



Family Handbook

First Step Preschool
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[First Step Preschool](https://firststep.parmacityschools.org/)

<https://firststep.parmacityschools.org/>





Parma City School District Administration

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First Step Preschool Administration

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The policies and procedures outlined in this Family Handbook have been board approved.

The Parma City School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, political beliefs, marital status, disability, or creed when hiring staff or enrolling children in the First Step Preschool Program.

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WELCOME

Welcome to Parma City School District's First Step Preschool. The program is for preschoolers ages 3-5 who reside in Parma, Parma Heights, or Seven Hills. We serve preschoolers with and without special needs. First Step Preschool has been designed to enhance and enrich the development of each child with the recognition of each student as a unique individual, worthy of the opportunity to reach their potential. We strive to provide a fun, safe, and enriching environment for all children in our care.

You are asked to refer to this Family Handbook as needed, as its purpose is to provide consistency when dealing with situations as they arise.

PHILOSOPHY

Our goal is to provide a safe, enjoyable, enriching, developmentally-appropriate learning environment, while supporting the emotional well-being of every child by offering opportunities for social interaction and learning experiences.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Our First Step Preschool is designed to meet the needs of young children, ages 3-5 via a continuum of least restrictive services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that ensures eligible children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION AND IEP SERVICES

Preschoolers who are suspected of having a disability may be evaluated to determine whether they are eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Eligibility is determined by a team of qualified professionals, including the child's parent/guardian, based on a comprehensive evaluation documented in an Evaluation Team Report (ETR).

A preschool aged child may be determined eligible under an applicable disability category, including autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment including blindness, or developmental delay.

If the child is determined eligible and requires special education and related services, the IEP team, including the parent/guardian, develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) designed to provide the child with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Parents/guardians will be provided a copy of Ohio's *A Guide to Parent Rights in Special Education* (Procedural Safeguards Notice) as required by law. The notice will be provided in the parent's/guardian's native language or other mode of communication, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. The District will provide appropriate translation or other assistance as necessary to ensure parents/guardians understand their procedural safeguards.

Children who reside within the Parma City School District Boundary and receive Early Intervention services may transition to preschool special education services as they approach age three. Parents or guardians who have concerns about their preschool-aged child's development may also contact First Step Preschool to request information about screening and the special education evaluation process.

First Step provides a continuum of preschool special education services designed to meet each child's individual needs in the least restrictive environment. Depending on the child's IEP, services may include itinerant services, inclusive preschool programming, center-based special education services, and structured teaching services.

The Parma City School District is responsible for identifying, locating, and evaluating children with suspected disabilities who may be eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a parent/guardian, staff member, or other individual suspects that a child may have a disability and may need special education and related services, they are encouraged to contact First Step Preschool at 440-885-8645 or the PCSD Office of Exceptional Students at 440-885-8788.

PEER MODELS

Peer models are an important part of First Step Preschool's inclusive learning environment. Families interested in having their child participate as a peer model may complete a Peer Model Application, available on the Parma City Schools website. Applicants participate in a screening process conducted by the First Step Preschool team to help determine whether the program is an appropriate fit for the child. Following screening, children may be offered placement, asked to participate in additional screening at a later time, or not offered placement.

Peer models must be 3–5 years of age and residents of Parma, Parma Heights, or Seven Hills. Peer models should demonstrate age-appropriate independence with self-care skills, including being toilet-trained or actively working toward independent toileting. Families are responsible for applicable tuition, any supplies related to self-care needs, and transportation.

Peer model placements are limited and are based on the screening process and available openings; therefore, placement is not guaranteed. When all available peer model openings have been filled, applicants may be placed on a waitlist. Waitlist priority is determined by the order in which the required Peer Model Application and Contract are completed.

COMMUNICATION

First Step Preschool values open and ongoing communication with families. Program information and important updates are shared through a variety of methods, including the designated family bulletin board located at First Step Preschool, electronic communications, and the Parma City Schools website. The **First Step Family Handbook** and other program information are also available online. Parents/guardians of children enrolled in First Step Preschool are permitted unlimited access to the school during the preschool's hours of operation to contact their child, evaluate the care provided by the program, evaluate the premises, or for other purposes approved by the preschool director. Upon entering the school, parents/guardians must report to the preschool office.

Teachers communicate with families through a variety of methods, which may include in-person or virtual conferences, phone calls, written communication, and electronic communication. Families will receive regular information about their child's developmental progress, and parent/guardian-teacher conferences will be offered at least twice each school year. Families are encouraged to share information about changes or circumstances that may affect their child's learning, behavior, or well-being so that staff can provide appropriate support.

Preschool classrooms follow developmentally appropriate daily routines that typically include circle time, motor time, center time, and snack/self-care time. Individual classroom schedules may vary based on the needs of the students and the instructional program.

Families are encouraged to contact their child's teacher with questions or concerns. Additional questions or concerns regarding the First Step Preschool program may be directed to the First Step Preschool administration at 440-885-8645.

STATE LICENSING AND STEP UP TO QUALITY (SUTQ)

State Licensing

First Step Preschool is licensed and inspected by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) and operates in accordance with applicable Ohio laws and school-based preschool licensing requirements. First Step maintains required staff-to-child ratios, group sizes, staffing qualifications, and preschool special education caseloads in accordance with applicable state requirements. Services for preschool children with disabilities are provided in accordance with Ohio's special education rules and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

First Step Preschool staff meet applicable state requirements for qualifications, background checks, orientation, health and safety training, and ongoing professional development. Preschool staff members are required to maintain current age-appropriate first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training. The program also ensures that personnel with required training in the recognition and management of communicable disease or illness and child abuse recognition and prevention are readily available as required by Ohio law.

First Step Preschool has full-time Clinic Staff onsite during preschool hours to support the health and medical needs of students. Medication is administered by appropriately qualified or trained personnel in accordance with applicable Ohio law, preschool licensing requirements, and District procedures. Please see the Health and Medical section of this handbook for additional information regarding health services and medication administration.

First Step Preschool maintains required policies and procedures addressing the health, safety, supervision, care, and education of children. Required emergency procedures and emergency contact information are maintained and posted as required. First-aid supplies are readily available, and applicable health and safety information, including the current DCY Communicable Disease Chart, is posted and maintained in accordance with state requirements.

Step Up To Quality (SUTQ)

First Step Preschool participates in Ohio's Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) program, Ohio's quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs. SUTQ recognizes programs that meet quality standards beyond minimum health and safety licensing requirements. First Step Preschool is committed to ongoing professional learning and continuous improvement to support high-quality early learning experiences for children and families.

Licensing, Inspection Reports, and Complaints

First Step Preschool's licensing and inspection information is available through the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY). Families may obtain copies of preschool inspection reports and information regarding the program's licensing record through DCY. Questions or complaints regarding the operation of a licensed preschool program may also be submitted to DCY. Additional information regarding preschool licensing, inspection reports, and the complaint process is available through the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. Ohio licensing rules require the parent handbook to tell families how to obtain inspection reports and file a complaint with DCY. To file a complaint, please contact our state's Ombudsman 614-466-5203, 844-234-KIDS, childcarepolicy@childrenand youth.ohio.gov. To obtain a copy of First Step's most recent inspection report, please contact info@childrenand youth.ohio.gov. Publicly, one can learn more about the most recent inspection(s) process by the Department of Children and Youth at their website.

<https://childcaresearch.ohio.gov/>

HOURS OF OPERATION

The First Step Preschool Calendar is available on our school website and is sent home in our annual orientation packet. Disclaimer: First Step Calendar dates/times are subject to change.

As part of PCSD, First Step follows the district calendar with modified days at the beginning and end of the school year. Center-based program runs Tuesday through Friday, with two sessions:
AM Session from 8:15-11:00 AM
PM Session from 11:50-2:35 PM

The IEP team schedules itinerant hours and location(s) in compliance with IEP services and minutes. Kindergarten Launch Academy (KLA) runs Monday through Friday from 9:00-1:45 PM

PCSD ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance is important to help children benefit from consistent instruction, routines, and services. Daily attendance is recorded for all First Step Preschool students in accordance with Ohio preschool licensing requirements. Enrollment, admission, transition, and withdrawal information is maintained in accordance with applicable District and state requirements.

If your child will be absent, please notify the First Step Preschool Attendance Line at 440-885-8645. If your child receives PCSD transportation, please also notify PCSD Transportation at 440-885-8336 and provide your child's first and last name and bus number.

Children who are ill should remain home when appropriate to protect their health and the health of others. Please refer to the "Should I Keep My Child Home From School Today?" section of this handbook for information regarding symptoms and illnesses that may require a child to remain home.

When Parma City Schools are closed due to inclement weather, a power outage, or another emergency, First Step Preschool will also be closed, and preschool programs and activities will be canceled.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Preschool Curriculum

First Step Preschool implements **The Creative Curriculum**, a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum aligned with Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards. The curriculum provides children with opportunities to develop skills across developmental and learning domains through purposeful play, hands-on exploration, classroom studies, and teacher-guided learning experiences.

Classroom environments are designed to encourage active learning, exploration, communication, creativity, and independence. Teachers use developmentally appropriate materials, manipulatives, learning centers, and play-based experiences to support each child's individual needs, interests, and abilities. First Step staff follow the District's board-adopted preschool curriculum and curriculum map.

Social-Emotional Learning

First Step Preschool incorporates the Second Step Early Learning curriculum to support children's social-emotional development. Through developmentally appropriate activities embedded throughout the preschool day, children practice skills such as listening and paying attention, identifying and managing emotions, solving problems, and developing positive relationships with peers and adults.

Staff follow the established curriculum scope and sequence and provide opportunities for children to practice these skills throughout their daily routines. Family resources may also be provided to help reinforce social-emotional learning at home.

Outdoor Play and Screen Time

First Step Preschool provides opportunities for indoor and outdoor gross-motor activity as part of the daily preschool program. Children will participate in outdoor activities when weather and environmental conditions are appropriate and safe. When outdoor play is not appropriate due to weather, temperature, air quality, or other safety conditions, opportunities for gross-motor activity will be provided indoors.

Screen time is limited and used only when it supports developmentally appropriate instructional activities. The use of assistive technology, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), and other supports required by a child's IEP is not considered recreational screen time and will be provided in accordance with the child's IEP. Screens will not be used during meals or snacks.

Enrichment Opportunities

First Step Preschool provides enrichment opportunities designed to complement the preschool curriculum. Children participate in developmentally appropriate art experiences provided by a PCSD Art Teacher. Art activities may connect with classroom studies and provide opportunities for children to explore a variety of materials, techniques, and artists. Preschoolers also have opportunities to participate in STEM and library experiences. Through hands-on, play-based activities, children explore early concepts in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Children may also check out books from the First Step library. Families are asked to return borrowed books before another book is checked out. First Step does not charge library fines.

Related Services

Preschoolers with IEPs may receive related services when determined necessary by the IEP team to support the child's education. Related services may include, as appropriate, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, orientation and mobility services, and services for students with visual or hearing impairments.

The type, frequency, duration, location, and delivery of related services are determined by the child's IEP team and documented in the child's IEP. Services may be provided individually or in a group and may occur within the classroom or in another appropriate setting based on the child's individual needs.

When communication with an outside or private provider is requested, a signed Consent for Release and Exchange of Information is required before First Step staff may exchange personally identifiable information with that provider. Families with questions regarding Medicaid School Program billing may contact the PCSD Office of Exceptional Students.

Snack

Children may bring a labeled water bottle and a **nut-free snack** to preschool. Glass containers are not permitted in preschool classrooms for safety reasons. Families are encouraged to provide nutritious, developmentally appropriate snacks. When a snack is provided by First Step, it will include foods from two food groups in accordance with applicable preschool licensing requirements.

If a child does not bring a snack, First Step will provide one. Families should notify First Step of any food allergies or dietary needs so that appropriate precautions can be taken. Snacks containing nuts or that do not meet First Step's allergy-safety requirements will be sent home and an appropriate snack will be provided.

Supplies and Clothing

A current preschool supply list is available on the Parma City Schools website. Families should provide any diapers, pull-ups, wipes, or other personal care supplies their child may need. All center-based preschoolers should also have a labeled change of clothing available at school.

Because preschoolers participate in active indoor and outdoor learning experiences, children should wear comfortable clothing appropriate for the weather and activities planned for the day. Tennis shoes or other secure, closed-toe shoes are strongly encouraged. Crocs, flip-flops, slippers, and other footwear that may create a safety concern during active play are not permitted.

Families who need assistance obtaining preschool supplies are encouraged to contact the First Step Preschool office.

Kindergarten Launch Academy (KLA)

Kindergarten Launch Academy (KLA) is an optional prekindergarten program for children who will enter kindergarten the following school year. Participation requires an application. KLA operates Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

For the 2026–2027 school year, tuition for KLA students with IEPs is \$700, including a \$50 deposit, plus the applicable \$40 school fee. Tuition for KLA students without IEPs is \$1,500, including a \$50 deposit, plus the applicable \$40 school fee. KLA does not accept Cuyahoga County child care vouchers as payment.

For children with IEPs, participation in KLA will be coordinated, as appropriate, with the child's IEP team to ensure the child's special education and related services are provided in accordance with the IEP.

PCSD Nutrition Services provides lunch for KLA students. Families may also send a cold lunch, a nut-free snack, and a labeled water bottle.

First Step Preschool Fees

A \$20 annual supply fee is assessed for center-based preschool students and is used to support the purchase of instructional and consumable supplies. Payment information will be provided to families at the beginning of the school year.

Peer model tuition is \$800 per school year and may be paid in quarterly installments. Families are responsible for maintaining required tuition payments for continued participation in the peer model program. First Step Preschool does not accept Cuyahoga County child care vouchers as payment.

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESS MONITORING

First Step Preschool uses developmental screening, assessment, progress monitoring, and information from families to better understand each child's strengths and needs, guide instruction, and monitor growth and development.

BRIGANCE Screening

All students participating in center-based preschool will be screened within 60 days of their start date using the BRIGANCE Early Childhood Developmental Screener. The screening supports applicable state developmental screening requirements and provides information about each child's developmental strengths and needs to help teachers establish a baseline and guide instruction and support.

Childhood Outcome Summary (COS)

For preschoolers with IEPs who meet applicable state reporting requirements, the Childhood Outcome Summary (COS) process is used to describe the child's functioning across federally established child outcome areas. Information from multiple sources, including parent/guardian input, is considered as part of the COS process. Required COS information is reported to the state in accordance with Ohio reporting requirements.

Early Learning Assessment (ELA)

The Early Learning Assessment (ELA) is used to gather information about a child's development and learning and to help teachers plan appropriate instruction and supports. Preschool students who meet Ohio's assessment requirements participate in the ELA in accordance with state requirements. Staff use observations and other evidence collected during everyday activities to assess children's skills across developmental and learning domains.

IEP Progress Reports

Parents/guardians of children with IEPs receive regular progress reports describing their child's progress toward the annual goals identified in the IEP. Progress reports are provided in accordance with the schedule identified in the child's IEP. Families with questions about their child's progress are encouraged to contact the child's case manager and/or related service provider.

Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG)

Center-based preschool students participate in ongoing developmental assessment using Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG). Teachers use observations and documentation gathered during everyday classroom activities to monitor children's growth and development and to inform instructional planning. Families receive information regarding their child's developmental progress through TSG reports twice each school year.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

First Step Preschool is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children, families, staff, and visitors. Exterior school doors remain locked during the school day. Visitors must follow District safety procedures, including presenting photo identification, signing in, and obtaining a visitor badge before entering the preschool area. Parents/guardians continue to have unlimited access to the preschool during its hours of operation in accordance with Ohio preschool licensing requirements and must report to the preschool office upon entering the building.

Emergency Preparedness and Safety Drills

First Step Preschool maintains emergency and safety procedures in accordance with applicable state requirements and District safety protocols. Staff receive required emergency preparedness and safety training, and children participate in developmentally appropriate safety and emergency drills, including evacuation, fire, tornado, and other required school safety drills. Drills are conducted and documented in accordance with applicable requirements.

Emergency Contacts and Student Release

Families are required to maintain current emergency contact and authorized release information for their child. Emergency contacts should include individuals other than the child's parent/guardian who may be contacted if a parent/guardian cannot be reached.

Children will be released only to a parent/guardian or other individual authorized to pick up the child. Families are responsible for notifying First Step Preschool of any changes to emergency contacts or authorized individuals. Photo identification may be required before a child is released to an individual whose identity is not known to staff.

Family Directory

Families may choose whether to share their contact information with other families for purposes such as playdates and family communication. Permission to include contact information in a class directory may be provided or declined on the appropriate First Step form. Any family directory or class roster information will be maintained and shared in accordance with applicable privacy and preschool licensing requirements.

Itinerant Services

For children receiving itinerant special education or related services, the location of services is determined through the IEP process based on the child's individual needs and applicable special education requirements. Services may be provided at First Step Preschool, the child's community preschool or other educational setting, or another appropriate location as determined by the IEP team.

Personal Belongings and Electronic Devices

First Step Preschool provides the instructional materials and supplies needed for classroom activities. Families are asked not to send toys or other personal items to preschool unless requested or approved by staff. Items that may present a health or safety concern, including make-up, nail polish, perfume, batteries, or similar items, should not be brought to preschool. When a child benefits from a familiar item or other support for transition, families are encouraged to work with the child's teacher or IEP team to identify an appropriate strategy or support.

Buying, selling, or trading personal items is not permitted at preschool. Families are encouraged to label permitted personal belongings. First Step Preschool is not responsible for personal items that are lost, damaged, or misplaced.

Students may not use personal cellular phones or other personal electronic communication devices during preschool unless their use is authorized as an educational, communication, accessibility, or disability-related support. Assistive technology and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices required by a child's IEP or Section 504 Plan will be available and used in accordance with the child's plan.

PCSD Care of Property Statement and Suspension Policy

First Step Preschool uses positive, developmentally appropriate approaches to support student behavior and promote a safe and nurturing learning environment. When behavioral concerns arise, staff will work with the child and family to identify appropriate supports and interventions. For children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), staff will implement behavioral supports consistent with the child's plan and applicable disability laws.

Ohio law generally limits out-of-school suspension and expulsion for students in preschool through third grade. Suspension, expulsion, or emergency removal may occur only when permitted by Ohio law and Parma City School District Board of Education policy. When such action is necessary, the District will follow all applicable procedural safeguards and due process requirements. Additional protections apply to students with disabilities under IDEA.

PCSD Parent Right to Know

You may request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child(ren)'s classroom teacher and paraprofessionals. Additional information regarding educator certification and licensure is available through the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce.

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITIONS

First Step Preschool works with families to support a positive transition from preschool to kindergarten. Throughout the school year, families will receive information and opportunities to learn about kindergarten programs, registration, expectations, and the transition process. Families are encouraged to ask questions and communicate with First Step staff and appropriate PCSD representatives as they prepare for this important transition.

When possible, center-based preschool classrooms provide opportunities for children to build relationships with peers who may attend their neighborhood school. These experiences can support social-emotional development, a sense of belonging, and familiarity with peers as children prepare for kindergarten.

For children with IEPs, transition planning will occur through the IEP process as appropriate. The IEP team will consider the child's individual strengths and needs when developing the IEP and determining appropriate special education services and supports for kindergarten.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND PTA

First Step Preschool recognizes families as important partners in their child's education and encourages meaningful family involvement throughout the school year. Family engagement opportunities are offered during the year to strengthen connections among children, families, staff, and the preschool community.

Families may have opportunities to volunteer and participate in classroom celebrations, special activities, and other preschool events. Volunteers must follow PCSD and First Step Preschool procedures, including completing required volunteer documentation and following school safety and visitor procedures. Volunteers must sign in and out of the building and present photo identification as required.

To ensure that scheduled preschool instruction and IEP services are provided, PTA-sponsored field trips and similar activities may be offered on a voluntary basis outside of regular preschool instructional hours or on days when preschool is not in session. Families will receive information regarding these opportunities in advance.

For any preschool-sponsored swimming or water activity requiring parental permission under Ohio preschool licensing requirements, written permission from the child's parent/guardian will be obtained before the child participates.

First Step Preschool is supported by an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that provides opportunities for families to become involved in the preschool community. The PTA holds meetings, supports family engagement activities, and provides additional opportunities for families to participate throughout the school year. Information about PTA meetings, events, and activities is shared through school communications, flyers, and other approved communication platforms.

DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

List of Community Preschool Providers

Per our interagency agreement, First Step partners with community programs. A list of Preschools in our community is accessible on our website. Other agencies include Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Cuyahoga County Local Education Agencies, Family and Children First Council of Cuyahoga County, Bright Beginnings, Starting Point for Child Care and Early Education, Step Forward - Early Head Start & Head Start, and The Centers - Head Start and Early Head Start Grantee for Catholic Charities. Per PCSD Policy, to share information with these agencies, First Step parents are required to sign a PCSD Consent for Release and Exchange of Information Form for 2-way communication and any relevant preschool information.

Partnerships

First Step has partnerships with various stakeholders in our community. Information from our Cuyahoga Community Libraries, local colleges and universities, and food pantries will be distributed to families electronically and/or via hard copies.

PCSD Supports

Parent Mentor and Home Liaison supports are also available. Please contact our First Step office and/or PCSD Office of Exceptional Students for more information.

NOTIFYING OF AUTHORITIES

First Step Preschool will follow State and District Policy requiring all professional school staff to report any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect. PCSD Staff are trained in Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting. Staff will also notify the police if they suspect a person is under the influence or impaired when dropping off and/or picking up children from the program.

NONDISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The Parma City School District Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age (except as authorized by law), religion, military status, ancestry, or genetic information in its educational programs or activities. Equal educational opportunities are available to all students in accordance with Board Policy 2260.

Parents/guardians and other members of the school community are encouraged to promptly report concerns regarding unlawful discrimination or retaliation to a teacher, administrator, or other District official. Reports may also be made directly to either of the District's Civil Rights Compliance Officers:

C. Patrick Hoy

Director of Human Resources
7377 Chateau Drive
Parma, Ohio 44130
440-885-2320

Dr. Amy Cruse

Assistant Superintendent
7377 Chateau Drive
Parma, Ohio 44130
440-885-8784

The District prohibits retaliation against an individual for reporting discrimination, filing a complaint, participating in an investigation or proceeding, or otherwise exercising rights protected by Federal or State civil rights law.

Complaints of sex discrimination or sexual harassment covered by Board Policy 2266 will be addressed through the District's Title IX procedures. Disability discrimination complaints may also be addressed in accordance with Board Policy 2260.01.

Please refer to Board Policy 2260 – Nondiscrimination and Access to Equal Educational Opportunity for the District's complete nondiscrimination policy and complaint procedures.

SECTION 504/ADA – NONDISCRIMINATION BASED ON DISABILITY

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. The Parma City School District does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in admission or access to, participation in, or treatment in its programs and activities.

The District is committed to identifying, evaluating, and providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students within its jurisdiction who are eligible under Section 504. Appropriate services may include regular or special education and related aids, services, accommodations, or other supports necessary to meet the student's individual needs. The District Section 504 Compliance Officers/ADA Coordinators are:

C. Patrick Hoy

Director of Human Resources
7377 Chateau Drive
Parma, Ohio 44130
440-885-2320

Megan McCaskey

Director, Office of Exceptional Students
6800 Commonwealth Blvd.
Parma Heights, Ohio 44130
440-885-8788

Parents/guardians who believe that discrimination based on disability has occurred may contact a District Section 504/ADA Compliance Officer. The District provides procedures for the prompt and equitable resolution of Section 504/ADA complaints, as well as procedural safeguards regarding the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of students with disabilities.

Please refer to Board Policy 2260.01 – Section 504/ADA Prohibition Against Discrimination Based on Disability for the complete policy, complaint procedures, and procedural safeguards.

TITLE IX – NONDISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEX IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES

The Parma City School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs or activities, including admission and employment, as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and its implementing regulations. Sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, is prohibited.

The Board of Education has designated the following individuals as Title IX Coordinators to oversee and coordinate the District's compliance with Title IX:

Megan McCaskey

Director, Office of Exceptional Students
6800 Commonwealth Blvd.
Parma Heights, OH 44130
440-885-8788
mccaskeym@parmacityschools.org

C. Patrick Hoy

Director, Human Resources
7377 Chateau Drive
Parma, OH 44130
440-885-2320
hoyc@parmacityschools.org

Any person may report sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, whether or not the person reporting is the person alleged to have experienced the conduct. Reports may be made in person, by mail, telephone, or email using the contact information above and may be made at any time, including outside normal business hours.

Questions concerning Title IX or the application of Title IX to the District may be directed to either Title IX Coordinator or to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Additional information regarding Title IX, reporting procedures, supportive measures, and the District's grievance process is available in Board Policy 2266 Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities and on the District's Title IX webpage.

REGISTRATION

All children attending First Step Preschool must be registered with the Parma City School District and provide required enrollment information in accordance with District procedures and applicable law. Families needing assistance with registration should contact the District's Registration and Enrollment Office or First Step Preschool.

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS-McKINNEY-VENTO

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides educational protections and supports for children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. These protections apply to eligible preschool-aged children as well as school-aged students.

Children experiencing homelessness may be entitled to immediate enrollment and other supports even when records or documents normally required for enrollment are not immediately available.

McKinney-Vento protections may also include the right to remain in the child's preschool or school of origin when doing so is in the child's best interest, as well as assistance with transportation and access to educational services.

Families experiencing temporary or unstable housing are encouraged to contact the PCSD Homeless Education Liaison for assistance. Additional information is available through the Parma City School District and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce.

Please refer to Board Policy 5111 and applicable District procedures for additional information regarding enrollment and the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness.

This is especially worth making preschool-specific because Ohio DEW expressly states that McKinney-Vento applies to preschoolers and that ESSA expanded "school of origin" to include preschool. Ohio also specifically says the law is intended to ensure preschoolers experiencing homelessness have equal access to public education and requires every district to have a homeless education liaison.

STUDENT RECORDS, PRIVACY, AND DIRECTORY INFORMATION

Student Records and FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Ohio law protect the privacy of student education records. Generally, personally identifiable information from a student's education records may not be disclosed without the written consent of the parent/guardian, except as otherwise permitted or required by law.

Student records are available to students and their parents/guardians, eligible students, school officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the information, and other individuals or organizations as permitted by law.

Unless otherwise provided by court order or law, both parents have equal access to a student's education records.

Parents/guardians have rights under FERPA regarding the inspection and review of their child's education records, requests to amend records they believe are inaccurate or misleading, consent to certain disclosures of personally identifiable information, and the right to file a complaint concerning alleged violations of FERPA.

Please refer to Board Policy 8330 Student Records and the District's annual FERPA notice for additional information regarding access to, review of, amendment of, and disclosure of student education records.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION AND OPT-OUT

The District has designated certain information as directory information, which may be disclosed without prior written consent unless the parent/guardian has notified the District that the information should not be released.

Directory information includes a student's:

- name;
- address;
- telephone number;
- date and place of birth;
- major field of study;
- participation in officially recognized activities and sports;
- height and weight, if a member of an athletic team;
- dates of attendance;
- date of graduation; and
- awards received.

The District also designates a student's District-assigned email account as directory information for the limited purpose of providing access to online educational services used for educational purposes.

District-assigned email accounts will not be released as directory information for other purposes.

Directory information will not be provided to an organization for profit-making purposes.

Parents/guardians may refuse disclosure of any or all directory information by completing and returning the District's [Media & Directory Information Refusal Form](#) to the school office by November 1 of the current school year. For students who enroll later in the school year, the form must be submitted within thirty (30) days after receipt of the District's annual notice.

TRANSPORTATION

First Step Preschool is committed to providing a safe and efficient arrival and dismissal process for all students.

Transportation may be provided for preschool students with IEPs when transportation is determined necessary by the IEP team and documented in the child's IEP. First Step staff will coordinate required transportation information with PCSD Transportation. Families of peer models are responsible for providing transportation to and from preschool. Families of students with or without disabilities may also choose to transport their child as a car rider, as appropriate.

Bus Transportation

Families of students who receive PCSD transportation should have their child ready approximately 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time and maintain a safe, clear path between the home and the school bus, particularly during inclement weather. Families are encouraged to review safe bus behavior with their child. At the beginning of the school year, families may be asked to have their child wear or carry identifying information provided by First Step to assist bus drivers and monitors with transportation routines.

If your child receives PCSD transportation and will be absent from preschool, please notify PCSD Transportation at 440-885-8336 and provide your child's first and last name and bus number.

Arrival and Dismissal

The center-based preschool program operates Tuesday through Friday with two sessions:

AM Session: 8:15 a.m.–11:00 a.m.

PM Session: 11:50 a.m.–2:35 p.m.

The KLA preschool program operates Monday through Friday 9:00-1:45 PM.

First Step Preschool has established arrival and dismissal procedures in collaboration with PCSD Safety and Security to promote the safety of students, families, staff, and drivers. Families are expected to follow designated traffic patterns and

directions provided by staff. Drivers should remain attentive, refrain from using cell phones during the arrival and dismissal process, avoid blocking driveways or designated traffic areas, and display the provided car tag as directed. Children should be released from the vehicle only to a First Step staff member as directed during the arrival process. During dismissal, children will be released only to a parent/guardian or other individual authorized to pick up the child in accordance with First Step's student-release procedures.

Parents/guardians are responsible for appropriately securing and releasing their child from the child's car seat or other passenger-restraint system. First Step staff do not buckle or unbuckle children in family vehicles. Families must follow all applicable traffic, parking, and vehicle-safety requirements and should never leave a child unattended in a vehicle.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL

First Step Preschool is committed to supporting the health, safety, and well-being of all students. Full-time Clinic staff to support students' health and medical needs. Families are encouraged to contact the First Step Health Clinic with questions or to share health information that may affect their child's participation in preschool.

Health and Immunization Records

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing required health and immunization information for their child. In accordance with Ohio preschool licensing requirements, a dated immunization record must be provided prior to admission or no later than 30 days after admission and every 13 months thereafter. The immunization record must include the child's name and date of birth and the date of each immunization. Applicable immunization exemptions will be handled in accordance with Ohio law.

For a child with a disability, failure to provide the required immunization record will be addressed in accordance with applicable preschool licensing and special education requirements. A child with a disability will not be excluded from the preschool program for lack of an immunization record unless the child's IEP or IFSP team has reconvened and applicable requirements, including the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE), have been addressed.

Families should provide First Step with current information regarding their child's health conditions, allergies, dietary or medical needs, and other information necessary to support the child safely at school.

Required medical and health forms will be provided to families as appropriate.

Health and Developmental Screenings

Health and developmental screenings are important components of early childhood care and education. Families are encouraged to maintain regular preventive health care for their child, including appropriate vision, hearing, dental, lead, and other recommended screenings. Families will be notified when specific health documentation or screening information is required for participation in the preschool program.

Dental Care

Regular dental care is encouraged as an important part of a child's overall health and development. Families are encouraged to establish ongoing dental care for their child and complete recommended preventive dental examinations.

Administration of Medication

When medication must be administered during preschool hours, families must follow PCSD medication-administration procedures and complete all required forms. Written instructions from a licensed physician or dentist, as appropriate, must be on file before prescription or nonprescription medication, a food supplement, or medical food is administered at preschool.

Medication will be administered only by appropriately qualified or trained personnel and will be documented as required by Ohio law and District procedures. Medication will be stored securely and inaccessible to children, with appropriate provisions for medications requiring refrigeration and emergency medications.

Families should contact the First Step Health Clinic regarding medication forms, emergency medications, seizure action plans, feeding plans, allergy plans, or other individualized health-care needs.

Handwashing and Hygiene

First Step Preschool promotes frequent and appropriate handwashing to help reduce the spread of illness. Staff and children are encouraged and supported in washing their hands with soap and running water at appropriate times throughout the preschool day.

Preschool staff are required to wash their hands after assisting with toileting or diapering, after cleaning, after using the restroom, before preparing or eating food, before feeding a child, and following contact with nasal or other mucous secretions, in accordance with Ohio preschool licensing requirements.

Hand sanitizer may be used when appropriate but does not replace required handwashing with soap and running water.

Sunscreen and Topical Products

Families are encouraged to apply sunscreen to their child before arriving at preschool when appropriate for planned outdoor activities. If a topical product or lotion is to be applied by preschool staff, parent/guardian permission is required, and the product will be used according to the manufacturer's instructions and applicable District procedures. Parent permission is not required under the preschool licensing rule for the use of hand sanitizer by children older than 24 months.

Healthchek

Healthchek, also known as Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT), is Ohio Medicaid's preventive health-care benefit for eligible children and young adults. Healthchek provides access to preventive services and medically necessary follow-up care to help identify and address health concerns early.

Families enrolled in Ohio Medicaid may obtain additional information about Healthchek services through their Medicaid managed care plan, county Healthchek coordinator, or the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

Injury and Incident Reports

Parents/guardians will receive written notification on the day an injury or health/safety incident involving their child occurs, as required by Ohio preschool licensing requirements. First Step will document injuries and incidents and maintain required records.

Serious incidents that meet Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) reporting requirements will also be reported to DCY through the Ohio statewide licensing system within the required timeframe. Student information will be maintained in accordance with applicable privacy requirements.

Illness and Communicable Disease

First Step Preschool follows Ohio preschool licensing requirements for the recognition and management of communicable disease and illness. A person trained to recognize common signs of communicable disease or other illness will observe children as they enter the group each day.

Families should not send a child to preschool when the child is experiencing symptoms that require exclusion under applicable health requirements. If a child becomes ill during the preschool day, the child will be cared for in accordance with First Step's communicable-disease procedures. When required, the child will be separated from the group in a safe and comfortable location within sight and hearing of a staff member, and the parent/guardian will be contacted promptly.

Families are asked to notify First Step Preschool when their child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease or condition so that appropriate health and safety procedures can be followed. When children have been exposed to a diagnosed communicable disease, First Step will provide required notification to affected families while protecting student confidentiality and will follow applicable guidance from public-health authorities.

Please refer to the “Should I Keep My Child Home From School Today?” and “Management of Communicable Disease” sections of this handbook for additional information regarding symptoms, exclusion from preschool, return to school, and communicable-disease procedures.

SHOULD I KEEP MY CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL TODAY?

Families should keep children home when they are experiencing symptoms that may indicate a communicable disease or when they are not well enough to participate comfortably in the preschool day.

Please keep your child home and contact the First Step Preschool Clinic if your child is experiencing any of the following:

- Diarrhea, including three or more abnormally loose stools within a 24-hour period
- Severe coughing that causes the child to become red or blue in the face or make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Redness of the eye or eyelid with thick or pus-like drainage, matted eyelashes, burning, itching, or eye pain
- A temperature of 100°F or higher when accompanied by other signs or symptoms of illness
- Untreated infected skin patches
- Unusually dark urine or gray or white stool
- A stiff neck with an elevated temperature
- Evidence of untreated lice, scabies, or another parasitic infestation
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Vomiting more than one time or vomiting accompanied by another sign or symptom of illness
- Unusual spots or rashes
- Other symptoms that prevent the child from comfortably participating in normal preschool activities

First Step Preschool staff will notify a parent/guardian when a child develops signs or symptoms of illness while at preschool. Families should ensure that a parent/guardian or authorized emergency contact is available to pick up the child when necessary.

Families are asked to notify the First Step Preschool Clinic when their child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease or condition so that appropriate precautions and required notifications can be completed.

Return to preschool will be determined based on the child’s symptoms, applicable Ohio preschool licensing requirements, the current Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) Communicable Disease Chart, and any applicable guidance from public-health or medical professionals. Families should contact the First Step Preschool Clinic with questions regarding when their child may return.

Management of Communicable Disease

First Step Preschool follows Ohio Administrative Code 5180:2-20-11 and the current DCY 08087 Communicable Disease Chart for the recognition and management of communicable disease and illness. A person trained to recognize common signs of communicable disease or other illness will observe children as they enter the group each day.

When a child develops signs or symptoms of illness, First Step Preschool will promptly notify the child’s parent/guardian. A child who exhibits symptoms requiring immediate exclusion under Ohio preschool licensing requirements will be separated from the group and discharged to a parent/guardian or other authorized individual as soon as practical. These symptoms include:

- Diarrhea consisting of three or more abnormally loose stools within a 24-hour period
- Severe coughing that causes the child to become red or blue in the face or make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes

- Redness of the eye or eyelid with thick or pus-like drainage, matted eyelashes, burning, itching, or eye pain
- A temperature of 100°F taken by the auxiliary method when accompanied by other signs of illness
- Untreated infected skin patches
- Unusually dark urine or gray or white stool
- Stiff neck with an elevated temperature
- Evidence of untreated lice, scabies, or another parasitic infestation
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Vomiting more than one time or vomiting accompanied by another sign or symptom of illness

A child with unusual spots or rashes or an elevated temperature will be immediately separated from the group and carefully observed. The preschool director and the child's parent/guardian will determine whether the child should be discharged immediately or at another appropriate time during the day, consistent with applicable health and licensing requirements.

A child who is separated from the group because of suspected illness will remain in a safe and comfortable area within sight and hearing of an adult at all times. The child will be observed for worsening symptoms until released to a parent/guardian or other authorized individual. Any cot, mat, linens, or other materials used by an ill child will be cleaned, disinfected, or laundered as required before use by another child.

First Step Preschool will follow the current DCY 08087 Communicable Disease Chart when determining appropriate management of suspected communicable diseases. The chart is posted in an area accessible to families and staff as required by Ohio preschool licensing rules.

When First Step becomes aware that children have been exposed to a diagnosed communicable disease, families will be notified as required while maintaining student confidentiality. Notifications and return-to-school guidance will be based on the applicable DCY Communicable Disease Chart and public-health requirements.

CHILD GUIDANCE, POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS, AND STUDENT SAFETY

Bullying and Other Forms of Aggressive Behavior

The Parma City School District Board of Education is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all students. Harassment, intimidation, bullying, and other forms of aggressive behavior toward students are prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying includes any intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical act that a student or group of students exhibits toward another student more than once when the behavior causes mental or physical harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment. Bullying may include conduct that occurs on school property, on school transportation, at school-sponsored activities, or in other circumstances addressed by District policy and Ohio law.

Families are encouraged to promptly report concerns regarding bullying, harassment, intimidation, or aggressive behavior to their child's teacher or a school administrator. Reports will be addressed in accordance with District procedures.

Please refer to Board Policy 5517.01 Bullying and Other Forms of Aggressive Behavior for the complete policy, reporting procedures, and consequences for violations.

First Step Preschool Child Guidance Policy

First Step Preschool is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and developmentally appropriate learning environment. Staff use positive and constructive approaches to help children develop social-emotional skills, communicate their wants and needs, regulate emotions and behavior, solve problems, and develop positive relationships with peers and adults.

In accordance with Ohio preschool licensing requirements, child-guidance strategies are constructive and developmentally appropriate. Strategies may include redirection, helping a child move away from a problem situation, talking with the child about the situation, teaching and practicing replacement skills, and providing positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.

When an individual behavior-management plan is needed, First Step will communicate and consult with the child's parent/guardian before the plan is implemented. The plan will be in writing, signed by the parent/guardian, and consistent with applicable Ohio preschool licensing requirements and the child's IEP, IFSP, or Section 504 Plan, when applicable.

Prohibited Child-Guidance Practices

First Step Preschool does not permit cruel, harsh, corporal, humiliating, frightening, or otherwise inappropriate disciplinary practices. In accordance with Ohio preschool licensing requirements:

- Corporal punishment and unusual punishment, including punching, pinching, shaking, spanking, or biting, are prohibited.
- Discipline will not be delegated to another child.
- A child will not be placed alone in a locked room or otherwise confined in an enclosed area.
- Children will not be subjected to profane language, threats, derogatory remarks about themselves or their families, or other verbal abuse.
- Children will not be disciplined for failure to eat, failure to sleep, or toileting accidents.
- Child-guidance techniques will not humiliate, shame, or frighten a child.
- Food, rest, and toilet use will not be withheld as discipline, and food will not be used as a reward for behavior.
- When separation from a problem situation is used as a child-guidance strategy, it will be brief, developmentally appropriate, and provided in a safe space within sight and hearing of preschool staff.
- Preschool staff will protect children from abuse and neglect and will follow all mandatory reporting requirements when abuse or neglect is suspected.

First Step Preschool's child-guidance policy applies to all persons on the preschool premises and is implemented in accordance with OAC 5180:2-20-10, OAC 3301-35-15, applicable Ohio law, and District policy.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

First Step Preschool implements Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) as a framework for creating a positive, predictable, and supportive learning environment. Staff emphasize prevention, explicitly teach and model expected behaviors, reinforce appropriate behavior, and provide developmentally appropriate support when children need assistance with behavioral or social-emotional skills.

First Step staff use strategies such as pre-teaching expectations, modeling, redirection, teaching replacement skills, positive reinforcement, and other evidence-based supports to promote children's social-emotional development and reduce the need for crisis intervention.

First Step's universal PBIS expectations, behavior matrix, and related supports are taught to children and reinforced throughout the preschool environment.

Restraint and Seclusion

First Step Preschool emphasizes prevention, positive behavior supports, de-escalation, and developmentally appropriate interventions. Physical restraint is not used as a routine behavior-management or disciplinary practice with preschool children.

In accordance with Ohio preschool licensing requirements, a preschool staff member may briefly hold a child only when necessary to help the child regain control and only within the limitations established by Ohio law and District policy. Any physical restraint may be used only as a last resort when the child's behavior poses an immediate risk of physical harm to the child or others and no other safe or effective intervention is available.

Prone restraint, mechanical restraint, chemical restraint, corporal punishment, and restraint used for punishment, discipline, staff convenience, or as a substitute for less restrictive interventions are prohibited.

Any use of physical restraint must be age- and developmentally appropriate, protect the child's breathing and primary mode of communication, end as soon as the immediate risk of physical harm has passed, and be documented and reported as required by Ohio law and District policy.

First Step Preschool follows Board Policy 5630.01 Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports and Limited Use of Restraint and Seclusion and applicable Ohio preschool licensing requirements.

<https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/parma/board.nsf/public#>

Suspension, Expulsion, and Emergency Removal

First Step Preschool emphasizes positive, developmentally appropriate intervention and behavioral support. Ohio law generally limits out-of-school suspension and expulsion for students in preschool through third grade.

Suspension, expulsion, or emergency removal may occur only when permitted by Ohio law and District policy. When such action is necessary, PCSD will follow applicable procedural safeguards and due-process requirements. Additional protections apply to children with disabilities under IDEA and Section 504.

When a child is expelled from the preschool program for a behavioral reason, First Step will make any report to the Ohio Department of Children and Youth required by preschool licensing rules.

Pleasantview First Step Preschool Tier 1 Behavior Matrix				
	Classroom & Therapy Room	Gym	Hallway	Playground
Be Respectful	*Share *Take turns *Follow Directions 	*Share *Take turns *Follow Directions 	*Voices quiet *Nice Hands *Follow Directions 	*Take turns *Nice hands 
Be Responsible	*Clean up *Share *Follow Directions 	*Park your vehicle *Clean up *Line up 	*Wait *Voices quiet *Follow Directions 	*Keep mulch on ground *Line up 
Act Safely	*Walking feet *Body is calm *Follow Directions 	*Stay on the road *Nice hands and feet *Run on mats only 	*Walking feet *Eyes forward *Body calm 	*Walking feet in the parking lot *Walk on yellow line *Look both ways *Gate closed 

First Step Preschool

Observe Problem Behavior

Warning/Conference with Student

NO

Is behavior
office
managed?

YES

Reinforce
Appropriate
Behaviors

parent
communication
as needed

5+ classroom
managed
incidents (same
infraction)

Provide
Additional
Behavior
Supports

phone call home

Request for
Assistance

Staff Managed Behaviors

- Not following direction
- disruption
- inappropriate language
- elopement
- throwing objects
- unkind words
- playground conflicts (depending on severity)
- instances of not keeping hands to self (depending on severity)
- Mildly aggressive behaviors
- Crying/Whining/Screaming
- Biting others or self
- Mild self-injury
- Interfering classroom behaviors

Office Managed Behaviors

- Threatening behavior to others
- threats of bringing/using weapons
- Excessive physical aggression
- intimidation
- sexual harassment/sexual offense
- Excessive elopement
- Theft
- verbal abuse/threat of violence
- vandalism/property damage
- false fire alarm
- Arson
- possession/distribution/use of OTC medications, controlled substance, tobacco, or alcohol
- possession/use of imitation weapons
- possession/use of imitation drugs
- possession of drug paraphernalia
- chronic violation of teacher-managed behaviors

Contact
Administration

Documentation of
behaviors

Administrator
contacts parents

Team Debriefing

Updated 8/1/26

BOE Approved 8/20/26

PARMA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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