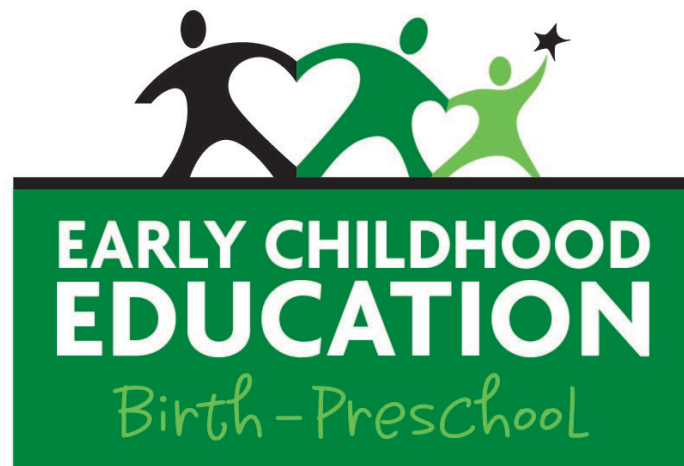


The Launching Pad Preschool



2024-25 Parent Handbook



Launching Pad Preschool is a 4-Star rated Parent Aware Program. The highest rating offered, it reflects a commitment to high quality programming using research-based best practices, while preparing children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Rockford Area Early Childhood Programs is a program of the Rockford Area Schools Community Education Department.

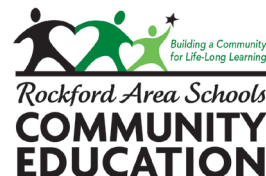


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Introduction

Welcome to the Launching Pad Preschool! The purpose of this handbook is to assist you in knowing more about this program offered through Rockford Community Education. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook. It includes information specific to the Launching Pad Preschool.

Tiffany Reinhard, Coordinator
reinhardt@rockford.k12.mn.us

Philosophy

We believe that a child learns best in an atmosphere of love, warmth and acceptance. Our teachers listen to children, allow them to take the initiative, and yet guide them in productive and non-competitive ways.

Our program is founded on the belief that all children have great potential, are curious, and interested in constructing their own learning. We encourage positive peer and social relations, development of critical thinking skills, and facilitate the development of self-esteem by fostering independence and problem-solving skills.

We further believe that parents are the child's first and primary teachers and we enhance and support the parents in this important role.

It is important to remember that development is a journey, not a race. Children benefit from the individual, measured pacing of the journey, not from achieving developmental milestones at the earliest opportunity. We offer only developmentally appropriate activities for the children and will not push beyond what they are comfortable doing.

Jean Piaget generally is recognized as the leader in the field of early childhood education in the research and understanding of a child's development. From ages two to seven, a child is developing many of the cognitive skills that are the foundation for all formal learning. Attempts to hurry a child's cognitive development are not worthwhile: Piaget's research documents that the stages of cognitive development cannot be skipped, nor is it possible to speed through them. While most children at the youngest ages are able to memorize and recite, these skills do not represent meaningful learning in the preschool years. In our setting, we encourage deep and complex thinking. This fosters the tendency in children to be curious, to wonder, investigate then to question, study, and analyze so they can think critically. This is true preparation for life-long learning. "Academics" are very much embedded within our daily work. They are found in both the ordinary moments of our day and in the project work that we may do.

Children have a real understanding only of that which they invent themselves, and each time we try to teach them something too quickly, we keep them from reinventing it themselves. ~ Jean Piaget

Staff

Teachers are typically licensed in early childhood education and are carefully selected by our interviewing committee. Teachers are required to attend workshops, conferences, and other in-service training opportunities to keep abreast of the best way to enhance children's learning. Assistants are all parents and some have had children in our program. District #883 has a licensed school nurse on duty at all times.

Coordinator - Tiffany Reinhard

Children's Teachers - Michelle Anderson, DeAnn Lommel, BethAnn Brooks, Lindsey Stotts

Assistant Teachers - Lisa Feyen, Katelin Schroeder, Cathy Egbert, Kimberly Johnson, Courtney Thorson.

Administrator: Melissa Joseph, Community Education Director

Advisory Council: Composed of community members, including parents with children in the program, the advisory council assists with direction, support, program development, public relations, and evaluation of the program. Please contact your child's teacher or the coordinator if you wish to serve on the Advisory Council.

Program Information

Enrollment: Each class has one teacher and one assistant and a maximum of 16-18 children.

Funding: Our program is supported by tuition fees from parents along with a small amount of funding from the state for tuition assistance purposes.

Location: Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School, 7650 County Road 50, Rockford, Minnesota, classrooms 209, 210, 211, 212, and 305.

Telephone Calls - Messages

The Early Childhood Programs phone number is 763-477-7500. All teachers have voice mail and you will be able to leave a message for your child's teacher. *If it is a very important message, such as a change in your child's dismissal routine, please speak to someone in the Early Childhood Office or REAMS office.*

Birthday Snacks

Please send nutritious foods rather than sweets.

Since nutrition is one of the main components in our preschool program, **please do not send cake, cupcakes, cookies, candy, caramel-type popcorn, "fruit snacks," or other sweets.** State law does not allow homemade treats.

Hours:

Morning class: 8:05 - 10:45 AM

Afternoon class: 12:15 - 2:55 PM

All-day class: 8:05 AM - 2:55 PM

Days: Launching Pad Preschool classes are scheduled for 60, 90, or 150 class sessions during the 2024-25 school year. The days off due to no school are built into the total, so you are not losing any of the 60/90/150 days when there is no school.

School closings/delays: If school is closed for any reason, then preschool classes will also be canceled. If there is a two-hour late start, there will be no morning preschool; all day preschool will be 2 hours late and PM preschool will be held as usual.

Make-Up Days: When preschool is cancelled due to weather related events, Launching Pad Preschool will make-up as many preschool sessions as the K-12 school calendar and program calendar permits. As these occurrences are beyond our control, refunds will not be issued.

Transportation: Parents are expected to provide transportation or arrange for car-pooling. Free transportation is available if there is room on regularly scheduled district bus routes.

Children who ride the bus to and/or from school are met by the assistant teacher at the bus stop every morning and at mid-day. Teachers and assistants walk children to the individual buses each afternoon.

Snacks: Nutritious snacks will be served daily. We ask that parents help provide snack food to assist in keeping the cost of tuition down. Food will not be used as punishment or reward. Again, no sweet treats, please.

Field trips: Parents will be notified of any field trips and may be asked to volunteer to help supervise children. A small fee may be required for some field trips.

Clothing/backpack: Your child's clothing should be comfortable, washable, and designed so that he/she is generally able to manage toileting by him/herself. Classes go outside when the weather permits. Therefore sweaters, snowsuits, raincoats, caps, mittens and boots should be easy and big enough for the child to dress him/herself. Please clearly mark each item with the child's name for identification, particularly snow boots, snowsuits, jackets, etc. Your child will need to carry a large backpack so he/she can bring artwork, notices and other items to and from school.

Student Withdrawal: If you need to withdraw your child from Launching Pad Preschool, we require a written notice of 10 business days prior to your end date. Failure to do so will result in you being billed for the tuition of the required 10 business days.

Curriculum

Our staff has been greatly influenced by training we have received in Reggio Emilia curriculum. We are members of the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance and the Minnesota Reggio Network. We attend Reggio networking sessions and explore literature about the Reggio approach to early education.

Creative Curriculum is research based, aligned with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs), and reflective of our Reggio-inspired approach to early education. Ours is an emergent curriculum – we are always learning and changing as we strive to

ascertain what works best for providing children with tools for learning.

Together, the Reggio Philosophy and Creative Curriculum foster methods of teaching children that reflect “best practices” for age and developmentally-appropriate activities that are exciting, creative, and best encourage children’s growth and learning.

What is a Reggio-inspired approach?

Reggio Emilia, a city in northern Italy, is the home of what many people consider the best program in the world for young children, ages birth to six.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy sees the child as unique, strong, and full of potential and envisions environments that are reflective of learning and relationships between children, teachers and parents.

The Reggio Emilia approach to education is committed to the creation of conditions for learning that will enhance and facilitate the child’s construction of his or her own powers of thinking through the fusion of all the expressive, communicative and cognitive languages.

The Reggio Emilia approach is based upon the following principles:

- The image of the child as curious, competent, and able to build theories.
- Shared discussions among children, among adults, and between adults and children are ways children represent what is learned. Through repeated conversations and revisiting ideas, children can reconstruct their earlier theories.
- The Reggio approach is about guiding children's ideas with provocations. There is collaboration on many levels. Parents are considered an essential collaborator and parent participation is desired and supported.
- The Reggio Emilia approach calls for the introduction of a wide array of creative media and activities as a means of enhancing children's creative, social, and cognitive development. The children represent their ideas and emotions through many "languages," including spoken and written words, visual arts, drama, music, movement, construction and more.
- The teacher's role within the Reggio Emilia approach is complex. Teachers co-explore the learning experience with the children to provoke ideas, problem solve, and critical thinking skills. Teachers help children see the connections in learning and experiences and help children express their knowledge through representational work.
- Teachers document children's processes of learning in many ways - through photographs, written records, journals, etc. Projects can emerge from children's ideas and/or interests, or by knowing what is of interest to children, teachers can introduce them: shadows, puddles, tall buildings, construction sites, nature, etc.
- Time is a critical factor but not measured by the clock or calendar. Children's own personal rhythms and own sense of time is considered important.

Breakfast/Lunch:

During the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session, lawmakers signed into law the Free School Meals program for students:

Eligible for 1 reimbursable breakfast, free of charge:

- **AM classes and all-day classes**

Eligible for 1 reimbursable lunch, free of charge:

- **All-day classes**

Even with this change, districts are still required to keep track of meals served to each individual child and families that qualify for benefits. We will continue to collect the Application for Educational Benefits. Students qualifying for benefits increases federal and state funding to support learning experiences for students in Rockford Area Schools. Qualifying for benefits also helps your family reduce fees in other areas of your child's school experience.

Parents may provide cold lunches and purchase milk for \$.60 each. Lunch is to be eaten in designated areas only.

If your child brings his/her lunch:

- Make sure the lunch is clearly labeled.
- Low sugar and high fiber are important.
- Remember protein/vegetables/fruits/grains.
- Please don't send candy or more than one cookie.

If you intend to purchase milk, it is necessary to have funds available in your student's food service account. When you log into [Infinite Campus Parent Portal](#)* you will see the Food Service tab in the menu. On this tab you can view individual or family meal account balances, view daily meal purchases in real time, and sign up to receive low balance e-mail notifications. You have the convenience of making online payments directly through [Infinite Campus Parent Portal](#).

All-Day Preschool

Children will have preschool in the morning and then there will be a lengthy break for lunch and a quiet time, or naptime, for those who choose to sleep. The afternoon will continue with another session of preschool that will be at a more relaxed pace, with time for enrichment activities and group time.

Please send a small blanket, one that can remain at school with your child for naptime. We will furnish a soft mat for your child, but a blanket from home will add to their comfort. Please put your child's name on the blanket.

Calendar

We follow the school year calendar of Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School, except that we begin later and end earlier, and offer mid-year parent-teacher conferences.

Conferences

Every family has a parent/child conference with the teacher before classes begin in September. Parents also have the opportunity to have a formal conference to discuss their child's progress in January. At the end of the year, each parent receives a summary report of his/her child's progress.

Daily electronic journals

Teachers e-mail parents a recap of each day. Parents who do not have e-mail service receive a paper copy of the e-mail.

Gifts to Employees

Refer to District Policy 421

Employees are not allowed to solicit, accept, or receive a gift from a student, parent, or other individual or organization of greater than nominal value.

Parents/guardians and students are encouraged to write letters and notes of appreciation or to give small tokens of gratitude.

Guidance Procedures

By noticing children behaving positively and praising them for this, the need for discipline is greatly reduced. We believe positive reinforcement, redirection of negative behavior, and an explanation of what is expected and why is the best and easiest way of handling inappropriate behavior. Yet, at times, purposeful discipline becomes necessary for the good of the individual child and the other children in the program.

The following is the course of action that will be taken, if needed:

1. First time - identify the undesirable action to the child as being inappropriate.
2. Second time - reminder of rule.
3. Third time - brief "break-time" from the activity to calm down and/or help regulate oneself.
4. If the inappropriate behavior continues, a parent-teacher conference will be requested to discuss alternative measures of guidance.

Referral:

The Launching Pad Preschool is designed to serve students ages three to five years old. It is a non-mandated community education preschool program. Though every effort is made to meet the educational needs of every student, if a child's behavioral, developmental or cognitive needs exceed the typical services offered to children in our program, then we will seek parental permission to begin the referral process for consultation and/or assessment to the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) team. This is rooted in our commitment to the success of all students by providing developmentally appropriate education to each one.

Emergency Procedures

We will participate in fire, tornado, and safety drills so the children are familiar with the procedures.

Health Information

District #883 has a licensed school nurse on duty at all times. All immunizations must be current according to state law. Your child must complete Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (offered by the school district) prior to being enrolled in the program, within 90 days after the enrollment date, or when your child reaches the age of 3 years and 7 months. Please call our office to set up an appointment at 763-477-7500.

For your child's well-being and the protection of the other children, your child should be kept home if he/she has the following:

Red eyes	Heavy cough
Upset stomach	Ear ache
Open sores	Swollen glands
Fever	Diarrhea

Children should be fever free for 24 hours *without* the aid of medicine (Tylenol, Motrin, Advil, etc.) before returning to school. Also, when the illness includes vomiting or diarrhea, please wait to return to school until it has been 24 hours since the last incident.

If your child becomes ill at school, the teacher will notify the parents or the contact person on the emergency card if the parents cannot be reached. You should have someone who can care for your child if he/she cannot remain at school.

The district student health service is staffed by a licensed nurse. Other health services may be provided to students under the direction and supervision of a licensed school nurse. In the event of an emergency, 911 will be notified along with the parent/guardian.

Please notify us if your child has a contagious illness. The staff will notify you if a contagious illness exists among the preschool children.

All prescription medications require a doctor's order and signed parent permission. The medication must be brought to the school in its original container with a label prepared by a pharmacist. This form must be completed annually (once per school year) and/or when a change in the prescription or requirements for administration occurs. Medication, with the exception of Epi-Pens, will be stored in a locked receptacle in the EC Office. Epi-Pens can be stored in the child's respective classroom.

Attendance:

If your child will be absent from preschool, please call the attendance line at 763-477-7525 and leave a message.

Tobacco-Free Schools

Refer to District Policy 419

School district students and staff have the right to learn and work in an environment that is tobacco free. School policy is violated by any individual's use of tobacco, tobacco-related devices, or electronic cigarettes in a public school, on school grounds, in any school-owned vehicles, or at any school events or activities.

Tuition/Fees

Tuition is divided into a nine-payment plan and is due on the 1st of the month – all payments are the same regardless of school vacation days, conferences, etc.

Payment months:

June, by the September conference, October, November, December, January, February, March, April.

TUITION IS DUE ON THE 1st DAY OF EACH MONTH. A \$25.00 LATE FEE WILL BE ASSESSED FOR PAYMENTS MORE THAN 5 BUSINESS DAYS LATE. If your tuition is more than three weeks late, LPP reserves the right to withdraw your child from the program if arrangements have not been made with the Coordinator.

There is a non-refundable registration fee: \$40 for the first child - \$30 for the second child that is due with the application in order to process the registration.

If your child is absent for an extended time, you will still be responsible for preschool tuition, as we cannot offer that slot to anyone else unless you withdraw your child from the program.

Class options

Children must be at least 3 by 9/1/2024 for:

5 days/week (MTWThF) 8:05 AM–10:45 AM:
\$365/month.

3 days/week (MWF) 8:05 AM–10:45 AM or 12:15 PM–2:55 PM: \$250/month

2 days/week (T/Th) 8:05 AM–10:45 AM or 12:15 PM–2:55 PM: \$200/month.

2 days/week ALL DAY (T/Th) 8:05 AM–2:55 PM:
\$310/month.

Children must be at least 4 by 9/1/2024 for:

5 days/week ALL DAY (MTWThF) 8:05 AM–2:55 PM:
\$640/month

3 days/week ALL DAY (MWF) 8:05 AM–2:55 PM:
\$415/month.

Late fees: There is a \$25 late fee for tuition payments received more than 5 business days past the first of each month. There is a \$10 late fee for each 15 minutes a child is picked up late from preschool.

Drop-off/Pick-Up for Preschool children:

- Parents are requested to bring their child to the classroom no more than 10 minutes before scheduled starting time. A child should not be dropped off outside the elementary school on their own unless arrangements have been made previously with ECP staff.
- Parent must notify LPP if someone other than the parent will pick the child up from school on any one day, or on a regular basis.
- Parents must notify LPP and transportation if their child is to get off the bus at any place other than the normal drop-off point. (A child may only be delivered to an area within the general bus route.) The transportation supervisor requests a three-day notice and parents are asked that they deviate from the normal bus route only in case of an emergency.
- Parents should pick their child up outside the classroom promptly at the scheduled release time.

Busing

Bus transportation to and from preschool is available if:

- 1) The pick-up/drop-off point is on the regular bus route and,
- 2) There is space available on the bus. Busing policy permits only one address for pick-up each day and one address for drop-off each day.

Parent Participation

We welcome parents into our classrooms as observers and/or helpers. Please call your child's teacher to arrange a time for your visit.

What we expect from you:

- **Please pay tuition promptly on the 1st of the month. You may pay online on *ELEVO*, or by check or cash in our office.**
- Talk to the teacher or coordinator about any concerns you have about the program, your child, or related matters.
- Inform the EC office of any changes in phone number (work or home), address, or emergency information.
- Make sure your child has an adequate night's rest before sending him/her to school.
- Assess your child's health before sending him/her to school. (See Health Information above.)
- Read any correspondence via email or sent home with your child as you check the backpack each day.
- Label your child's personal items.
- No expensive or fragile items should be sent to school with your child - these may get broken or lost.
- Arrange to have an ill child picked up from the health office promptly.

What you can expect from us:

- An atmosphere of warmth, love and acceptance.
- Individual, positive attention for each child.
- A conscientious and thoroughly planned program with age-appropriate activities.
- A pleasant, safe, well-supervised, and healthy environment.
- Information sent home on a regular basis about activities, special events, or if there are concerns about a particular situation.
- Confidentiality of all information pertaining to children or families.
- Opportunities for you to be involved in your child's education.
- Children who ride buses will be met at the bus in the AM and be placed individually on buses in the PM.
- Our staff is required by law to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

Sample Daily Schedule

A daily schedule and on-going documentation of the children's experiences are displayed in each classroom as well as our common areas. Parents are strongly encouraged to pay attention to the displays as they provide a glimpse into the inner life of the classroom community. Children learn about time from the daily, predictable routines that are established.

A sample of the daily schedule may include:

5-10 minutes

ARRIVAL

Free choice time

15-20 minutes

MEETING

Hello, sharing, story time and explain new activities

80 Minutes

PLAYFUL LEARNING

Hands-on activities, explore learning stations; projects

HEALTHY SNACK & WATER

Wash hands, social interaction, conversation, and manners. Children choose snack as a self-directed, independent activity

15 minutes

MUSIC & MOVEMENT CIRCLE

Songs, music, finger plays

10-15 minutes

GROSS MOTOR

Outdoors or play in large motor room; extra story or songs

10 minutes

DISMISSAL

Get ready, good-byes, pick-up or buses

Interest centers for developmentally appropriate activities:

Creative: Art, music, building blocks and dramatic play.

Literacy: Writing tools, paper, alphabet, books, story writing and documenting.

Science: Exploration, natural science, water/sand experimentation; "How?" "What?" "Why?" "Where?" "How much?"

Music: Experimenting with music, singing, listening, creating, performing, movement exploration, rhythms, playing instruments and exposure to many types of music.

Large muscle activity: A large muscle room and outdoor play area offer many opportunities for running, climbing, jumping, sliding, riding and balancing.

Math: Hands-on activities provide concrete experiences with counting, matching, sequencing, weight, size, volume, and one-on-one correspondence; children also experiment with shapes and manipulatives to learn classifying, sorting and predicting.

Acknowledgement Form

I have received a copy of the 2024-25 Launching Pad Preschool Parent Handbook.

Student Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date