



Parent Handbook



Rockford Public Schools

Quality Community – Quality Schools
Together Building a Tradition of Excellence

Preschool & Childcare Services Office
350 N. Main Street, Rockford, MI 49341 (616)863-6560
Office hours 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday
Executive Director, Lisa Jacobs
Preschool & Childcare Services Director, Melissa Cochrill
www.rockfordschools.org
www.facebook.com/rockfordchildcareservices
Tax I.D.# F38-6001986

Our Purpose

To provide for the total needs of the preschool age child. Our aim is to promote healthy child development through social, physical, emotional, and cognitive growth experiences. It is our intention to make this experience as happy, secure, and stimulating as possible for the children. We have a well-trained and caring staff to provide a warm, understanding environment in which your child can grow. All programs are state licensed and help prepare young children for school success.

Admission and Withdrawal Policy

Children must be three years of age and be completely toilet trained to enroll. Your child must be 3 years old by September 1st of the current school year for our 3-year old programs. Our 4-year old programs require your child be 4 years old by September 1st of the current school year. A non-refundable enrollment fee is due at the time of registration; in addition to the State of Michigan required paperwork and signed Policy agreement.

Children in all programming are required to be fully toilet trained. This means that your child can independently go to the bathroom, pull down their clothing, sit on the toilet, wipe, redress, and wash hands without any adult assistance. **A child who is wearing Pull-Ups is not toilet trained.** We understand that occasional accidents happen. In the case of an accident, children will be changed immediately. The soiled clothing will be put in a plastic bag to be taken home. Bathroom breaks are built into the daily schedule, and a bathroom is always available for when a child needs to go. Staff will encourage your child to wipe themselves after a bowel movement. We ask that you practice this at home as well. If a child cannot clean themselves after a bowel movement, parents will be called to assist. Teachers cannot clean children. You are welcome to keep wipes in your child's cubby labeled with their name for them to use at school.

If your child is experiencing excessive accidents—defined as more than two per week over a three-week period—we will request a two-week break from school to focus on training at home. If there is no improvement after this break, the child may be dismissed from the program.

If we feel that a child is not adjusting to the preschool program, we will conference with the parents and decide on what is best for the child.

We request a **two-week notice** before withdrawing from our program. Should you decide to re-enroll, there must be a spot available. A \$50 re-enrollment fee will be due at that time.

Philosophy

This is a child centered program. We let kids be kids. We believe children are curious, eager learners who can be guided to be independent, self-reliant problem solvers. Children can help make decisions about their daily activities. We believe children learn best when allowed to explore, experiment, and actively participate in the use of a variety of materials and learning experiences. We feel children develop best in a classroom with clear, consistent, yet fair limits, where staff allows children to learn through their mistakes and are guided in a nurturing way in how to choose acceptable behavior. We believe the center and families should establish effective two-way communication to meet the learning and developmental needs of children.

Transitioning to the Program

In July, there is a parent orientation meeting to learn about the policies of the center and the goals and activities for your child's particular classroom. This is a very important meeting so you can learn more about what will be happening each day with your child. There will also be a family open house before the start of school. At this time the children are invited to come meet the staff, get acquainted with their classroom, and see other parts of the center.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

1. Read the Parent Handbook and the Rockford Preschool Policy Book.
2. Provide up-to-date emergency information and let us know about changes in phone numbers, addresses, emails, and parent work place.
3. Send your child well rested, healthy, and with appropriate clothing for playing outside.
4. By attending family functions that our center sponsors, you will get to know staff better and meet the families of other children in your child's room. You will become more familiar with our center, our philosophy, and our policies.
5. Giving feedback to the staff and program director helps to build a strong bond with your family.
6. Be sure you are aware of how we can best work with your child. We want to know what they like to do, their special interests, new fears, anything that worries your child, and/or health changes.
7. All art is refrigerator worthy! Displaying your child's art shows that you value their work. We stress process over product art. Learning and pride comes from doing their own creation.
8. Keep up to date on what is happening in your child's classroom so that you can ask specific questions about their day. Each classroom has a parent information board with reminders, photos, and highlights of the day. Monthly newsletters will provide information about unit themes, dates to remember, and activities you can do at home to enhance what your child is doing in the classroom.
9. Cell phone use – please finish your conversation, verbal or text, prior to entering the building.

Communication with Parents

As stated in our philosophy, we believe the center and families should establish effective two-way communication to meet the learning and developmental needs of the child. The lead teachers will keep you informed of your child's adjustment to the program. If there is an event during the day that we feel you should know about, we will contact you or leave a note in your child's cubby. It is important that you communicate any concerns that you have with the lead teacher of the classroom. It is also helpful to know of an events at home that may change your child's normal disposition.

Tuition

Tuition is charged on the basis of enrollment, not attendance. Parents will be charged tuition for scheduled days whether or not the child/children attend. We pre-bill tuition for all programs. Sibling discounts are not offered. As a self-supported program, timely payments are necessary to support and sustain the standards of the program. A late payment fee of \$25.00 will be assessed for payments made 10 days past the due date. Non-payment of tuition will result in dismissal from the program. Please refer to the Rockford Preschool Policy Book for details outlining Rockford Preschool's Tuition Payment Policy.

*Payments are made through Family Access under the "Fee Management" tab and "Make a Payment." You will then be routed to the "e-Funds for Schools" banking website where you set up payment. If you are a new user, you will need to create a User ID and Password. Then click on "Manage Students" and add your child/children to your account using their last name and Student ID number. If you already have an existing e-Funds account, you can add your student to your current account using their last name and Student ID number. **Student ID numbers are located in Family Access under the "Student Info" tab. It is listed as "Other ID" below the child's photo.***

\$48.00 Per Day – Preschool Enrichment Child Care Program Only - Minimum Enrollment 2 Set Days

\$38.00 Per Day - Dual Enrollment Full Day Enrichment along with the Spanish or Montessori program

Hours and Days of Operation

The Preschool Enrichment Child Care center is in operation Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm year round. **The center is closed major holidays, a few days around Christmas and the New Year and during Mid-Winter Break.** Please check the Preschool Enrichment Child Care Center calendar and if dually enrolled, your other program calendar for *additional* closure dates. The State of Michigan law requires no child be left at a child care center for longer than 11 hours.

Arrival and Departure

Drop Off:

Enter the building through the front entrance. A staff member will let you in through the child care office. If there is no one at the desk, please ring the doorbell. You will drop your child off to their classroom and sign them in. Please let a teacher know that your child has arrived.

Pick Up:

Parents are to remain in their vehicles with their parking passes visible. A preschool staff member will escort your child to the car. If you do not have a sign/parking pass, an ID will be requested before a child will be released.

Delay/Cancelled School Days

If Rockford Public Schools are cancelled due to weather, Preschool is also closed. This information is normally available on the major local TV and radio stations, as well as the district web site, www.rockfordschools.org. We recommend signing up for text alerts directly from the district site: <http://www.rockfordschools.org/?s=school+closing+information>

If the cancellation occurs on a day(s) that is a regularly scheduled Preschool Enrichment Child Care day for your child, your account will be credited on the next statement. If there is a morning delay of Rockford Public Schools, Preschool Enrichment Child Care opens at 7:00 am.

Trading Days/Vacation

Trading days is not allowed. If your child is absent on their regular scheduled day, and as long as there is room, you can add in an additional day. You must contact the Child Care office for availability.

If your child attended 3's full day preschool for the entire school year, your child is entitled up to 5 vacation days at no charge to use while enrolled in the 4's full day preschool. This is dependent upon the number of days your child attends preschool each week. For example, if your child attends 4's preschool two days a week. You will receive two vacation days. **Please email or contact the Child Care office to report vacation days.**

Health Care Policy

The health and safety of the children and staff is a top priority for our program. Rules have been established to help keep everyone safe and healthy. Parents will be contacted in the event that a child falls ill, is involved in an accident or injury, or requires emergency care. Children who become ill at the center are put on a cot to rest in the Child Care office within sight or sound of a Child Care office staff member until a parent can arrive within one hour to take the child home. If parents are unavailable, persons indicated on the emergency card will be notified. In the event none of the above can be reached and it is an extreme situation, the child will be taken to the hospital listed on the child's information sheet. The parent or guardian will be responsible for any incurred expenses. All serious injuries requiring medical attention are immediately reported to the office of Child Care Licensing.

Procedures are in place to stop the spread of infectious disease and information is given to parents to inform them about certain common illnesses, how to detect them, and how to stop them from spreading. Parents will be notified if a communicable disease has been reported in your child's classroom. The notification will provide the name of the illness, signs & symptoms, incubation period and when an affected child can return to the center. If your child is ill, please contact the Child Care office with your child's symptoms and/or diagnoses, as we report all illnesses to the Kent County Health Department. Please contact the Preschool and Child Care Services office with any confirmed cases of communicable diseases, i.e., strep throat, pink eye, flu, head lice, etc.

If your child has a temperature of 100.4 or higher, has thrown up, or has diarrhea in the last 24 hours, they cannot be brought to the center. Your child must be fever free without fever reducing medication or on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before they can return to the center. Coughing should be treated as contagious and the child needs to recuperate at home. A rash is also cause to keep the child from the center. A child with a rash cannot attend without a doctor's note saying the rash is not contagious. If your child attends our program, then they are well enough to participate in all indoor/outdoor activities.

Children's Health Records and Immunizations

Children must have a current Health Appraisal signed by a physician (or P.A.) on file before they can attend the program. Immunizations must be up-to-date within 30 days of the start of school. **If you chose to waive your child's immunizations, you must make an appointment at a Kent County Health Department Immunization Clinic to speak with a nurse. The Child Care office must receive a certified waiver from the Health Department before a child can attend our program. If the Health Department electronically enters the waiver into MICRS, a physical copy of the waiver form is not needed.**

Allergies

In the case of an air-borne and/or seasonal allergy, parents will be asked to fill out a form so that medication can be administered to that child if necessary. In the case of a food allergy, the parent will indicate which food(s) the child is allergic to, which will be noted on the Child Information Card. Parents will also fill out an "Allergy Alert" form outlining the procedure to follow in case the child should ingest that food. All staff will be alerted to any food allergies and the child's picture and allergy information will be posted in the classroom, the kitchen, and the office. Substitute teachers will be given this information as well.

Staff Health Care and Training

Staff is encouraged to have the Hep. B series of shots and have up-to-date immunizations. All staff is trained in CPR for children and pediatric first aid and blood-borne pathogens. The teaching staff participates in 24 hours of professional development annually. The center requires all staff and unsupervised volunteers to have a comprehensive background check.

For children with special needs, parents will be asked who may have access to the information about those needs. If a child requires an epi-pen or other special equipment the district nurse will train the staff on its use.

No Smoking or Vaping

Please be aware there is no smoking or vaping allowed on Rockford Public schools property or during school field Trips.

Medication

All medication must be signed in on the Medication Permission form in the front office. It must be in the original prescription bottle and have a pharmaceutical label providing the following information: Name, Date, Dosage and Instructions for administering the medication. Staff may administer medications with written permission from a parent or guardian. Instructions from a licensed health care provider must be included. Staff will be trained in administration of medication. **Two staff members will verify and witness that the correct child receives the right medication, the correct dosage, and the correct time and method. Documentation of each procedure is kept on file.**

Late Pick up Fee

Please be prompt in picking up your child. We understand there are unplanned circumstances that can hinder a timely pick up; however, parents are expected to make every effort to arrive on time or arrange for an alternate pick up. We employ a "No Exceptions" policy for late pick-ups. A "Late Pick-up Fee" will be assessed as follows:

- 1 – 5 minutes late = \$1 per minute
- 6 – 15 minutes late = \$2 per minute
- 16 minutes late or more = \$5 per minute
- After **five** occurrences, your child will be unenrolled from the program

Children and Play

When children are playing they are exploring, discovering, learning, thinking, understanding, imagining, creating, problem solving, classifying. A child's preschool day is divided into various time blocks with many activities that focus on skill development.

Large-Group: Large-group time is a part of the day that builds a sense of community in the classroom. Everyone comes together to participate in a shared experience, such as music and movement, listening to a story, finger plays, classroom discussions and sharing experiences. This time allows children to develop the skills to take turns, listen to other and speak in a group of their peers.

Plan, Do, Review: This part of the day is both a critical and unique part of our curriculum. It involves all the elements of active participatory learning. The children are developing the ability to take initiative, solve problems independently, work with others and building knowledge and skills that will last them a lifetime.

***Plan:** During planning time, children express their intentions about the materials, actions, people and ideas they want to include in their work-time activities. When children plan, they begin with an intention or purpose. They hold in their minds, a picture of something. By planning their day, children carry out their intentions and play with a purpose. It leads to involvement in and concentration on play and more complex play. It also promotes children's self-confidence and sense of control.

***Do:** This part of the day lasts 60 minutes. This is the "free choice" time of the day. Children are free to make choices in their play and discover new things. Our classrooms are set up with intentionality. While the items may look like random toys, these manipulatives are chosen purposely based on the student's interest and skill set. Children will encounter interesting challenges, solve problems, construct their own knowledge and build new skills, based on their developmental level and interests. Play is a time when a great deal of learning takes place.

***Review:** After free choice and cleanup-time, the children are encouraged to reflect on their actions and share with a group what they have learned throughout the day. This reflection allows children to exercise their capacity to form and talk about mental images. It also extends children's thinking beyond the present and encourages social interaction within a group.

Outside Play: During outside play, the child uses a full range of muscles. Large muscles when running, climbing and swinging and small muscles for zipping jackets and using sand toys. At this time, children are also developing body balance, control, and coordination.

Goals

1. To help children become decision makers. Each child decides what they want to explore and pursue.
2. To help children become more self-reliant and independent through self-help experiences during free choice, meal times, and personal care.
3. To help children learn to be problem solvers through their own thinking skills and self-reliance.
4. To help children learn to negotiate problems and conflicts with their peers. Children will use verbal skills to express feelings to reach a mutual agreement.
5. Children will gain literacy skills through story reading, songs, finger plays, language development, discussions, self-expression, and other creative outlets.

6. Children will develop math skills through exploration and meaningful experiences.

Curriculum

The early years of a child's life are a critical time when the brain is forming connections that help determine a lifetime of skills and potential, affecting the way that children think, learn, and behave. At our center, the age-appropriate researched based, HighScope curriculum and stimulating environment helps children prepare to enter kindergarten eager to learn. We want to provide children with a good balance between adult-directed and child-directed activities to ensure your child's healthy physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. Child-driven play time also helps preschoolers become self-sufficient and resilient!

Literacy is an important element of our curriculum. Children are read to each day and are exposed to a variety of literature. Songs, rhyming, and finger-plays are part of our daily circle time activities. There are plenty of opportunities to practice writing and develop the small muscles in the hands with different fine motor activities. Children learn about colors, shapes and numbers through classifying, sorting, and patterns. Curiosity and observation skills are enhanced with science and nature activities such as gardening, neighborhood exploration walks, field trips, and live animal visits. Gross motor skills develop through lots of outdoor play, group games and creative movement. Above all, you know your child best! Please let us know what we can do to help your child while they are in our care.

Child Assessment

Child assessment is the process of observing, recording, and documenting what children do and how they do it as a basis for a variety of educational decisions. In our child care setting, we use the authentic assessment tool developed by HighScope, COR Advantage, the latest version of the Child Observation Record. Staff observe children, write anecdotal notes, take pictures of children involved in an activity, sometimes ask them to perform a specific task, and talk with the child to gain knowledge of their abilities. Children are assessed in eight areas: Approaches to Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development and Health; Language, Literacy, and Communication; Mathematics; Creative Arts; Science and Technology; and Social Studies. A portfolio is kept for each child with documentation of skills and physical evidence of accomplishments. From the results of these informal assessment strategies the staff can better plan to meet the needs of the individual child and the whole group. You may ask to see this portfolio at any time.

We have goals for children at each age level so that curriculum specific skills are worked on. When the staff finds that a child or whole group is developing in an area, more activities will be planned to strengthen that skill. If a child seems advanced in an area, more challenging activities will be introduced.

Progress reports and conferences will be scheduled during the year. Information that we have gained from assessments will be relayed to you at those times. There is complete confidentiality about these findings. If we feel more professional assessments may be needed, the parents will be informed and together we will decide what steps should be taken.

Food Program

The children are provided breakfast, snack, and milk as part of the Adult and Child Care Food Program. Families are asked to provide a healthy lunch each day. Please do not send "fast food." We have found that simpler is better. Packing small quantities of a variety of items will encourage your child to try new things. Our staff will be happy to provide ideas for healthy, simple lunches. Menus are posted on the Parent Information board and on-line. The importance of good nutrition for growing, active young children is stressed at our center. If your child has any food allergies, please inform us. Precautions are taken to ensure they do not receive the food that they are allergic to. We must have a waiver form signed by your doctor if your child may not have milk or follow our menu.

Breakfast is served at 8:30 am. Please have your child here by 8:15 am if you would like to have your child eat breakfast. Children are encouraged to try each item served at breakfast. Lunch is served at 11:35 am, and afternoon snack is served after rest time.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provided and employer.

Clothing and Shoes

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes. Your child needs suitable clothing for outdoor play; i.e. hats, boots, mittens, etc. It is also recommended that you label all of your child's outerwear. On any given winter day, we have many pairs of black, blue, and pink snow pants and boots. Please bring your child a change of clothes to be kept at the center. Tennis shoes are definitely the shoes of choice. Our playground surfaces include sand, asphalt, cement, and grass. With so many different surfaces, crocs and sandals do not protect little feet. Rubber sole shoes prevent injury and give traction on playground equipment.

Rest

Children enrolled in Preschool Enrichment Child Care rest during the afternoon. During that time children will sleep or lay quietly on their own cot. Children do not share cots. A quiet activity to do on their cot will be provided for children who do not sleep. Bedding is sent home weekly to be washed. After one hour those who are awake or have not slept are escorted back to their classroom, where staff is waiting for them. During the second hour children are escorted back to their classroom as they wake up. If you do not want your child to sleep more than a specific amount of time, please tell staff so they can wake your child at the appropriate time.

Things to be Provided by the Family:

- Your child may bring a special **child sized** blanket, pillow and/or stuffed animal for rest time.
- Change of clothing. Clothing to be kept in a special box in their cubby. Be sure to change the clothing with the change of seasons. If clothing from the box is used, it needs to be replaced the next time the child comes.
- A one-inch-thick three ring binder and 25 protector sheets for your child's portfolio.
- Your child should not bring sharp objects, candy, medication (cough drops), toys or money to the center with them.

Opportunities for Involvement

Occasionally you may be asked to volunteer in the classroom or donate a specific item for a special activity. Fundraisers help us buy playground equipment, go on field trips, and allow us to purchase new materials needed for the classrooms. To get to know our families better we request, from time to time, photos and stories from you telling us more about your family. If you or someone special to your child has a special talent or interest that you would like to share with the class or the entire center, please let us know and arrangements can be made.

All supervised volunteers shall receive a public sex offender registry (PSOR) clearance before having any contact with a child. A copy of this clearance will be kept on file at the center. Any individual registered on the PSOR is prohibited from having contact with any child in care.

Facebook

For more information about any of our programs or activities within the school district, visit our website at www.rockfordschools.org. Our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/rockfordchildcare services has current events and other family friendly information.

3-year-old Activity Schedule

7:00am	Center opens, children arrive at various times. This is a time for individual exploration. The goal is to encourage the children to move from one activity to another, to develop individual interests, work together happily, and reinforce social relationships.
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Group time, calendar, special activities, Plan-Do-Review and centers
10:45	Outside play - weather permitting
11:30	Lunch
12:40pm	Group story
1:00	Rest time
2:00	Non-nappers may return to room for quiet activities
3:00	All children awake, weather chart and/or group story, and snack
4:00	Outside play
4:45	Inside for learning centers, art, songs, stories, and finger plays
6:00	Center closes for the day

4-year-old Activity Schedule

7:00 am	Center opens, children arrive at various times. This is a time for individual exploration. The goal is to encourage the children to move from one activity to another, to develop individual interests, work together happily, and reinforce social relationships
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Large motor time, outside play weather permitting
10:00	Group time, story, special activities and centers open for the day
11:30	Lunch
12:00pm	Outside play
1:00	Rest time
2:00	Non-nappers may return to rooms for quiet activities
3:00	All children awake, learning centers open, exploration, and snack
4:00	Outside play time
4:30	Individual exploration, outdoor play or gym activities
6:00	Center closes for the day

Note: These schedules are consistent, though times may change slightly to allow for special events of interest, visitors, field trips, etc.

Community Resources

The community offers many resources for families in need of a variety of services, many of which are free.

1. **Bright Beginnings:** This group is run through the Intermediate School District. They provide play groups for children and are a **Parent as Teachers** program. Groups meet in each community. For more information, call 616-365-2276.
2. **Arbor Circle:** Provides mental health, substance abuse & prevention and family development services to children, youth, adults, and families. For more information, call 616-456-7775.
3. **State Dept. of Human Services:** State agency responsible for investigating abuse and neglect complaints and providing other child welfare services. For more information, call 616-247-6000.
4. **Early On of Kent County:** Links families with services and supports their needs to help infants and toddlers (birth to three) who may be developing slowly or have medical problems.
5. **Rockford Public Schools Special Services Office:** Offers families assistance early childhood special education, speech, language, etc. For more information, call 616-863-6326.
6. **Rockford Public Schools Community Services:** Offers families a variety of recreation activities for all ages, special interest classes, i.e., art, cooking, etc. Their online catalog can be found at [RPS.DIGITALSIGNUP.COM](https://www.rpsdigitalsignup.com). For more information, call 616-863-6322.

Family Activities

1. **Grand Rapids Children's Museum:** Provides a hands-on, interactive environment that encourages learning through play. For more information, call 616-235-4726.
2. **Frederick Meijer Gardens:** Offers tropical conservatory, world-class sculptures, indoor gardens, special events and festivals, botanical and art exhibits. For more information, call 616-957-1580.
3. **John Ball Zoological Garden:** 616-336-4300
4. **Kent District Libraries:** 616- 647-3940

Family Friendly Websites

- www.pbs.com
- www.familyfun.com
- www.safekids.com
- www.smartparent.com
- www.getnetwise.org
- www.healthykids.us
- www.rightchoiceforkids.org – Information about accreditation
- www.cdc.gov/actearly - Center for disease control and child development information
- www.greatstartconnect.org
- www.grkids.com

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