



Readiness Program
Michigan's Nationally Recognized Pre-K Program



Family Handbook

Welcome to GSRP!

We are happy to welcome you and your child to the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), Michigan's free preschool program for eligible four-year-olds.

GSRP classrooms are friendly and fun places where children learn through play, making friends, and trying new things. Our teachers help your child grow in many ways, prepare for Kindergarten, and set the stage for a bright future.

We know that families are a child's first and most important teachers. That is why we work with you throughout the year, through family meetings, classroom visits, and everyday conversations, to help your child learn at home.

This parent handbook will answer your questions:

- What is the program?
- How do I connect with it?
- How does my child get in?
- What does a day look like?
- How will my child be safe and cared for?
- How do teachers guide behavior?

We are excited to be part of your child's journey.

Welcome to the GSRP family!

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About Our Program

Rochester Early Childhood Programs

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<https://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/schools/pre-k/>

Director- Annemarie Miller

Mission Statement

The mission of the Rochester Great Start Readiness Program is to provide a secure and engaging environment which supports success in kindergarten and beyond by empowering young children to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically.



Program Philosophy

Our Guiding Principle: All children are capable, curious, and full of potential.

We Believe that

- Preschool matters. It helps your child grow, learn, and prepare for school and life.
- Families matter. You are your child's first and most important teacher, and we're excited to work with you.
- Every child and family is special. We welcome and respect who you are and what you bring to our community.
- Relationships matter. Children thrive when they feel safe, loved, and supported.
- Play matters. Through play, children ask questions, try new things, and make sense of the world around them.

These beliefs guide everything we do. We're here to build on your child's strengths and help every family feel welcomed, valued, and supported.

Learning and Development

Curriculum

GSRP programs use learning plans that are approved by the state and based on research. These plans help children build strong skills and support their growth in every area. If your program is new to GSRP, things may look a little different, but these changes are meant to give children the best start in school and life.

HighScope - Children and teachers are partners in learning! In HighScope, kids learn by doing through hands-on activities and daily routines like planning, doing, and reviewing. This approach helps children grow in areas such as language, math, science, art, and social skills.

Watching Your Child Grow

Developmental Screening - By the first two weeks of school, we will do a short screening called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) with you. It helps us learn more about your child's development and what supports may be helpful. You'll get the results and some fun learning activities to try at home. If the screening shows that extra support might help, we'll talk with you and make a plan together.

Ongoing Assessment - Families are important partners in the assessment process. Parents can support their child's learning by sharing observations, photos, questions, and information about their child's strengths, routines, and development at home and in the community. This is the assessment system used in your child's classroom:

HighScope Online Child Observation Record (COR) - We use COR to learn about and support each child's growth during the school year. Teachers observe children during daily activities and use what they know to plan experiences that build on each child's strengths. Families receive a My Child's Developmental Profile three times a year to see their child's progress.

Referrals for Child and Family Needs - We screen each child's development, behavior, and family needs early in the year. If concerns arise, we work together with families and schools to provide support and make referrals when needed. A referral is a way to connect families with extra help or services. This can include support for medical or mental health needs, food, clothing, housing, or other services. Parents are involved at every step, and services only begin with written consent.

Families and Teachers: Better Together

Working Together to Improve

Program Evaluation and Family Consent - Our program is always looking for ways to grow and better support children and families. One way we do this is through program evaluation. This helps us understand what's working well and where we can keep improving.

As part of this process, we may be asked to participate in local, state, or national studies on the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). These studies are designed to make sure programs like ours are providing children the best start possible.

If our program is selected, we may:

- Welcome visitors to observe classroom learning.
- Provide a quiet space where children can take part in short activities or assessments.
- Give teachers and staff time to share their feedback through surveys.
- Share important program details, like reporting information already entered in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS).
- Take part in meetings, calls, or webinars that support program growth.
- Send home family letters with helpful information about the project.

These efforts help us learn more about how children grow and succeed, and they guide improvements so that all families benefit.

Opportunities for Families

Children learn best when families and teachers work as a team. **Your voice matters**, and you're always welcome in our classroom! Here are some ways families can be involved:

- **Classroom volunteering:** Ask your child's teacher how you can help. There are many ways to be part of your child's learning!
- **Home visits & conferences:** We meet with families 4 times a year to share progress, set goals together, and build strong partnerships. Two home visits and two conferences are scheduled at set times during the year, and give us time to talk about your child's growth and learning at home and school.
- **Family orientation:** A chance to meet the team, connect with other families, and get helpful information at the start of the year.
- **Family activities:** We may host family-friendly, fun events throughout the year to learn, play, and grow together.

- **Participation opportunities:** Families are invited to share their voices by joining the Family Participation Group, which meets twice a year at the program level, or the School Readiness Advisory Committee at the ISD level. New members receive an orientation, and meeting notes are shared to keep everyone informed. Some meetings include meals and child care to help make participation easier.
- **Data Analysis Meetings:** Three times a year, families can meet with teachers and leaders to review program data and plan improvements together.

We're here for you. Whether you need support finding resources, understanding your child's development, or just want to talk. We will listen, partner with you, and support your family every step of the way.

Miscellaneous

Celebrations and Holidays

We welcome families to share their home traditions and celebrations with our classroom community. You can talk with your child's teacher, the program director, or share ideas during a parent advisory meeting. We support celebrations in ways that align with the curriculum and program rules. Families are not asked to donate or buy items.

End-of-Year Celebrations

At the end of the year, we celebrate your child's growth together as a community. We focus on relationships and fun activities children enjoy, like a playground party or an open house. Instead of caps and gowns, we create a joyful, child-centered event that honors learning and connection. More details will be shared as the date approaches.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special! While we don't allow treats or items from home due to allergies and health goals, we celebrate every child with a small book and a kind message from their teacher on their birthday—or half birthday for summer birthdays. Thank you for your cooperation.

Field Trips

Our classrooms may take field trips based on children's interests and developmental needs—for example, to a nature center if they are exploring animals and habitats. Trips will be limited and short to maintain daily routines. The program covers the cost of entry fees. Parents are welcome to attend, but free adult entry may be limited to one per child.

Fundraising

If our program participates in a fundraiser or donation drive, it will follow these guidelines:

- Participation is optional
- No competition between students or classes

- No big prizes for raising the most
- Donation lists will include low-cost items (e.g., a box of Jell-O)

Guests and Visitors

We enjoy having guests and volunteers join us to support learning and community. Visitors may share about a topic children are exploring, like a veterinarian talking about animals, or sit with children during a meal or activity. If you know someone who would be a great guest, please let your child's teacher or the program director know.

Picture Day

Picture day happens each fall. Children will be included in a class photo and individual portraits. Families can purchase individual and class pictures and if they choose. If you do not want your child to participate, please notify the teacher and program director.

Toys from Home

Children may want to bring items from home, but we do not take responsibility for lost or damaged toys. If a toy becomes a challenge in the classroom, we will work with you and your child to find a solution.

Daily Life in Our Program

Calendar, Weather, and Hours

Calendar - You will receive a program calendar before the first day of school. It includes key dates like the first and last day, holidays, breaks, and planned closures. Need another copy? Just ask your teacher or program administrator. Calendars can be found on our website, under Parent/Caregiver information::

<https://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/schools/pre-k/>

Classroom Hours - Class schedules follow our program's established calendar. We offer full-day and part day options and typically operate from Monday to Thursday for at least 120 days each year. Specific class location and times can be found here: <https://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/schools/pre-k/>

If our program schedule does not meet your family's needs, Help Me Grow Care Coordinators are available to help explore other program options that may be a better fit.

Before & After Care (GSRP)

- Our program does not offer before or after-care. We can help you connect with trusted local providers.

You can also search for licensed child care at www.GreatStartToQuality.org. Just click “Families” and then “Finding Child Care and Preschool.”

Families are not charged application or registration fees for GSRP. There may be fees if they enroll in before- or after-care.

Weather & Emergency Closures - If school closes due to weather, power outages, or other emergencies, you'll be notified via local TV and radio or through direct messages. If school closes early during the day, we'll contact families right away for pick-up. Our GSRP program will close if the Rochester Community Schools district is closed.

Daily Routine

Children do best when they feel safe and connected and know what to expect. Each classroom follows a welcoming, predictable routine that helps children feel confident and ready to learn.

A typical day includes:

- Warm welcome on arrival
- Nutritious food
- Individual, small group, and whole group learning
- Child-led play and exploration
- Outdoor time and movement
- End-of-day transitions and goodbyes

This daily rhythm builds curiosity, independence, and strong relationships. It helps children learn through play, connection, and discovery.

To support this, we post the daily schedule outside and inside the room for adults, and inside the classroom at child's eye level. Having the routine at the child's level helps them see and understand it.

Rest Time (full-day programs only) - To support your child's well-being, each classroom has a daily, calm, and consistent rest time. Children rest on a mat or cot. You're welcome to send a small blanket or comfort item, just make sure it's labeled and not too big (no large blankets or pillows, please). Items are sent home weekly for washing.

Daily rest time may be scheduled up to one hour. Some children sleep, while others may not. Awake children can do quiet activities on their mat, at a table, or in a cozy classroom area. This helps every child feel safe, calm, and respected.

After rest, we gently help children return to their day. Sleeping children are softly encouraged to wake, but they are never rushed.

Outdoor Play - Children play outside every day as long as the weather allows. Please dress your child for the weather and send boots, coats, or snow gear when needed. Outdoor time is part of our learning and supports your child's health and well-being. If your child is too sick to go outside, it's best to keep them home and let them rest.

Meals & Snacks at School - We provide a planned food service program at no cost to families. Meals and snacks are served during the school day to support children's growth and healthy habits.

Sample Meal Times (times may vary by classroom):

- Morning Snack – around 9:15 AM
- Lunch – around 12:00 PM (full day only)
- Afternoon Snack – around 2:30 PM

All meals meet nutrition standards from the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Menus, including any food substitutions, will be posted for families to view. If your child will bring their own meals and snacks, please complete the [Request for Food Service Individualization and Adjustments Form](#).

Please note: Outside food is not allowed unless it is approved.

Through family-style dining, children learn to:

- Serve themselves
- Try new foods
- Build healthy habits
- Enjoy mealtime with classmates

It's normal for children to need 12 or more tries before accepting new food. We gently encourage them to explore and participate. Please see the Health, Safety, and Well-Being section for more information about food allergies.

Attendance & Pick-Up Reminders - Coming to school every day helps your child learn, grow, and build healthy habits. Missing even 10% of the year can affect learning, so we encourage families to aim for fewer than 5 absences per year.

If your child will be absent, please call the school before the start of the day. Frequent absences may lead to placement on a waitlist, but we're here to help. If anything makes it difficult for you to get to school, please let us know—we want to support you.

We also understand that delays can happen. If you will be late for pick-up, please contact your teacher by telephone or through the Kaymbu app. If late pick-up becomes a regular challenge, we'll work with you to create a supportive plan that meets your family's needs.

Health, Safety, and Well-Being

Accidents & Emergencies

- For minor injuries, you'll get an "accident/incident report" to explain what happened.
- For serious injuries, we'll call **911** and contact you right away.
- Reports are filed with licensing when required.

Health Guidelines - Even with good care at home and school, children may become ill during the year. If your child gets sick at school, we will call you to pick them up. If we can't reach you, we will contact someone listed on your Child Information Record. Please plan to pick up your child within one hour of being notified.

If your child has been out of school due to a communicable disease (such as strep throat or pink eye), a doctor's note may be required before they can return to school.

Please **do not send your child to school** if they have any of the following:

- A fever (100°F or higher). Your child must be fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine before returning.
- Diarrhea or vomiting. Your child must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning.
- Red or draining eyes
- Ear discharge
- Green or yellow nasal discharge
- Persistent or productive cough
- Sore throat
- Skin rash
- Ringworm (children may attend unless the rash could easily spread to others)
- Lice, hand-foot-mouth disease, or any other contagious illness (Refer to Oakland County Health Division for guidance.)

Please notify the school if your child has a communicable disease or an extended illness. If needed, the school will inform other families of any exposure to illness. A doctor's note may be required to return after a communicable disease or a long illness.

Henry Ford Rochester Hospital	248-652-5000 - Henry Ford Rochester Hospital
Oakland County Health Division	248-858-1280 - https://www.oakgov.com/health
National Capital Poison Center	800-222-1222 - www.poison.org

General Health & Wellness	American Academy of Pediatrics
	Healthy children
	Bright Futures
Nutrition	My Plate (USDA)
	American Dietetic Association

Medication - To keep all children safe, we follow clear guidelines when giving any medication at school.

Before we can give your child medication (prescription or over-the-counter), you must complete an Authorization to Administer Medication Form. In some cases, a doctor's signature may also be required.

Here's what you need to know:

- Only trained adult staff will give or apply medication.
- We can only give medication with written permission from a parent or guardian.
- All medication must be in its original container, clearly labeled with your child's name.
- Prescription medication must include a pharmacy label with:
 - Your child's name
 - The doctor's name
 - Medication name and strength
 - Clear instructions for use
- Nonprescription medications (like Tylenol, sunscreen, or insect repellent) must be labeled and provided by you.
 - You'll need to give us written permission each year to use them.

If you have questions about medication procedures or forms, your child's teacher or program staff can help.

Supporting Children with Food Allergies - The health, safety, and well-being of every child in our program is very important to us. To support children with food allergies, we follow Michigan Child Care Licensing requirements related to food allergies and medical emergencies. If your child has a diagnosed food allergy, families are asked to provide a completed **Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan** from your child's health care provider. This plan helps our staff understand your child's specific allergies, the symptoms to watch for, and the steps to take if an allergic reaction occurs. Our staff is trained to recognize and respond to

allergic reactions and to follow each child's individualized care plan to help keep all children safe.

Each child's allergy care plan must include, at a minimum:

- The child's name and a list of their food allergies
- The names of medications, dosage amounts, and instructions for how the medication should be given if a reaction occurs
- Guidance for staff on how to recognize the child's allergic reaction symptoms

The child's care plan will be readily available to staff and will also be carried out during field trips, so children remain safe while outside of the classroom.

To help prevent allergic reactions, our program also follows important safety practices, including:

- Sharing information with families about known food allergens so those foods are not brought into the classroom or program
- Posting a child's name and food allergy information in the classroom or other appropriate areas, with parent or guardian permission, to help staff remain aware
- Training staff and unsupervised volunteers to recognize the symptoms of anaphylaxis
- Preventing food sharing between children

If an allergic reaction occurs, staff will follow established emergency procedures, including:

- Promptly administering medication according to the instructions in the child's care plan.
- Calling emergency medical services (911) immediately if a child experiences a serious allergic reaction, if a new serious allergic reaction is suspected, or whenever epinephrine is administered, even if the child appears to recover.
- Notifying parents or guardians right away if a child is suspected of having an allergic reaction, ingests a food allergen, or comes into contact with a problem food, even if a reaction does not occur.

Families can learn more about food allergies and access a sample emergency care plan here: **Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan:**

<https://www.foodallergy.org/living-food-allergy/food-allergy-essentials/food-allergy-a-naphylaxis-emergency-care-plan>

If your child has food allergies or other medical needs, please speak with program staff so we can work together to support your child's health, safety, and well-being while they are in our care. Please visit the RCS website for required forms:

<https://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/header-utility/familiescommunity/health-wellness>

Keeping Children Safe - Your child's safety and well-being are our top priorities. All staff are trained to recognize and respond if a child may need help. Because we care deeply about protecting children, staff are required by law to report any concerns of possible abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services (CPS). Staff are not required to notify families before making a report, as these steps are meant to ensure that children receive help and support as quickly as possible.

Idle-Free School - To help keep the air clean and healthy for everyone, especially young children, we ask all families and visitors to limit vehicle idling during drop-off and pick-up times. Exhaust from idling cars can affect children's growing lungs and may increase the risk of asthma and other breathing problems. Small changes can make a big difference in creating a healthier environment for our children, families, and staff.

Please help by:

- Turning off your vehicle while waiting to pick up or drop off children
- Shutting off your engine anytime you will be stopped for more than 10 seconds
- Limiting idling to no more than 5 minutes if heat or air conditioning is needed
- Avoiding unnecessary idling by cars and delivery vehicles on school property

Thank you for helping us create a healthier and safer environment for all children.

Emergency Preparedness & Family Communication

At RCS Early Childhood Programs, the safety and well-being of your child are our highest priorities. We have developed comprehensive emergency plans to ensure a swift, organized response to a range of situations, from inclement weather to building emergencies.

Our Emergency Protocols

Our staff undergoes regular training and conducts monthly drills so that emergency procedures become second nature. We prepare for four primary scenarios:

- Evacuate: If the building is unsafe, children are escorted to our primary assembly point.
- Shelter-in-Place: Used for severe weather (such as tornado warnings). Children are moved to designated interior "safe zones" away from windows.
- Lockdown: Used if there is a perceived threat inside or near the building. All doors are secured, and children remain out of sight until an "all clear" is given by emergency personnel.
- Relocation: If we cannot return to our building for an extended period, children will be transported to our secondary site.

Communication During an Emergency

In the event of a real emergency or an unplanned school closure, we will communicate with families as quickly as possible. Please do not rush to the school until you receive instructions, as this can block emergency vehicles and complicate safety procedures.

How we will contact you:

- Email / Text / Phone Call through Kaymbu, ParentSquare, etc.

Note: It is vital that your contact information remains up to date. If you change your phone number or email address, please notify the office immediately.

Reunification Process

In the event of a relocation or early dismissal, we will implement a formal Reunification Process to ensure every child is released to an authorized adult.

- Identification Required: No child will be released to an adult without a valid photo ID.
- Authorized Pick-up: We will only release children to individuals listed on the Emergency Contact Form. No exceptions will be made during an emergency.
- Signing Out: Parents/Guardians must sign the reunification log before departing with their child.

Guidance and Enrollment

Positive Guidance and Support

Guiding Positive Behavior and Peer Relationships - In our program, we believe all children can learn to express themselves in kind and respectful ways. We guide children as they build important life skills like self-control, confidence, and cooperation.

To help with problem-solving, we use a caring, six-step process:

1. Stay calm and make sure everyone is safe.
2. Show empathy and name each child's feelings.
3. Invite children to share their side of the story.
4. Restate the problem using their words.
5. Help them think of solutions and choose one together.
6. Support them as they follow through.

We encourage families to use these same steps at home. When children see the same caring guidance in both places, they feel safe and confident.

To keep our classroom safe and supportive, we will never use physical punishment or hurtful words. **Our staff will never:**

- Hit, spank, or restrict a child's movement

- Shame or threaten
- Withhold food, rest, or bathroom use
- Exclude children from play or learning
- Confine a child in a small or locked space

We are committed to helping your child grow through kindness, respect, and developmentally appropriate support.

Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors - All children deserve care, support, and the chance to learn. When a child needs help with behavior, we take steps to understand what's going on and how to support them. We:

- Watch and listen to understand the child's needs.
- Work together with families to make a plan.
- Give each child the support that works best for them.

In very rare cases, we may work with the family to create a special plan called an Alternate Program Option Plan. This is done together, with care and respect for the child and family.

How We Handle Challenging Behaviors - We believe every child deserves care, support, and the chance to succeed. When challenging behaviors arise, we work with families step-by-step to provide the right support based on the child's needs, strengths, and safety.

Level I: Early Support & Observation

When behaviors are frequent or may be unsafe, we start with:

1. Raising a Concern – A teacher or parent can share concerns; we may use a simple screener.
2. First Steps – We look at triggers and quick ways to help. A specialist may observe.
3. Trying New Strategies – Teachers try different approaches and track results for ~3 weeks.
4. Family Partnership – With your permission, support staff may observe your child and meet with you.
5. Support Team Observation – A team member offers helpful notes from their visit.
6. Planning Together – We meet as a team to decide if a Behavior Intervention Plan is needed.
7. If your child has an IEP or IFSP, we will align support with your special education team.
8. Creating a Plan – If needed, we build a personalized, positive plan for home and school.
9. Follow-Up – We check in after two weeks and adjust as needed.
10. Timeline – This process typically takes 4–8 weeks.

Level II: Continued Support

If behavior challenges continue, we review progress as a team:

- What's working at home and school?
- Are we using strategies consistently?
- Are there positive changes or ongoing concerns?

Together, we decide whether to keep building on the plan or explore more support.

Level III: Alternate Program Options (*Used only when needed for safety*)

In rare cases, if safety is still a concern, we may develop an Alternate Program Option Plan *with your family*. This is a short-term, supportive adjustment.

Together, we'll set clear goals and steps. If challenges continue, we'll meet again with GSRP leadership to explore every possible solution that supports both your child and the classroom community.

Confidentiality - We keep all information about your child and family private. We only share it if you give permission or if the law requires it (like in cases of suspected abuse). Oakland Schools or MiLEAP may sometimes review records to ensure we follow the rules.

Sometimes, our program is chosen for state or national studies. This may include surveys, classroom visits, or child assessments. If this happens, we'll let you know and ask for your permission if needed.

Enrollment and Access for All Children

Enrollment & Eligibility - Children are accepted based on state guidelines, with priority given to families with the greatest need. To apply, you'll need to show proof of your child's age, your income, where you live, and your child's health records.

We welcome all children and value their unique strengths. No child will be denied a spot or excluded because of differences like toileting needs, speech or language delays, motor skills, learning needs, or behavior.

Need help? Help Me Grow can support you with the online application process. 844-456-5437.

Withdrawal Process - We understand that sometimes families need to make changes. If you decide to leave the program, please let us know as soon as possible. This helps us notify families on the waitlist and support a smooth transition for your child.

The only reason we would permanently withdraw a child from GSRP is due to low attendance.

Your child may also be asked to stay home temporarily if they have a contagious illness that could affect the health and safety of others.

No child will be removed for needing support. According to the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP), children

enrolled in GSRP must not be excluded or expelled for needing additional medical or behavioral support.

Grievance Policy - If you have a concern:

- Start by speaking with your child's teacher.
- If the issue is not resolved, please contact the program administrator.
- If you still need support, contact:
 - **Oakland Schools Early Childhood:** (248) 209-2266
 - **MiLEAP:** (517) 241-7004

Licensing Notebook - Our program keeps a Licensing Notebook on-site with all inspection and investigation reports. You can review it anytime. Reports from the past two years are also online at Michigan.gov.

Funding - The State of Michigan funds the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) through the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP). The state provides funding to local intermediate school districts to offer high-quality preschool at no cost to families. These funds are carefully managed each year to make sure resources are used to support children and families. Studies show that preschool programs like GSRP help children do well in school and later in life.

“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”

Fred Rogers

Notice of Nondiscrimination: Rochester Community Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, creed, or ancestry, age, sex, marital status, height, weight, familial status, arrest record or physical and mental disabilities in accordance with the Elliot-Larson Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) MCL 37.2206, Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act (PWCERS), MCL 37.1206, Title II, Title VI, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (8U.S.C., Section 1324A Et.Seq.) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In addition, individuals will not be excluded from, or be denied, the benefits of participation in any program or activity for which the Board is responsible. Rochester Community Schools has designated the following individuals as Compliance Coordinators: Title IX, Title II and Section 504 – Students: Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, 552585 Dequindre, Rochester, MI 48307 (248) 726-3106; Equal Employment Opportunity/Section 504 for non-students: Executive Director of Human Resources, 552585 Dequindre, Rochester, MI 48307 (248) 726-3110.

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