FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH
SCHOOL DISTRICT

General Education

Preschool

Parent Handbook

2026-2027

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FNSBSD Mission and Vision

Mission
As a community, we create supportive learning environments where all students thrive.

Vision
Empowering every student to take ownership of their learning, choices, and future.

The four pillars guiding our work are:



Achieving Educational Excellence - Educators foster a culture of high expectations and growth; students meet academic goals; student growth is celebrated; students are engaged in their learning and have access to resources that support their growth



Supporting Access and Choice - We will prioritize meaningful educational opportunities for all students



Partnering with Our Community - Families feel informed, included, and valued; family members are updated on and engaged in their child's learning and school activities; families have opportunities to give feedback



Investing in Our People - Our staff is highly qualified; we provide engaging and meaningful professional learning opportunities, and our educators feel empowered to implement best practices in their classrooms and learning environments

Purpose and Goals

The preschool program is designed to help young children grow, learn, and feel excited about school. We focus on creating a safe, welcoming, and fun environment where every child is included and supported. Children learn best through play, hands-on experiences, working with others, and building strong relationships. Our goal is to help every child feel confident, curious, and ready for the next step in their learning journey.

Program Standards

Our preschool program implements the Alaska Early Education Program (EEP) Standards. You can learn more about the standards here: education.alaska.gov/earlylearning/eep-standards.

Eligibility

The following requirement must be met to be eligible to enroll:

★ Students are 4 by September 1.

Students who are 5 by September 1 are not eligible for preschool and will need to enroll in kindergarten.

We recognize that children who are newly toilet-trained will occasionally have accidents. If a child has an accident, the teaching staff will supervise and give any verbal instructions required for the child to clean up himself/herself.

Enrollment Process

Starting February each school year, parents wishing to enroll their child in preschool the following fall can enter the lottery through the school district's Lottery Portal (lottery.k12northstar.org). Our preschool programs have limited seats available. Following EEP Standards for the learning environment, double-session general education preschool programs have a maximum class size of 17 children to two teaching staff members (one teacher and one paraprofessional), with additional support staff added as necessary based on needs.

If the child is selected through the lottery, then:

- Parents register their students in preschool through PowerSchool, beginning July 1.
- Upon staff return to school in August, preschool teachers complete enrollment and roster students in AM/PM sessions based on the date and time of registration.
- *Birth Certificate and immunization records* must be on file at the school prior to the student attending.
- The ASQ-3 Screener is completed during the Roll-In process and is required to be completed within the first 45 days of school.

Screener: ASQ-3 (General Education Only)

FNSBSD preschool programs prioritize student growth and development. One of the tools we are required to use in support is the Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3). This is a developmental screening tool designed to help us better understand each child's strengths and identify any areas where they may need additional support.

For newly enrolled students (no matter when they enroll), we are required to have parents complete the ASQ-3 within 45 days of their enrollment and return it to school. If an ASQ-3 was completed by another agency within 45 days of the student's attendance at school, the district can accept a copy of this ASQ-3 and the parent does not need to complete a new one.

All general education preschool students must have an ASQ-3 on file. A copy of the completed ASQ-3 will be uploaded into the student's PowerSchool SIS file.

What is the ASQ-3?

The ASQ-3 is a set of simple, age-appropriate questionnaires that look at key areas of a child's development, including:

- Communication
- Gross motor skills (like crawling and walking)
- Fine motor skills (like grasping and drawing)
- Problem-solving
- Personal-social skills (like playing and self-help)

Why do we use it?

- Early identification: Children develop at their own pace, but early detection of any delays can lead to timely support and intervention, which is most effective when starting early.
- Partnership with families: You know your child best. The ASQ-3 is completed by both teachers and parents, allowing us to work together to understand your child's development.
- Supporting all learners: The ASQ-3 helps us tailor our teaching to meet the individual needs of each child, ensuring they are challenged and supported appropriately.

Parent Expectations

Parents are requested to fill out the questionnaire about their child's skills and behavior within 45 days of their child's first day of preschool. It takes only about 10–15 minutes and provides valuable insights to the teacher.

The ASQ-3 **is not a test**—it's a tool to guide learning and support. Results are shared with parents, and if anything raises a concern, the teacher will connect with you to discuss next steps together. Results are not used to diagnose any issues; they are used as an indicator of your child's strengths and areas where additional support may be needed. Results of the screener are not used to exclude students from programming.

Attendance Expectations

We are happy to have the opportunity to provide your child with a high-quality preschool experience! While in attendance at our preschool, the following expectations have been set to help maximize the success of your child in our program:

- Attendance is important! Please get your child to school on time every day. Multiple unexcused tardies and/or absences may result in your child losing his/her space in this program. If your child is absent for any reason, contact the school front office so your child can be excused for the day.

- There is NO district-provided transportation for general education preschool. Families will need to provide their own transportation to and from school.
- After five days of absences, you will be contacted by the teacher.
- After 10 days of back-to-back unexcused absences, district policy is to drop your child from the program. Communication with the teacher is vital to keep your spot.
- Prompt Pick-up - Please be prompt in picking your child up on time at the end of his/her preschool day.

Parent Involvement

Parent Involvement is a very important part of a child's education. Your involvement in the classroom is both welcomed and encouraged. Below are some guidelines to ensure the success of all students:

- Please notify the teacher at least one day in advance of your request to spend time in the class, unless you are a regular volunteer.
- Confidentiality is extremely important. Respect the privacy of all children by not discussing matters you may observe while in the classroom with anyone.
- Support the classroom learning environment by allowing the teacher to manage and redirect behavior. If you have concerns, please address those concerns with the teacher. Please direct your child to listen and follow the directions of the teacher at all times.
- No cell phones in the classroom. If you need to use your phone, please leave the classroom.

We want all families to feel welcome and included. Please share your culture, language, and traditions with your child's class. When children see their family's values and experiences reflected in the classroom, they feel proud, and it strengthens their cultural identity. It also helps other children learn and appreciate different cultures.

Curriculum

Based on the belief that children learn through play, active manipulation of their environment, life experience, and communicating with peers and adults, **Creative Curriculum** is designed to facilitate children's involvement in their own learning. The program balances active and quiet play. Children work both alone and in small groups where teachers facilitate the children's interactions with each other and their environment.

On a daily basis, preschool students will practice oral language, phonemic awareness, and print knowledge, the three foundational skills for reading. Through a variety of engaging, interactive, and fast-paced activities, children learn to hear and manipulate the sounds in words by rhyming, blending, and segmenting. These quick lessons are a fun way to prepare your child for future literacy success.

Weekly Schedule

The program meets for 10 hours per week. During this time, we prepare your child for kindergarten and beyond. Each day, children learn through play, stories, games, and hands-on activities that build skills in communication, learning, and getting along with others. Our district offers half-day general education preschool programs at two schools. Your child will attend either the morning or the afternoon preschool group. Listed below are the start and end times at each school.

School	Morning Preschool Group		Afternoon Preschool Group	
	Arrival Time	Dismissal Time	Arrival Time	Dismissal Time
Arctic Light Elementary School	8:00 a.m.	10:45 a.m.	11:45 a.m.	2:30 p.m.
Weller Elementary School	9:15 a.m.	12:00 p.m.	1:00 p.m.	3:45 p.m.

Our Preschool Program for 4- and 5-year-olds is Monday through Thursday, 2 hours and 45 minutes a day per session. Once preschool starts, the schedule follows the regular elementary school calendar. Your child's teacher will share the preschool start date with you; this is usually the Tuesday after Labor Day in September.

Daily Schedule

Each daily session offers a balance of active exploration, group connection, and quiet learning opportunities:

Welcome & Circle Time	Morning/Afternoon greetings, songs, storytelling, and group activities.
Small Group & Guided Learning	Hands-on math, phonological awareness, print knowledge, and creative projects.
Choice Play & Discovery	Sensory play, building blocks, dramatic play, and art exploration.
Outdoor & Physical Play	Movement and gross motor activities outdoors or in the gym.
Snack & Socializing	Family-style snack times focused on conversation and healthy habits.

Family Home Visits

Before your child starts school, we look forward to visiting with you and your child. This meeting can take place in your home, at school, or in a community setting (such as the school playground) that works best for you. Each family is offered at least two visits during the school year. When we work together, it helps your child feel more confident and ready to learn.

Below are some typical questions your child's teacher might ask you:

- ☐ List 5 words that describe your child.
- ☐ What are some of your child's favorite things to do?
- ☐ What does your child do when he/she is upset? How is he/she comforted?
- ☐ How often do you read with your child? What is your child's favorite book?
- ☐ Please list any special likes, dislikes, or fears your child may have.
- ☐ Describe how your child interacts with others.
- ☐ What do you want your child to work on in preschool?
- ☐ Is there anything you would like to share about your family's cultural background?

Assessments/Observational Data

Assessment for learning is an ongoing process that arises out of the interaction between teaching and learning. In November and May, we use a research-based tool called Teaching Strategies GOLD to assess how your child is doing. The tool uses observations from across the school year to track your child's development in areas like talking, thinking, moving, and getting along with others.

Collecting Observational Data can do more than simply identify students' learning needs; it can be used to assist improvements across the education system in a cycle of continuous improvement:

- Students and teachers use the data collected to determine their next teaching and learning steps for each individual child, as well as the whole group.
- Parents and families are kept informed of next plans for teaching and learning and the progress being made, emphasizing that parents play an active role in their children's learning.
- Teachers will formally collect data for placement on the developmental continuum at the beginning and end of the year. During the year, observational data is collected in an ongoing process.

Behavioral and Social/Emotional Expectations for Students

Each child walks in the door with a different learning history and understanding of what it means to be in a classroom. Although each teacher has a different approach to handling behavior in their own classroom, preschool teachers and staff recognize that it is important to ease children into this new experience by establishing behavioral expectations across all settings in the school where children learn and interact. This creates a foundation of predictability and consistency to make the learning environment a positive place for children and staff.

An important part of our preschool is Social and Emotional Learning. Each child will learn social/emotional skills such as kindness, sharing, self-awareness, and self-regulation. These skills are foundational and contribute to a child's overall academic success, as well as their success in life. The ultimate goal for preschoolers is to become good citizens by learning how to identify their feelings, what to do with them, and use coping strategies and problem-solving skills–all to help self-regulate and get along with others.

We believe all students can behave appropriately. Teachers do not allow disruptive behavior to stop teaching and/or interfere with other students from learning. Our goal is to help students learn to monitor and control their own behaviors. When disruptive behaviors occur that cannot be quickly corrected, the teacher follows schoolwide and districtwide discipline practices.

If a child has a pattern of challenging behaviors that disrupt the classroom, a collaborative team approach will be implemented to identify interventions and supports that can be implemented. This process is called MTSS, or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. This approach includes collaboration and communication with the school's team, preschool teacher, and principal with the goal of helping the student develop and use socially appropriate skills in school.

Emergency Drills

Emergency Drills will be practiced each month at each school site. Preschoolers participate in fire, earthquake, and lockdown safety procedures. In addition, personal safety lessons are taught throughout the school year. In the event of a school crisis, teachers will follow school safety procedures and the directions of the Building Principal.

Communication – Notification

Open communication with families is the best way to keep everyone informed and build positive relationships. Parent emails, messages, and calls will be returned within 24 hours except over the weekend or holidays. Parents who do not feel a teacher is responding adequately should contact the building principal.

Our district schools use ParentSquare to communicate with families. Once you have enrolled your child, a ParentSquare account will be generated for you, and you can sign up for the online app.

Family-Teacher Conferences

Family-Teacher conferences are a chance for us to talk about how your child is learning and growing in the classroom. We encourage all families to join in the fall and spring, and you can also ask for a meeting anytime. At conferences, we will share about your child's progress. Most importantly, we want to hear from you - you know your child best, and your insights help us support their learning. See your school's calendar for fall & spring conference dates.

Field Trips & Special Celebrations

Field Trips

- Preschools are eligible to participate in field trips.
- Parents need to transport and chaperone their preschooler at each event.
- Each student will require a completed parent permission slip to attend, even though they are transported and chaperoned by the parent. This is a district-required slip.

Special Celebrations

Special events such as birthdays and holidays may be celebrated in class. Parents may send in special treats for their child's birthday or events. Parents, please connect with the teacher prior to sending in/dropping off treats. Please also be aware of any student allergies.

If there are any specific holidays your family does not celebrate or acknowledge, please let the teacher know as soon as possible and communicate with the teacher regarding alternatives.

Supplies & Donations

Personal Supplies to bring to school:

- Labeled Backpack
- Labeled Change of Clothes
- Labeled Water bottle

Suggested donations for classroom supplies–These items are OPTIONAL:

- Tissues
- Baby Wipes
- Markers (Broad Line)
- Crayons
- Watercolor paints
- Glue Sticks
- Large Pencil
- Paper plates/Plastic utensils/Paper towels

Snacks

Children need fuel to stay focused. To help promote our students' physical health and development, each preschool program will provide an opportunity for children to eat a snack each day. Snacks will be eaten at the table in a family-style setting for safe eating and to provide students with an opportunity to learn social skills in this setting.

Snacks for special occasions are welcome. These can be store-bought or homemade. Please check with your child's teacher about how she/he conducts snack time and/or special occasion snack time in their classroom.

Please let your child's teacher know if your child has food allergies (including airborne). Your child's teacher will inform you of any food allergies that you need to be aware of when preparing food for the classroom or sending in snacks for your child or the class.

Services for Multi-Lingual and Multi-Cultural Learners

In our classrooms, speaking multiple languages is seen as a strength. We will work with you to help your child grow in both English and their first language. We encourage families to continue using your home language at home - this helps your child learn more!

In our program, we use visuals, gestures, and simple words to help children understand routines and directions. We give extra time and support when children are learning new words or ideas. We celebrate every child's language and culture through books, songs, and classroom activities.

If your child needs an interpreter for an assessment (such as Ages & Stages or GOLD), we will provide one when feasible.

Services for Students with Disabilities

If your child has a disability, or if a concern arises, staff will talk with you about the next steps and support. Support may include adjustments to instruction, additional adult support, or consultation with a specialist. The school will explain the process and involve you in each step. We will ensure that you are connected with trusted community organizations, if necessary.

Kindergarten Transition

As your child gets closer to starting Kindergarten, our program team will ensure a smooth transition. We may offer visits to a Kindergarten classroom or share readiness checklists to help you prepare for the transition and ask questions. We may connect with Kindergarten teachers to share helpful information about your child's strengths, learning style, and progress (with your permission).

These steps help your child to feel confident, and their new teachers start the year with useful information to support their success. If you have any Kindergarten-related questions, please contact Mackenzie Staiger, FNSBSD Elementary Curriculum Coordinator, at mackenzie.staiger@k12northstar.org.

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are a vital part of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, with each school actively cultivating unique relationships with local businesses, military units, non-profit organizations, and community members. These collaborative partnerships enrich the educational environment to support student well-being, foster strong relationships, and help every learner succeed.

In particular, our early childhood programs work closely with key local partners, including the Fairbanks Native Association Head Start and ThrivAlaska Head Start. Together, we coordinate resources and transitions to ensure a supportive, comprehensive foundation for our youngest learners and their families.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program

Children experiencing homelessness are eligible for additional services and support through the McKinney-Vento Education Program. McKinney-Vento Education Program can assist students in removing barriers to their education. Possible services may include emergency clothing assistance, backpacks, basic school supplies, transportation to preschool (even if preschool transportation is not typically provided), and free school meals.



For more information, contact our school district's McKinney-Vento Coordinator, Chelsea Taylor, by email at chelsea.taylor@k12northstar.org or by phone (907) 452-2000 ext.11470. You can also complete a referral form by clicking this link or by scanning the QR code on the left.

FNSBSD Preschool Contact Information

Arctic Light Elementary School
4167 Neely Road, Fort Wainwright, AK 99703
(907) 356-2038
arc.k12northstar.org/about

Weller Elementary School
635 Elementary Drive, Fairbanks, AK 99712
(907) 457-1629
wlr.k12northstar.org/about

Administrative Center
520 Fifth Ave, Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 452-2000
Emma Henze-Nelson, Preschool Coordinator
emma.henze-nelson@k12northstar.org