

## COUNCIL ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT – KINDERGARTEN HANDBOOK

*As your child enters the new and exciting world of kindergarten, we want you to know that his/her success and happiness is important to all of us at Council Rock. By working together, we can make this first educational step a positive experience for your child. Your encouragement and assistance at home is crucial to this endeavor. Please take a moment and review the important information contained in this booklet. Should you need further information or assistance, please feel free to call us.*

*Respectfully,*

*Mark J. Klein, Superintendent of Schools*

**KINDERGARTEN** - The kindergarten program provides young children with hands-on learning experiences in art, health and safety, language arts, mathematics, music, science, and social studies. Children develop reading and writing skills. They are encouraged to ask questions, seek answers and think critically. Through structured play, the children develop social skills.

**THE KINDERGARTEN CHILD** - **The education of young children must be in keeping with their unique mode of learning.** Children learn in different ways through their senses. Some children are strong visual learners. They are able to extract meaning from what is seen. Others learn more effectively through the sense of hearing. Still others, the tactile learners, need the sense of touch. **Every child has a personal learning style.** By understanding it, parents can help their child develop natural strengths.

### **THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM**

- Provides time for both quiet and active hands-on experiences
- Provides opportunities for child-selected and teacher-selected activities
- Allows for individual, small, and large group activities
- Is a half-day program

**ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS** - Children **shall** be admitted to kindergarten provided they have reached the chronological age of five years (5.0) on or before the first day of September of the new school year. There shall be **no early admission to the kindergarten program.**

**PROOF OF BIRTH DATE** - Documentation of age requirement for admission may be satisfied by:

1. Original birth certificate or duly attested transcript of the birth certificate
2. Original Baptismal certificate or transcript of the record of Baptism – duly certified and showing date of birth

**IMMUNIZATIONS** - According to state law, each child entering school for the first time **must** be immunized against:

1. Diphtheria
2. Tetanus (lockjaw)
3. Polio
4. Measles (Red Measles)
5. Rubella (German Measles)
6. Mumps
7. Hepatitis B
8. Proof of varicella (chickenpox) immunity (by immunization, history of the disease, or immunity confirmed by laboratory report)

The law requires that immunizations for measles, rubella, and mumps be administered after 12 months of age. Your family physician will provide you with a record of these immunizations. You will be asked to provide this information prior to your child's admission to school. The only exceptions are for religious or medical (if the child cannot receive the vaccine) reasons. In these cases, special forms are available from the school nurse.

**MEDICATION** - Prescribed medications necessary for your child's health can be administered during the school day. If your child must have medication, it is suggested that you have your family doctor prescribe it outside school hours. Please read the district's policy on Health Services before sending medication to school with your child. The policy can be found on the district website, under [Health Services](#).

**KINDERGARTEN TESTING** - Children enter kindergarten with a wide variety of experiences, different rates of developmental growth, and distinct levels of academic achievement. Because of Council Rock's commitment to meeting the needs of all children, we have developed assessment tools to identify each child's basic skills. A variety of assessment tools are used by the kindergarten teachers to determine the strength of each student. This information is shared with parents at the November conference.

**ATTENDANCE** - Schedule for a normal kindergarten day: **AM Session 9:10–11:45; PM Session 1:05–3:40.**

On **early dismissal** days the kindergarten program changes. To accommodate a balanced approach to the program, the AM and PM sessions alternate attending school in the morning on **early dismissal** days. Please refer to the online school calendar to determine on which **early dismissal** days your child will attend school.

**School hours on early dismissal days are 9:10-12:15. On early dismissal days, your child will be transported home on the same bus in which he/she arrived at school - there is no "Kindergarten" bus on early dismissal days.** This is different from the regular school day transportation procedures. Parents may drop off children between 8:55 and 9:10 AM or 12:50 and 1:05 PM. Remember to check for delays in school openings due to inclement weather.

#### **TRANSPORTATION**

- It is important that your child knows the rules of safety: how and where to walk coming to and from school, what to do when approached by a stranger, and the rules for riding on the bus.
- Transportation scheduling and parental request are factors in determining AM or PM class assignments. The district will send you a postcard with the bus number and bus stop location prior to the opening of the school year.
- If there is a need to alter your child's normal dismissal or means of transportation, **the request must be made in writing to your child's classroom teacher.**
- Conditions, such as inclement weather, sometimes warrant an **unscheduled early dismissal** from school. Unscheduled early dismissals will be announced on local radio and TV channels and will also be posted on Council Rock's website. It is important that arrangements are made in advance for your child's care when such occasions occur. **IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT CHILDREN KNOW WHERE TO GO WHEN PARENTS ARE NOT AT HOME.**

**COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME** - An important key to a child's success is good communication between the school and home. There are several occasions which are designed to facilitate communication between the parents and teacher: Back-to-School Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and Report Cards, which are sent home at the end of each marking period. For individual questions or concerns, parents are encouraged to contact their teacher. Because teachers are with their class during the day, it is often impossible for them to come to the telephone. A note will facilitate a timely response from the teacher. Sometimes parents are asked to meet with the Instructional Support Team (IST) to discuss strategies to assist their child. Members of the Instructional Support Team are the parents, classroom teacher, and perhaps other staff members who can provide helpful suggestions.

**THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM** - The use and organization of time, space, and materials in the kindergarten classroom address all areas of a child's development – intellectual, physical, and social.

**KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM OVERVIEW** - It is our firm belief that every child is entitled to a kindergarten experience and that this phase of education should be an integral part of the total educational program.

**POSITION STATEMENT ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT** - Typically, young children enter school eager to learn. In order to foster that enthusiasm, we believe that young students are ready for reading and writing experiences. It is our philosophy that a large part of a child's school day should include immersion in a rich language-filled environment which promotes the sharing of real (or approximations of real) reading and writing. Children share orally and aurally when they are learning to speak and listen; they learn to read and write in much the same way – in a sharing atmosphere. Books are the “hub” from which all other activities extend. Children learn that books are meaningful and pleasurable. In a relaxed “literate environment” the children utilize real literature. Many students “pretend” to read and some read by themselves. They experiment with writing. The key to reading readiness is to allow children to “live” in an authentic, language-rich, flexible environment.

**LANGUAGE ARTS** - Children experience a language-rich environment that promotes positive attitudes regarding reading, listening, speaking, viewing, composing, and researching. The program emphasizes the sharing of children's literature and allows for all developmental levels of reading and writing behaviors. The environment also fosters the investigation of language patterns, letters, words, and sounds.

**MATHEMATICS** - Children develop basic mathematical skills and are encouraged to develop a curiosity and confidence working with mathematical concepts.

**LIBRARY** - Children learn to use the services provided by the library and gain an appreciation of the purpose of a library. They will learn to listen and respond to selections from quality children's literature.

**SCIENCE** - Through a multi-sensory approach, children develop an interest about the physical world around them. Exploration, observation, and classification of the physical world will be an integral part of the science program.

**MUSIC** - Children are introduced to the basic elements of music. Concepts of loud/soft, fast/slow, high/low, same/different, and the "heartbeat" of music are explored through singing, listening, movement, and playing instruments. Varied styles of music are incorporated into the curriculum to enhance a positive attitude towards learning.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY** - Children develop an awareness for personal health and safety practices as they apply to daily life. Areas include personal hygiene, nutrition, and safety both at home and in school.

**TECHNOLOGY** - Children explore the parts of the computer and instructional software programs that will support and enrich their learning experiences.

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT** - Children learn to make new friends, work and play cooperatively with other children, develop independence and self-confidence, learn self-control and how to follow rules.

**ART** - Children work with basic shapes, line direction, and color identification. They are encouraged to use symbols to convey ideas while taking part in drawing and painting activities. Proficiency with using pencils, scissors, paste, and paints are encouraged.

**SPECIAL SERVICES** - The Council Rock School District provides specialized instruction for children identified with special needs. The District offers special programs for all identified students based on their individual strengths and weaknesses. Programs are offered within Council Rock schools whenever possible. Based on a specific student's needs, the program might also be provided outside of Council Rock schools in classes operated by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit or other educational service providers.

Screening for learning, social/emotional, speech/language, physical, vision, and hearing difficulties occur on an ongoing basis. When a child is thought to be in need of specially designed instruction and/or educational accommodations, a team of school personnel in conjunction with the student's parents will conduct an evaluation to identify needs and make program recommendations. Please see your child's teacher or principal if you believe your child may be in need of special programs or services.

## **PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR READING – LEARNING TO READ BEGINS WITH YOU!**

### **Preparing Your Child to Learn to Read**

The first five years of a child's life are so important in preparing him to read. What can you do as a parent in those first few years?

- First, and most importantly, read to your child when your child is an infant and continue to read to him/her as long as s/he will listen.
- Model life-long reading habits for your child. Show him that you read the newspaper to find out what is happening in the neighborhood, in the community, in the state you live in, in our country, and in the world. Let your child see you reading for pleasure: magazines, books, letters from friends, e-mail messages on the computer.
- Be sure your child has the tools with which to begin to read. This includes early emergent books that are for very young children, alphabet books of all types, magnetic letters with which to make words, letter/sound games to use everywhere (even on the refrigerator), books of all types, soft-back books, hard-back books, cardboard books, books with flaps, books with just pictures, and photo books with captions of family events.

### Teach Your Child His/Her Name First

The best place to begin is with teaching your child to recognize and then write the letters in his/her name.

- Start with letters in his/her first name, then once he has mastered the names of those letters, teach him/her the letters in his/her last name.
- Provide your child with tools to use for writing: crayons, markers, paper, white boards, paintbrushes and water colors.
- Make sand paper letters for your child to trace. Encourage your child to make letters from clay. Pour salt in a square baking pan and let your child practice tracing the letters of his name in the “salt pan.”
- Verbalize the movements as you model how to form a letter (for the letter “L,” say “Start at the top and go down and then over”). All directional movements when forming letters should **start at the top and go down**. Hold your child’s hand and/or arm as he tries to form letters and have him verbalize the movements you have taught him.

### Talk to Your Child About Books

It is important to read many different types of books to and with your child.

- Try to engage him in conversations about the story, the characters and the problems they may be facing.
- Ask your child what he would do in a similar situation. This will encourage your child to “think” about the story as you read it.

### What Types of Books Should I Read to My Child?

The children of today are fortunate to be able to hear wonderful literature at a very young age. The books of today have interesting stories and beautifully illustrated pictures.

- If you are not sure, ask the children’s librarian at your local library, or go to a local bookstore and ask for assistance.
- Alphabet books are an excellent choice for young children as well as books by Tomie DePaola, Patricia Polacco, Bill Martin, Eve Bunting, Leon Lionni, Lois Ehlert, Jane Yolen, Mem Fox, and Angela Johnson.
- Not only should you read, but you should also just recite old-fashioned “**nursery rhymes**” to your child. This should begin when your child is an infant. When is the best time to do this? Whenever you are in the mood. Singing and reciting nursery rhymes during bath time is great, or when walking up/down stairs. Learning nursery rhymes helps prepare a child for reading by hearing the “sing-song” pattern of songs, rhymes and poems. Once your child can speak, read nursery rhymes to him/her and watch how quickly s/he catches on, learning them himself. Children learn many skills by learning nursery rhymes. They develop a sense of rhyming, understand beginning sounds, and are able to begin to be able to blend and segment sounds in words. These skills are all necessary for beginning reading to take place.

### What Does the Research Say?

In recent brain-based research, it has been found that the experiences children have before entering school impact greatly on their ability to learn to read and write.

In addition to taking your child many places, make the most of his time at home during the preschool years. Give him the opportunity to hear and share stories, dramatize stories, to paint, to color, and to write at home.

Research tells us that young children are capable of learning a great deal before entering school. Play games with your child to help him/her learn the sounds and names of letters. For example, ask your child to find different articles of clothing that begin with “s,” like: sock, sweater, sweatshirt; or kitchen items that begin with “s,” like: saucer, spoon, sifter. Point out environmental print to your child. S/He will love to learn the names for: Wendy’s, Pizza Hut, Burger King, McDonald’s, and Taco Bell. Then play games at home with a bag from each eatery and put objects in the bag that begin with the first letter of that eatery (for Pizza Hut: pen, pencil, popcorn, paper plate, paper). You’ll soon start thinking of more games like this to play.

When you read to your child, track the print with your finger and show him/her that we read the left page before the right one. Then once you have shown him, ask him which page you should read first when turning the pages of a book.

It is important for your child to learn left to right movement, and “tracking” will help him to learn this. The sooner he understands this “left to right” movement, the easier it will be for him to learn to read and write.

Most importantly, talk to your child, engage him in conversation, and encourage him to talk to you. Children need to **hear** and **speak** our language proficiently before they can learn to read and write.

Enjoy this wonderful time with your child. Take pictures and make books with short, repetitive sentences about the pictures. Your child will love to look at these books over and over again, and he will learn to read some high frequency words like: see, look, can, go, we, and like, by reading these books over and over again!

### **What You Can Do!**

As your child's **first teacher**, you have a great deal of power in preparing your child to begin to learn to read. Talk to your child, sing to your young child, help your child to learn nursery rhymes, learn to play with words, and most importantly, **read to your child!** Learning to read begins with oral language. Children need to develop good oral language skills for several years before they are even ready to begin to learn the skills needed for reading.

“You may have tangible wealth untold: Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.  
Richer than I you can never be – I had a Mother who read to me.”

*“The Reading Mother” by Strickland Gillilan from Best Loved Poems of the American People*

Help your child to be on his/her way to becoming a life-long reader!

### **PARENTS AS TEACHERS**

**K**indle excitement about kindergarten. Visit your school and meet your child's teacher.

**I**nvite new school friends home to play and help your child build strong relationships.

**N**ever forget safety. Teach your child safety rules about walking and taking the bus.

**D**iscuss what your child will be learning in school: colors, shapes, letters, and numbers.

**E**xplore your neighborhood together. Talk about the world in which you live.

**R**eview the good behavior expected of your child such as following rules and taking turns.

**G**et involved at your child's school. Join the parent association. Volunteer in the classroom.

**A**nswer your child's questions about school. Reassure your child that school is fun.

**R**ead to your child daily. Visit the library together.

**T**urn every day into a learning experience. Let your child help with everyday chores.

**E**ncourage your child to eat well, get enough sleep, bathe daily, and brush teeth.

**N**otice new things your child is learning to do. Reinforce your child's progress with praise.