



**Highland Park ISD
Prekindergarten Program Handbook
2026-2027**

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Highland Park ISD Prekindergarten Program Handbook

2026–2027 School Year

Welcome to the Highland Park ISD Prekindergarten Program. We are excited to partner with families during these important early learning years. This handbook provides information about our Prekindergarten Program, enrollment pathways, program expectations, and resources to support your child's success.

About the HPISD Prekindergarten Program

The Highland Park ISD Prekindergarten Program provides a high-quality, inclusive early childhood learning environment for eligible three- and four-year-old children.

Our program is designed to:

- Foster school readiness
- Support language and literacy development
- Build early mathematics skills
- Promote social-emotional growth
- Encourage independence and self-help skills
- Develop positive relationships with peers and adults

HPISD utilizes a blended Prekindergarten model in which students with disabilities, students eligible for state-funded Prekindergarten, and tuition-based peer model students learn together in the same classroom. This inclusive environment benefits all children by providing opportunities to learn from one another while participating in developmentally appropriate instruction and play.

Prekindergarten Terms: A Quick Guide

- **ARD Committee:** The team meeting where we discuss your child's goals and support services.
- **ECSE:** Specialized instruction for students who need extra support to meet their developmental goals.
- **FIE:** A comprehensive evaluation used to understand how we can best support your child's learning.
- **Peer Model:** Students who participate in our blended classrooms to help foster social interaction and friendship for all learners.

The Prekindergarten Program follows:

- Texas Education Agency (TEA) Prekindergarten Guidelines
- Texas Education Code requirements
- Highland Park ISD Board Policy
- Federal and state special education requirements

Prekindergarten classrooms are currently located at:

- Armstrong Elementary
- Boone Elementary
- Bradfield Elementary
- Hyer Elementary
- University Park Elementary

Program hours are generally 7:55 a.m.–3:15 p.m. each school day.

Program Staffing

Each classroom is staffed by a certified teacher and support personnel in accordance with Texas Education Agency requirements and district staffing guidelines. In accordance with TEA and TEC Prekindergarten staffing Statute TEC 29.167 (d), the district attempts to maintain an average ratio of at least one certified teacher or aide for every 11 students.

Students receiving special education services may also receive support from related service providers including speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and other specialized staff as determined by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Pathways to Enrollment

Students may participate in the HPISD Prekindergarten Program through one of three pathways:

1. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
2. State-Funded Prekindergarten Eligibility
3. Tuition-Based Peer Model Enrollment

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Description

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) provides special education and related services for eligible children ages three through five who have been identified with a disability and require specially designed instruction.

Services are determined by an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee and are provided in the least restrictive environment appropriate for the student.

Depending on individual needs, services may include:

- Full-day Prekindergarten placement
- Partial-day Prekindergarten placement
- Speech therapy
- Other related services
- Specialized instruction

Identification Process

Students suspected of having a disability may be referred for a Full Individual Evaluation (FIE).

Following parental consent, evaluations are completed within timelines established by state and federal law.

Eligibility and services are determined through the ARD Committee process.

Tuition

There is no cost for students receiving services through the ECSE pathway.

State-Funded Prekindergarten Pathway

Description

Texas law requires school districts to provide Prekindergarten services to eligible students.

Students who qualify under Texas Education Code eligibility requirements may participate in the HPISD Prekindergarten Program at no cost.

Students enrolled through this pathway participate in the same blended classrooms as ECSE students and tuition-based peer models.

Eligibility

To be eligible, a child must:

- Be three or four years old on or before September 1 of the current school year; and
- Meet at least one eligibility criterion established by the State of Texas.
 - Language: unable to speak and comprehend English based upon an administered assessment
 - Income: Qualifies for the national free or reduced-price lunch program (income at or below federal poverty guidelines)
 - Homelessness: Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
 - Foster Care: Is currently, or was previously, in the conservatorship of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (or another state's foster care system)
 - Military Family: Is the child of an active-duty military member, or a member hurt/killed on active duty
 - First Responder: Is the child of a person eligible for the Star of Texas Award (police, firefighter, or emergency medical first responder)
 - Public School Teacher: Has a parent or guardian employed as a classroom teacher at a public primary or secondary school in the same school district.

Current eligibility criteria and required documentation can be found on the TEA Prekindergarten Eligibility website.

Child Find

HPISD maintains an ongoing Child Find process.

If concerns arise regarding a student's development, the district may recommend additional supports or discuss the possibility of an evaluation with the parent or guardian.

Tuition

There is no cost for students who qualify through the State-Funded Prekindergarten pathway.

Tuition-Based Peer Model Pathway

Description

A limited number of tuition-based seats are available for students who serve as peer models within the blended Prekindergarten environment.

These students participate in all instructional activities and benefit from the same high-quality curriculum and learning experiences provided throughout the Prekindergarten Program.

Eligibility

Students must:

- Be three or four years old by September 1
- Be residents of Highland Park, or
- Be children of full-time professional HPISD employees
- Demonstrate age-appropriate developmental skills
- Participate independently within the classroom environment

Toileting Expectations

Tuition-based peer model students are expected to demonstrate age-appropriate independent toileting skills prior to enrollment.

Occasional accidents are developmentally appropriate and expected.

A student in Prekindergarten is deemed not potty-trained if they have three or more accidents in a single week or need consistent daily assistance with toileting needs such as wiping or clothing adjustments.

If toileting concerns significantly interfere with a student's ability to participate safely and successfully in the school day, staff will collaborate with families to develop a support plan which may include temporary dismissal from the program for up to one month, or permanent dismissal from the program if a solution cannot be found.

Selection Process

Tuition-based seats are limited and are offered on a first-come, first-served basis based upon available openings within the program.

Students attending as three-year-olds receive priority consideration for available four-year-old placements the following year.

Tuition and Payment Information

For the 2026–2027 school year:

- Annual Tuition: \$11,000
- Semester Tuition: \$5,500

- Monthly Tuition: \$1,100
- Tuition for children of full-time, professional HPISD Staff is reduced based upon child's age and employee's job title. Email Ericca Vandagriff for exact amounts.

A non-refundable deposit equal to one month's tuition is required to secure placement.

The deposit will be applied toward the final month's tuition.

Additional payment procedures, withdrawal deadlines, and processing fees are outlined in the Prekindergarten Tuition Agreement.

Enrollment Process

Families must first receive notification of placement before beginning district enrollment.

Families will receive notification of placement via a confirmation email before beginning district enrollment. Enrollment requirements include:

- Birth certificate
- Immunization records or approved exemption documentation
- Proof of residency indicating the home is within Highland Park ISD boundaries
- Parent ID
- Custody or legal documents (if applicable)

Parents will receive notification from the campus registrar once enrollment is complete and verified.

Students may not begin school until enrollment requirements have been completed and approved.

Attendance

Regular daily attendance is a vital component of a child's success in the Prekindergarten Program. For young learners, the consistency of a daily routine fosters a sense of security and belonging, providing the essential foundation for both social-emotional growth and academic readiness. Consistent participation in classroom activities and peer interactions allows students to build lasting relationships and master foundational skills in a sequential, developmental manner.

Students are expected to attend school daily unless an absence is necessary due to illness or other approved reasons. In the event of an absence, parents or guardians must notify the campus office as early as possible on the day of the absence to establish a clear record for the school.

If attendance concerns arise, campus staff will work with families to determine appropriate supports and next steps.

Students receiving ECSE services will attend according to their IEP and ARD Committee decisions.

Withdraw from Program

For students who withdraw from the district, and are paying tuition, tuition will be prorated based on the cutoff date of the 15th of the month. The prorated amount will be either half or full month's tuition. The parent/guardian must submit a written notice to withdraw to the Director of Early Childhood one month prior to the termination of agreement. Deposits are non-refundable.

Curriculum and Instruction

Instruction is aligned to:

- Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines
- HPISD Prekindergarten Curriculum
- Individual student learning goals

Students engage in:

- Literacy
- Language development
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social studies
- Fine arts
- Social-emotional learning
- Physical development
- Play-based exploration

Learning occurs through a combination of whole-group instruction, small-group instruction, learning centers, outdoor play, and individualized support.

Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Teachers regularly assess student growth and development throughout the school year.

Families will receive information regarding student progress through:

- Parent conferences
- Progress reports
- Ongoing communication from teachers

Students receiving special education services will also receive progress reporting related to IEP goals.

Daily Schedule

Each campus provides a daily schedule that includes:

- Arrival and welcome activities
- Morning meeting
- Small-group instruction
- Whole-group instruction
- Learning centers
- Outdoor play
- Lunch
- Rest time
- Specials classes including Art, Music, Library, PE, and Spanish

- Story time
- Dismissal

Schedules may vary slightly by campus.

Tips for a Smooth Drop-off

Starting Prekindergarten is a big milestone! If your child experiences "first-day jitters," here are a few tips:

- **Keep goodbyes short and sweet:** A quick, confident goodbye helps your child feel secure that you will be back.
- **Create a ritual:** Establishing a consistent "goodbye wave" or a special handshake can make the transition easier.
- **Trust the team:** Our staff is experienced in helping children settle in. We will always reach out if your child needs extra comfort during the morning transition.

Lunch and Snacks

Students should bring a lunch unless otherwise directed by the campus.

Classroom snacks will be provided.

To help your child feel independent and ready for the day, please ensure they have the following:

- ☐ **Standard-sized Backpack:** Must fit a standard folder without folding.
- ☐ **Lunch Box:** Must be able to be operated by child.
- ☐ **Water Bottle:** Please label with your child's name.
- ☐ **Extra Clothes:** Keep a Ziploc bag in the backpack with a full change of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) at all times.
- ☐ **Nap Roll/Towel:** Please bring this on Monday of each week to cover your child's nap mat or cot.
- ☐ **Footwear:** Velcro shoes are highly recommended to help your child practice independence.

Health and Safety

Students must meet all state immunization requirements or provide approved exemption documentation.

Students should remain home if they:

- Have had a fever within the previous 24 hours
- Have vomited within the previous 24 hours
- Have symptoms of a communicable illness

Medications are administered according to district policy.

A school nurse is available at each campus.

Student Behavior Expectations

The HPISD Prekindergarten Program utilizes a positive, play-based behavioral framework designed to meet the developmental needs of young children. Our approach focuses on building self-regulation and social-emotional competence within a nurturing environment. We promote these skills through:

- Clear expectations
- Social-emotional learning
- Positive reinforcement
- Problem-solving instruction

When behavioral challenges arise, we are committed to a proactive and collaborative partnership between teachers and families. We believe that by working together, we can identify the underlying needs of the child and develop consistent strategies that support their success both at school and at home.

Students with disabilities will be supported in accordance with their IEP and applicable state and federal laws.

Serious safety concerns may require administrative intervention. Persistent behavior posing a safety threat may lead to suspension or permanent discharge; for tuition-based students, discharge may occur after three formal written warnings from the principal.

Confidentiality

HPISD is deeply committed to protecting the privacy of all students and their families, which is fundamental to creating a safe, trusting, and inclusive school community. This commitment is especially important within our blended classroom environment, where diverse learning needs are supported together.

Student records are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable state laws.

District employees may only share student information with individuals who have a legitimate educational interest.

Families are urged to exercise high discretion and respect the privacy of all students and staff members. Maintaining confidentiality regarding the progress or needs of other children in the program helps preserve the integrity of our supportive learning environment.

Communication & Partnership

We believe that a strong partnership between home and school is the foundation of a great Prekindergarten experience.

- **How We Connect:** You will receive regular updates through our district systems.
- **Response Times:** Our teachers focus on instruction during school hours. They will prioritize responding to parent emails within 24–48 business hours.
- **Urgent Matters:** If you have an urgent change regarding pickup or safety, please call the campus front office directly rather than emailing, to ensure the message is received immediately.
- **Conferences:** We look forward to partnering with you during scheduled conferences to celebrate your child's progress and discuss new milestones.

Prekindergarten Program Contacts

General Questions

Ericca Vandagriff

Director of Early Childhood & Gifted Services

214-780-3087

VandagE@hpsid.org

Tuition and Enrollment

Tina Nettleton

PEIMS and Skyward Coordinator

214-780-3019

NettleT@hpsid.org

Special Education Campus Contacts

Armstrong Elementary

Theresa Parada, Special Education Coordinator

214-780-3192

ParadaT@hpsid.org

Boone Elementary

Fatima Alibhai, Special Education Coordinator

214-780-4190

AlibhaF@hpsid.org

Bradfield Elementary

J'Aime Balogh, Special Education Coordinator

214-780-3294

BaloghJ@hpsid.org

Hyer Elementary

Rachel Funderburg, Special Education Coordinator

214-780-4391

FunderRa@hpsid.org

University Park Elementary

Jacqueline Holland, Special Education Coordinator

214-780-3494

HollanJa@hpsid.org