transported to the nearest hospital by ambulance, accompanied by a staff member.

- **Emergency Procedures:**

- An emergency number is extremely important for your child's well-being.
- Please notify the school office as telephone number(s) updates occur. If your child becomes ill, injured, or requires personal care, a parent or emergency contact will be called to school.

All students must have at least two working emergency contact numbers.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION.

- **Extra clothes** - All children should have a labeled set of extra clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) kept in their cubby in case of accidents or spills. Please update seasonally.
- **Toys from home** - We kindly ask that toys stay at home to avoid loss or distraction.
- **Weather & Outdoor Play** - We go outside daily, weather permitting. Please dress your child appropriately for the season, including jackets, hats, mittens, or boots as needed.

- **Emergency Procedures** - Our program practices regular fire, weather, and lockdown drills to ensure children and staff know what to do in case of an emergency.

TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN.

Our Preschool for All Program recognizes that the transition from preschool to kindergarten is an important milestone for children and families. We are committed to providing intentional transition activities throughout the school year to support children's social-emotional, academic, and developmental readiness for kindergarten and to ensure families are informed and engaged in the process.

Transition Planning Timeline - Transition planning begins at the start of the preschool year and continues throughout the year. During the spring semester, transition activities increase to help children and families prepare for kindergarten enrollment and attendance.

Family Engagement and Communication - Families are valued partners in the transition process. Parents/guardians will receive information regarding:

- Kindergarten registration and enrollment procedures
- School readiness expectations
- District kindergarten orientation events and open houses
- Community resources that support kindergarten readiness
- Their child's developmental progress and readiness skills

Information will be shared through newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, family events, written communications, and individual meetings as needed.

Preparing Children for Kindergarten - Throughout the school year, children will participate in developmentally appropriate experiences that promote kindergarten readiness, including:

- Social-emotional skill development
- Early literacy and language experiences
- Early mathematics and problem-solving activities
- Independent self-help and self-regulation skills
- Opportunities to practice classroom routines and expectations similar to those encountered in kindergarten

Teachers will intentionally support children's confidence, independence, and positive attitudes toward school.

Collaboration Between Preschool and Kindergarten Staff - Preschool staff will collaborate with kindergarten staff to promote continuity of learning and support successful transitions. Collaboration may include discussions regarding curriculum alignment, instructional practices, and kindergarten expectations.

With parent/guardian consent and in accordance with district policies and confidentiality requirements, relevant developmental and educational information may be shared with kindergarten staff to support each child's successful transition.

Kindergarten Visits and Orientation Opportunities - When available, children and families will be provided opportunities to:

- Visit kindergarten classrooms
- Meet kindergarten teachers and staff
- Participate in school orientation activities
- Become familiar with the kindergarten learning environment and school routines

Individualized Transition Supports - Some children may require additional transition supports. Families, teachers, administrators, and support staff will work collaboratively to develop individualized transition plans when appropriate. Additional supports may be provided for children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), multilingual learners, children experiencing homelessness, and children with identified social-emotional or developmental needs.

Transition Records and Documentation - Children's progress is monitored throughout the preschool year using ongoing assessment practices. Information gathered through assessments, observations, family input, and developmental screenings may be used to support transition planning and ensure continuity of services and instruction.

A written copy of this Transition to Kindergarten Plan is provided to all parents/guardians through the Preschool Handbook. Additional information and support regarding kindergarten transition are available upon request from program staff.