

Cedar Falls
Community School District
Preschool Handbook
2023-2024



www.cfschools.org/parents/preschool

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Cedar Falls Community Schools 2023-2024 Calendar



July 2023

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August 23-25	Preschool Home Visits
August 28-29	Preschool Home Visits
August 30	First Day of Preschool
September 1	Professional Development - PM
September 4	Labor Day - No School
October 13	Professional Development; PK-12 No School
October 23	10-12 Evening P/T Conferences
October 24	7-9 Evening P/T Conferences
October 26	Fall Mid-Term
October 26	7-12 Early Dismiss: P/T Conferences
October 27	7-12: No School
October 27	PK-6: Noon Dismiss
November 14	PK-6 Evening P/T Conferences
November 16	PK-6 Noon Dismiss: P/T Conferences
November 16	End of First Trimester
November 17	PK-6: No School
November 22	PK-12: No School
November 23-24	Thanksgiving: No School
Dec 25 - January 2	Winter Break: No School
January 3	Professional Development; PK-12 No School
January 4	PK-12 Students Return to School
January 11	End of Semester
January 12	7-12: No School - Teacher Workday
January 15	MLK Jr. Day: No School
February 16	Professional Development; PK-12 No School
February 27	End of Second Trimester
March 4	10-12 Evening P/T Conferences
March 5	PK-9 Evening P/T Conferences
March 7	PK-6 Noon Dismiss: P/T Conferences
March 7	7-12 Early Dismiss: P/T Conferences
March 8	PK-12: No School
March 11-15	Spring Break
March 26	Spring Mid-Term
April 19	Professional Development - PM
May 15	No Kindergarten Classes
May 15	1-6 Noon Dismiss/Performance Writing
May 26	Graduation
May 27	Memorial Day: No School
May 29	End of Third Trimester
May 30	Teacher Workday

- Vacation
- Holidays
- Professional Development
- Workshop/Workday

Days missed due to inclement weather will be made up on subsequent week days at the end of the school year.

January 2024

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Mission Statement:

Educating each student to be a lifelong learner and a caring, responsible citizen

Vision: Every student, every day:**All classes may include:**

- ❖ Students who qualify for Head Start, students with an IEP, and PK grant students,
- ❖ High-quality education,
- ❖ Play-based,
- ❖ Developmentally appropriate,
- ❖ Community/family partnerships,
- ❖ Focus on the whole child, and
- ❖ Resilient children

Preschool Program:

Children must be four years of age by September 15 to be eligible for the preschool program. This program is funded by the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Grant and Head Start, which allows for one year of participation for each student. The child/family must also live in the Cedar Falls School District in order to participate in the program. Locations for the 2023-2024 school year will be Aldrich, Cedar Heights, Hansen, Lincoln, North Cedar, Orchard Hill and Southdale Elementary.

Times / Days:

During the 2023-2024 school year, Cedar Falls preschools (NOT community PK partners) will run Monday-Friday from 8:45 a.m. - 1:50 p.m. We ask parents/guardians to drop their child(ren) off, and pick-up, as close to these times as possible. Please call if your child will be late; as the lunch count needs to be submitted by 9:15 a.m.

Start of School Day:

Attendance is crucial for school success. When children need to be absent, please call the building secretary at your attendance center. The secretary will then notify your child's teacher of the absence.

Attendance Policy:

A four-year-old child enrolled in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) is of compulsory attendance age unless the child's parent submits written notice to the district of the intent to remove the child from the program ([Iowa Code 299.1A](#)). Attending PK is voluntary in the Cedar Falls School District; however, once a child enrolls in the program, attendance is required. Because there are a limited number of spots available in the program, guidelines have been established to ensure these spots are being utilized. Students are expected to be in preschool 85 percent of the time class is in session. The preschool director will send a letter to the parent or legal guardian making them aware of the amount of time missed. The director will make the final

decision as to whether this spot needs to be opened up to another child. Each case will be evaluated separately.

Preschool Home Visits:

Prior to the start of the 2023-2024 school year, Cedar Falls preschools will follow this Home Visit Plan:

- ❖ The lead teacher will schedule home visits for each student.
- ❖ There will be two home visits scheduled for each child during the school year. The first will take place at the beginning of the school year. The second will take place during the last trimester.

Cumulative Files:

All PK students will have their personal information filed in a locked file in their building. This information could include a copy of the child's enrollment form, emergency contact, home language survey, etc.

Transportation:

Transportation to and from preschool is the responsibility of the family; please note: car seats are required. No bus transportation is offered to preschool students in the Cedar Falls School District, unless specialized transportation is part of an IEP. Bus transportation may be provided for any field trips scheduled during the school day.

School Delays/Closings:

When the Cedar Falls Schools close, have a late start, or dismiss early, preschool will also follow this decision. Preschool will be held until 1:50 daily, even with a late start. Parents will be notified through the BrightArrow notification system.

Breakfast:

Breakfast is offered to students in the Cedar Falls Schools. The cost for breakfast is \$2.25, unless you qualify for free or reduced price meals.

Lunch Program:

All students will be provided a hot lunch. The menu will consist of the items listed on the daily lunch menu. This is served family style in each classroom. The cost for lunch is \$3.00, unless you qualify for free or reduced price meals.

Snack Policy:

If snacks are brought in to share with other students, please keep in mind:

1. Bring enough for everyone in the class.
2. Healthy snacks are always encouraged in the PK classroom.
3. Non-food items are a suggestion for distribution during these times.
4. Teachers (staff) reserve the right to distribute snacks as the children are leaving for the day.
5. Snacks must meet allergy guidelines, as established by the District.

Communications:

Every preschool classroom will send home communication particular to the students at that center. Ongoing communication between home and school is an important part of the early childhood program. Communication will include two home visits (first will be virtual), newsletters, progress sharing, and conferences. Each attendance center has a parent information bulletin board to post and share information. Parents are encouraged to maintain regular, on-going, two-way communication with the teaching staff in a manner that best meets their needs; email, in person, notes, or phone calls.

The first home visit will be made at the beginning of the school year. This is an opportunity for the preschool teacher to get to know you, your child, and your family and for you to begin to create a partnership between home and school in order to best meet your child's needs. This is a great time for you to share what makes your family unique, how you prefer to communicate with the teacher, and share your knowledge about your child's interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs. You can help the teacher understand what your goals are for your child and whether you have any concerns you would like addressed. Parents or legal guardians are encouraged to share these preferences, concerns, and questions at any time with either the classroom teacher or administrator.

Access and Visitation:

We encourage parents/guardians to be involved in classroom and center activities. We encourage your active participation with your child.

Child Pick-Up:

We want to assure the safety of your child. One way to do this is to monitor the adult(s) that pick up your child at the end of their preschool day. Permission is granted to the adult that is listed by the parent/guardian on the enrollment form supplied to the teacher at the first home visit. If the adult picking up the child is not listed, a phone call will be made by the teacher to ensure that permission has been granted by the parent/guardian.

Health and Immunization Certificates:

A physical exam dated within the last 12 months needs to be presented before the first day of class along with an immunization certificate. Physical exams expire after one year. If the date of last exam expires during the school year you will be asked to provide an updated physical exam to remain in preschool. Forms will be provided or your health care provider may make a copy of their form for you. Immunizations must be up-to-date according to Iowa Child Care Licensing Center regulations. A dental examination within the past year must also be submitted.

Health and Safety Records:

Health and safety information collected from families will be maintained on file for each child. Files need to be updated as changes are made in your family situation. The content of the file is confidential, but is available to teacher, nurse, and administrator when they feel it is necessary.

Child health and safety records will include:

1. Physical examination and all findings, whether normal or abnormal.
2. Up-to-date immunization certificate.
3. Current emergency contact information.
4. Names of individuals authorized to pick up your child.
5. Health plan for any child with medical needs, such as allergies or chronic illnesses to include care needed during an emergency.

If all information is not available by the first day of school, child participation may not be granted by the district.

Illnesses:

If your child is ill, he/she should not attend school. Your child would not be able to participate in activities at school if they do not feel well, and will not benefit from being at school. A sick student may require more care than can be given in the classroom. The student may also pose a risk of spreading the illness to the others in the classroom. Conditions that require your child to stay at home while ill are:

- ❖ Fever (temperature greater than 100 orally) and other signs and symptoms of illness - may return 24 hours after fever free without fever-reducing medications
- ❖ Diarrhea more than 1 in 24 hour period - may return 24 hours after last episode
- ❖ Vomiting more than 1 time in a 24 hour period - may return 24 hours after last episode
- ❖ Mouth sores with drooling
- ❖ Rash with fever or behavior change (anything undiagnosed per nurse's discretion)
- ❖ Impetigo until 24 hours after treatment has started
- ❖ Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment has started
- ❖ Scabies until after the first treatment
- ❖ Chickenpox until all lesions have dried or crusted (usually 6 days after onset of rash)
- ❖ Other reportable communicable diseases as directed by Black Hawk County Health Department

Medications:

If your child needs to take medication at school, please complete a medication administration form that is provided by the school and sign it. When possible, please reduce or eliminate the need to administer medications needed to be given at school by adjusting the medication schedule to one that can be administered at home. The medication needs to be labeled by the pharmacy in the original bottle with the name of the child, the name of the medication, the time and amount to be administered, and how it is to be administered. No over-the-counter medication will be given without a doctor's written order. Medications will be kept in the health office of the school.

Emergency Drills:

Fire and tornado drills will be practiced during the school year. Children will learn appropriate procedures for taking shelter from storms and evacuation procedures for leaving school. Other emergency drills will be scheduled, as determined by the administration.

Smoke Free:

All attendance centers are smoke free facilities. This includes all school property outside of the classrooms.

Mandatory Reporting:

The Cedar Falls Community School District complies with the state of Iowa requiring all mandatory reporters working in a school system to report suspected abuse, or neglect, to the Department of Human Services. This is in the best interest of the child.

Curriculum:

The curriculum guides teachers to incorporate content, concepts, and activities that foster social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development and that integrate key areas of content including literacy, mathematics, science, technology, creative expression and the art, health and safety, and social studies. The schedule provides children learning opportunities, experiences, and projects that extend over the course of several days and incorporates time for play, self-initiated learning, creative expression, large-group, small-group, and child-initiated activity.

Cedar Falls Community School District preschool programs use the Creative Curriculum for planning and the Gold Assessment. Creative Curriculum includes setting up interest areas that include blocks, dramatic play, art, play cooking, library, discovery, computers, toys and games, sand and water, music and movement, and outdoors. The Creative Curriculum provides assessment tools that will be reported home three times a year in the fall, winter, and spring. Families will be given ongoing opportunities to share observations from home and contribute to the assessment process. Conferences will be held twice a year. Additional information will be gathered through checklists, observations, two home visits, etc.

Your child will be learning through creative, active play that can sometimes be messy. Your child should wear comfortable, washable clothing as well as rubber-soled and closed-toe shoes to school. While we encourage the use of paint smocks or shirts during art projects, we can't guarantee that spills or stains will not occur. Clothing should be free of words, graphics, or pictures that are profane, immoral, illegal, or disruptive in nature. All families are asked to provide an extra set of clothing for their child in case of an "accident" or messy play. Please clearly label the clothing with your child's name to reduce the possibility of mistakes.

Screens and Assessments:

All PK students will have the following screens and assessments done with them throughout the course of the year (if not already completed by their doctor):

- ❖ Speech,
- ❖ Hearing,
- ❖ Vision,
- ❖ Height & Weight,
- ❖ Blood Pressure,
- ❖ Dental,
- ❖ Social Emotional (DECA), and a
- ❖ Developmental screen done within the first 45 days of enrollment/Brigance Preschool Screen.

Outdoor Play and Learning:

We have daily opportunities for outdoor play as the weather permits. This allows children the opportunity to develop their large motor skills, get exercise, and be active. Sometimes we spend more time getting bundled up than we spend outside. We use the District guidelines to determine if the wind chill factor is safe for outdoor play (0° F or below).

In order to make sure that your child can play comfortably outside, it is important to dress your child according to the weather. When it is cold outside, they need a warm coat, boots, snow pants, mittens or gloves, and a hat (labeled with your child's name). For the warmer days, dressing your child lightly is just as important. For those in-between days dressing your child in layers is a practical idea.

There are areas on the playground for children to be in the shade and still be active. We encourage you to bring a hat or other clothing for your child to wear as another protection from the sun. Sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher will be applied to your child's exposed skin, if you wish to send it with your child and only with your written parental permission to do so.

Program staff will complete the National Program for Playground Safety's Suggested General Maintenance Checklist periodically.

Area Education Agency (A.E.A.):

Central Rivers AEA with its main office in Cedar Falls provides us with services which include hearing screen, speech, consultation or direct therapy which may provide added information, techniques, or individual assistance which can help the school make the most appropriate educational experience possible for your child. Federal and state regulations require that parents provide written approval prior to the initiation of any of the above services.

If through observation or information gathered, the teacher feels that there is a concern related to your child's development or other special needs, the teacher will discuss this with the family during a conference, sharing their findings. With the knowledge and consent of the family, the next steps may include:

- ❖ The teacher requests assistance from the PK Assistance Team to design possible interventions/solutions in areas of concern.
- ❖ After implementing suggested ideas, there may be consultation with Central Rivers AEA building support personnel to further address areas of concern.
- ❖ If concerns are not resolved, the family, school, and Central Rivers AEA would continue to address them through the Child Find Process, which states: "If a child is then determined to be an eligible individual, the team will develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) designed to meet the educational needs of the student."

Early Childhood Special Education Teachers:

Cedar Falls Community School District meets the needs of students with IEP's through an inclusion model, or a self-contained program. The teachers who work with special needs students have an Early Childhood Special Education Degree and are highly-qualified.

Weapon Policy:

No student shall carry, have in his or her possession, store, keep, leave, place or put into the possession of another student any real weapon or a look-alike weapon on any school premises, in any school vehicle or any vehicle used by the school or for school purposes, in any school building or the buildings or premises used for school functions, whether or not any person is endangered by such actions. "Look-alike weapon" means any item that resembles or appears to be a weapon. *Violation may result in a student suspension/expulsion.*

Family Involvement:

The school district will, to the extent possible, provide full opportunities for meaningful participation of the families with children with limited English proficiency, families with children with disabilities, including providing information and school reports in an understandable and

uniform format and, including alternative formats on request, and, to the extent possible, in a language families understand.

The school district believes that families should be supported in making decisions about services that their children may need. The teaching staff will provide information to families about available community resources and assist as requested in helping the family make connections.

It is the policy of the Cedar Falls Community School District not to discriminate in either: its educational programs on the basis of race, religion, creed, socioeconomic status, color, sex, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability; or its employment practices on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, ethnic background, age, disability, or genetic information. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the district's Equity Coordinator, Dr. Adrian Talbot, Executive Director of Human Resources, James L. Robinson Administrative Center, 1002 West First St. Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613, 319-553-3000.