

Mt. Zion Pre-Kindergarten Parent Handbook

2026 - 2027

Welcome to Pre-K!



Welcome To Mt. Zion PreKindergarten!

Our McGaughey Elementary PreKindergarten program is grant-funded and **FREE** to all selected families. We look forward to working with your child and family this school year. We hope to make this experience one that is positive and life changing! Your child will experience many changes as they grow socially, academically and emotionally throughout this year. It is our intent to assist you in the education of your child and provide them with a great start in their educational experience! Direct instruction, free exploration, hands-on activities and many fun and engaging activities will provide these very important positive experiences. Our days will be filled with hands-on learning through the use of centers. Centers will include literacy, technology, block play, dramatic play, science/discovery, art and small manipulatives. We will also have quality group time for discussing calendar, weather, basic academic skills, stories and learning new songs and movements. Much of the time in the classroom is spent in centers where children learn to play and interact socially with others. We also use this time for small group instruction from the teacher. This allows for closer observation and a more directed teaching approach. Our class will also attend library class once a week. ☺

Why Do I Need This Handbook?

Mt. Zion School District #3 does an excellent job of providing pertinent information to our families in the Mt. Zion District No. 3 Handbook/Calendar 2026-2027. This information helps our new families transition into our district and helps our present families stay informed on district policies and events. This handbook is not intended to replace that guide but merely to provide information that specifically relates to Mt. Zion Prekindergarten. Information not found within this handbook may be accessed through the district handbook or by calling our school office.

What Will My Child Learn In Prekindergarten?

Mt. Zion Prekindergarten aligns its curriculum with the Illinois Early Learning Standards-Ages 3-5, local program goals, and the ideals of current early childhood education, specifically Creative Curriculum and supporting activities. The intent and purpose of the program is to foster independence and prepare children for a positive kindergarten experience. The following are the *GOALS* your child will work towards mastering before entering kindergarten:

*****These are simply goals. It's important to remember that every child is different and will learn at their own developmentally appropriate pace.**

Reading Goals:

- Knows first and last name
- Recognizes name and letters in name
- Names some other letter names and sounds
- Recognizes print
- Understands upper- and lower- case
- Matches signs, symbols and pictures
- Matches some beginning sounds
- Beginning understanding of rhyming words
- Holds a book correctly
- Understands basic print concepts (print reads left to right, top to bottom; words are composed of letters; print carries a message)
- Recognizes environmental print

Writing Goals:

- Writes first name
- Writes some other recognizable letters
- Draws pictures to convey meaning
- Can read their own writing

Mathematics Goals:

- Recognizes 5 basic 2D shapes
- Recognizes numerals 0-10
- Rote counts to 20
- Counts 10 objects with one to one correspondence
- Categorizes by at least two objects (by color, size, shape, etc.)
- Recognizes simple patterns
- Understands positional and comparative words

- **Fine Motor Goals:**
- Holds pencil with correct grasp
- Copies shapes and figures
- Draws a person with identifiable parts
- Holds scissors with correct grasp
- Cuts on line with scissors

Social Development Goals:

- Accepts and respects authority
- Shows understanding of feelings
- Transitions from caregiver
- Can verbally problem solve with peers
- Plays cooperatively
- Can maintain a conversation
- Shows empathy for others
- Can sit and listen
- Can follow 2-3 step directions
- Possesses good manners

Self Help Skill Goals:

- Engages and zips a zipper
- Takes care of own bathroom needs
- Snaps and buttons clothing
- Gains independence by completing self help tasks
- Can ask for help

How Will I Know How My Child Is Doing?

How the Teacher Will Communicate With You:

The Prekindergarten teachers will communicate with families through several different means. Newsletters containing information pertinent to the classroom will be sent home, at the very least, on a monthly basis. Notes that are more specific to the needs of your child will be sent home as needed. Samples of student work not displayed in the classroom or needed for assessment purposes will also be sent home. When needed, phone calls will be made and parent conferences scheduled.

How You May Communicate With the Teacher:

Parents are always welcome in the Prekindergarten classroom. Parent volunteers are strongly encouraged and greatly appreciated. Class time is not an appropriate time for parents to address their concerns with the teacher. The best way to reach the teacher is through phone calls or email. Phone calls made to the school will be transferred to voicemail and the teacher will return the call at the earliest convenient time. Phone calls will only be transferred to the teacher's room when class is not in session. The teacher will also respond to notes sent in by the parents. **Office Phone: 864-2711 Office Fax: 864-4126**

Teacher emails: *Chloe Cable-* cablec@mtzschoools.org (ext 1519)

Jenny Taylor- taylorj@mtzschoools.org (ext 1514)

Parent Conferences:

Parent conferences are scheduled at least once a year to discuss your child's progress and any questions you may have. You may request a conference at any time to discuss any questions or concerns. Please contact the teacher to schedule a time that will be convenient for both you and the teacher. Conferences will never be given during class time since this is the quality time we need with the children.

How Is Learning Assessed In The Classroom?

The prekindergarten teachers use a variety of assessment techniques in order to provide the most accurate picture of what your child has learned. The main assessment program used is Teaching Strategies GOLD, which is an authentic, online observational system that is used to predict school success and readiness. Work samples, observations and notes will be collected throughout the year and placed in an online portfolio (TSG) to show overall growth through the program. Creative Curriculum also provides numerous checklists to facilitate teaching and learning. Lastly, we will assess according to the Pre-K Exit Goals which contain the behaviors and skills that students need to be ready for Kindergarten.

We are always trying to improve our program in activities, content, and assessment. We may find other assessments during the year that will add to our abilities.

What Happens If My Child Misbehaves?

Mt. Zion Prekindergarten expects students to follow the three R's: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Ready. We recognize that part of the prekindergarten experience is learning proper social behavior and we make this a large part of our instruction. Each student will be taught proper behavior through direct instruction, positive reinforcement, and interaction with adults and peers. Teachers will implement many of the PBIS resources, along with Second Step (social-emotional skills for early learning), to model appropriate behavior. Classroom rules are kept short and easy for children to remember. Both the rules and the consequences for breaking those rules are discussed in depth with the children at the beginning of the year and reminders are given throughout.

- **Rules**
 - Be Ready
 - Be Respectful
 - Be Responsible
 - Be Kind
 - Be Safe
- **Consequences**
 - First Offense: Redirection and counseling as warranted
 - Second Offense: Time away to reflect and counseling
 - Third Offense: One or more of the following:
 - Note or phone call home
 - Conference with the principal
 - Conference or home visit with the parent
- **Severe Clause**
 - Physical or verbal harm to others may result in immediate application of consequence #2 or #3.
 - According to Senate Bill 100-105, suspension is not allowed. However, teachers and parents may work together to transition to a more suitable program.

What about My Child's Personal Property?

The school takes no responsibility for damaged, lost, or stolen personal items. We will put some effort into recovery of lost or stolen items but only as time allows with no guarantees.

Parents are asked to leave personal entertainment items - toys, sports equipment, electronics, cell phones - at home. These items are not allowed in the classroom and will be held by the teacher in the event they are brought to class. All items will be returned to the students at the end of the day.

Please make sure that all clothing - coats, gloves, jackets, raincoats, umbrellas, boots - is labeled in a safe place with your child's name. Never label clothing on the outside where it can be seen by strangers. Make sure that shoe laces are long enough to tie and that all clothing follows the dress code in the Mt. Zion District Handbook.

Transportation

Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the parents, unless stated in a child's Individualized Education Plan. Please follow these directions for dropping off and picking up your child:

- Parents are responsible for taking their child out of the car seat and putting him/her in the car seat. Prekindergarten teachers will not, under any circumstances, remove a child from or place a child in a car seat.
- Teachers will be waiting on the sidewalk at the start of class. AM PreK assigned drop off is at the northeast gym door and pick up will be from the classroom doors at the west side of the building. PM PreK will utilize the side classroom doors for both drop off and pick up. Parents need to pull into their assigned drive and help their child out of the car.
- AM parents should pull into the back parking lot off of Westside drive in a single line. PM parents should park at the side of the building near the pine trees.
****Do not pass a car in front of you even if you have already dropped off your child.****
- If you are late or having trouble getting your child into school you must park in the school parking lot and walk your child into his/her classroom. **Do not block the line and hold up traffic.**

- Students will only be released to the adults listed on the Parent Contact Form. Adults may be asked to show a picture ID before the child is released into their care. Adults who are not authorized to pick up a student will not be allowed to leave with the student unless the office has received verbal or written confirmation from the student's parent/guardian.

AM Drop Off time is at 8:15am. If you arrive after 8:25am, please park and walk your child up through the main front entrance. A secretary or teacher will walk him/her down to the class. He/she will be considered tardy after 8:25am.

AM Pick Up time is at 10:45am. If you arrive after 10:55am, please park and meet your child in the office.

PM Drop Off time is at 12:00pm/noon. If you arrive after 12:10pm, please park in the west parking lot and walk your child in through the main front entrance. A secretary or teacher will walk him/her down to the classroom. He/she will be considered tardy after 12:15pm. **PM Pick Up time is at 2:30pm.** If you arrive after 2:40pm, please park and meet your child in the office.

Attendance

Regular attendance is very important, but we realize there are some instances where children simply cannot make it to school. If your child is ill or if there is a serious family problem and your child is unable to attend, please contact the school to report the absence. Absences should be reported to the office by 8:00AM for the morning session and 12:00PM/NOON for the afternoon session.

Medical Excuses from Activity

- o Parent Request- Students may be kept inside the building or held out of physical activity for a maximum of 3 consecutive days with a parent or guardian's written request. Extension of time may occur only with a physician's written order.
- o Doctor's Orders- We will not countermand a physician's orders under any circumstance, even at parent request. If restriction from physical activity is ordered, the restriction from similar activities outside the classroom is assumed. A signed physician's release for activity is required.

Students Medical Removal and Reentry to School

- o State and Board policy, physician's orders, the professional opinion of the school nurse, or the school nurse's expressed policy, is the final word on a student's mandatory removal from or reentry to the school for medical reasons.
- o An official physician's note is required as requested.
- o An official physician's note is required for students who have been absent a cumulative 7 school days per semester. Lack of an official physician's note results in unexcused absences being recorded.

Instances of Severe Tardiness/Absence

- o Students arriving after **8:25am** for the AM session and after **12:10pm** for the PM session will be considered **tardy**. Late arrivals must report to the office with their parent/guardian and be signed in.
- o Tardiness will be recorded.
- o An absence followed by a doctor's note and preplanned absences (when the teacher is notified in advance) will be considered an excused absence. All other absences will be considered unexcused.
- o Chronic Absentee Policy - All student absences will be documented in both the classroom and the office. If necessary, school personnel and parents will collaborate ways to assure child gets to school at an appropriate time.

How Do I Contact The School?

Phone calls regarding absences and transportation changes may be made to the school office. Transportation changes must be made at least 30 minutes before dismissal. Phone calls will not be directed to the prekindergarten teachers while class is in session. Phone calls will also not be transferred to students in the classroom. The office will gladly take a message for the student which will be delivered at the end of the class period before dismissal. Only messages regarding transportation changes or planned absence/appointment issues will be delivered. Personal messages will not be taken by the office or the teacher. Students are not allowed to have cell phones or other communication devices at school or on school provided transportation.

Backpacks will be checked each day upon arrival. Families are welcome to send in notes for the teacher, other building specialists or office personnel that may regard changes in routine, upcoming absences, or anything important you feel should be expressed. If the note is intended for the office, families should submit

the note to the teacher who, in turn, submits them to the office ensuring that all parties are aware of the information.

On the final school day of each month, the office distributes both a monthly calendar and monthly newsletter containing information about special events, holidays, and early dismissal times. We also provide these resources on our webpage and classroom newsletter.

How Do I Know About School Closings

Mt. Zion School District uses several television and radio outlets to notify the public about school closings and other emergencies. A call to the school office is not necessary on these occasions. (Please note: A call to the school office during an emergency situation is disruptive and may hinder our ability to protect your child.) You can also sign up to receive district-wide alerts.

When school is closed, the prekindergarten is closed. Please check with one or more of the following sources:

Station	Number	Type	Location
WXFM	99.3 FM	Radio	Mt. Zion
WDKR	107.3 FM	Radio	Decatur
WZNX	106.7 FM	Radio	Decatur
WYDS	93 FM	Radio	Decatur
WEJT	105.1 FM	Radio	Decatur
WDZ	1050 AM	Radio	Decatur
WDZQ	95.1 FM	Radio	Decatur
WSOY	1340 AM	Radio	Decatur
WSOY	102.9 FM	Radio	Decatur
WAND	7/17	TV	Decatur
WCIA	3	TV	Champaign
WCIS	2/20	TV	Springfield

What Are The Rules For Visiting School?

As of August 2022, visitors are only allowed to enter the building through the main front doors, and entrance will only be permitted for scheduled appointments/visits or emergencies deemed necessary by administration. Please comply with the following procedures and policies in the interest of the educational process and everyone's safety and wellbeing.

- o All visitors are required to sign in at the office (with photo ID) and receive and wear a visitor badge from 8:00am until dismissal. The office will inform the prekindergarten that they have a visitor.
- o Visitors are required to show respect for our mandate of educating children and must not disrupt a teacher while lessons are occurring. We ask that visitors wait in the hall or enter quietly until the prekindergarten staff may welcome them.
- o Our staff will not release any student without notification from the office. They are under strict orders to report difficulties to the office immediately.

What Are The Rules For Parties?

Birthday Treats

- o Birthday celebrations are welcome in the form of a simple INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED snack and/or drink. Healthy choices are strongly encouraged for snack donations, however other appropriate birthday snacks would be fruit snacks, mini muffins, teddy grahams, etc. We do NOT welcome cupcakes, icing or other similar snacks for birthdays in our classroom. If you cannot decide if a birthday snack is appropriate or inappropriate, please contact your child's teacher. Parents are welcome to bring in party cups, plates and napkins as well. Parents may also bring a story to read to the class for their child's birthday.

Invitations at School

- o If your child has an invitation for all students (or a girl invites all girls or a boy invites all boys), the distribution will be permitted. However, if a child is only inviting a specific group of classmates, the invitation distribution must occur away from school grounds.
- o This policy is also in effect for school pictures. Please do not send school pictures for a select group of students (other than all girls or all boys). If there

are not enough pictures for the whole class (or all girls or all boys) the pictures will not be distributed at school.

Holiday Parties

- o Classroom parties occur twice during the year. One before Christmas break and one for Valentine's Day. If necessary, the head room parent may ask for material donations from other parents.
- o There will be a variety of special events that take place throughout the school year.

Special Deliveries to Students

- o Deliveries of flowers, candy, balloons, etc. to students will not be accepted at any Mt. Zion School District Building.

What About Fundraisers?

We sincerely appreciate the time and effort that families put into fundraisers. All fundraisers are considered completely voluntary. We do ask that all fundraiser sales be cash or check up front at the time the sale is made. Orders will not be placed until the money is received.

Do You Provide After-School Care?

Our district provides B.A.S.A.P. before and after school childcare services only for the district's K-6 students. We do not provide childcare for younger children. Services for infants and preschool aged children may be sought through certified daycares and the "Childcare Resource and Referral Service," a service of the U of I Extension, at 1-800-325-5516. The U of I Extension screens and approves all childcare providers in their system. We do not advertise babysitters or private childcare.