

Estancia Municipal School District

Preschool Cubs Family Handbook

2024-2025



Estancia Lower Elementary School
119 7th Street


Estancia, New Mexico 87016

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505-384-2007



Welcome to Estancia Municipal School District's Preschool Cubs Program! We are excited to share the journey of learning with you and your child and we look forward to the many exciting adventures the school year will bring.

Estancia Municipal School District's (EMSD) Preschool Cubs Program is designed to provide your child with a developmentally appropriate program that promotes hands-on learning through purposeful play, exploration, independence, social skills, and readiness skills, all of which prepare children for kindergarten. Our teachers follow the FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality which are the New Mexico Preschool Program Standards. New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines provide a systematic approach for learning through engaging literacy, mathematics, science, socialization, and play activities focusing on communication, appropriate social interactions, and social-emotional learning, while incorporating culturally and linguistically relevant topics and routines that will help your child become successful in elementary school and beyond.

We have prepared this Family Handbook to help answer any questions you may have about the Preschool Cubs program. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Cynthia Golden or India Encinias at 384-2007.

PROGRAM PRACTICES AND CURRICULUM

Children enrolled in EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program receive instruction from teachers who follow developmentally appropriate practices for preschool children based upon New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines. Our teachers have been trained and understand child development and learning. Based upon this training, our teachers are able to predict and provide experiences that will support your child's learning and development. Our teachers have also learned that by observing your child's play and interactions with the environment and others, they will better understand how to teach and care for your child as an individual. EMSD's Preschool Program strives to honor and value all of our family's values and heritages, including home languages, to intentionally reverse negative stereotypes. Further, as your child's teachers get to know your child, your family's culture, values, expectations, and factors that shape their lives at home, they will be able to create meaningful, relevant, and respectful learning experiences for your child and their peers within the classroom setting. Using a developmentally appropriate practices approach means teachers meet children where they are developmentally, both as individuals and as a member of a group, and help each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals.

Children will be exposed daily to intentional, developmentally appropriate literacy and math activities in a variety of settings. Activities include singing songs, reciting poems, finger plays and rhyming activities to develop phonological awareness, oral language and vocabulary. Alphabet knowledge and letter recognition are taught through activities such as identifying the letter sounds for the week and writing a pretend menu or grocery list in the dramatic play area to encourage written language. Children will be read to and participate in read alouds in small group and large group settings daily. Your child's teacher will use the Early Learning Guidelines, which are aligned to the Common Core State Standards, in planning appropriate lessons to promote learning in a culturally-relevant, inclusive, play-based yet academically challenging environment using an evidence-based curriculum that will build on fundamental skills.

Play is an important part of learning and child development. Children will be provided ample time to play and explore with peers as well as our trained staff. It is through play that children learn social-emotional skills such as turn taking and how to develop their fine and gross motor skills by working with PlayDough or kicking a ball. Another important part of your child's education will be family engagement activities. These activities will be offered monthly and may consist of field trips, literacy or math nights, and other school activities which encourage learning together as a family.

Your child's teacher will monitor your child's growth through assessment and observations. Each child will be formally assessed three times during the year using the ECOT (Early Childhood Observation Tool). Outcomes from this assessment will be shared with you at Parent/Teacher conferences. Other formative assessments and observational checklists will also be routinely used, allowing teachers to document your child's growth and adjust learning activities accordingly.

PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS

The staff in our Preschool Cubs program identify and set both short and long term goals for the program each year. These goals help guide the program and help the staff make meaningful improvements for continuous growth within the program. Program and classroom instructional plans are available for parents to review.

TEACHER AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT QUALIFICATIONS

New Mexico PreK teachers and educational assistants are required by the State of New Mexico to have or work toward, a degree in Early Childhood Education. The classroom teacher must hold a current New Mexico Early Childhood Education teaching license. NMPreK Preschool Teachers In each preschool classroom, are required to have the following:

- 1) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through third grade;

2) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: PreK through grade three, or

3) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through PreK. If the teacher does not hold one of these early childhood teacher licenses but does hold a K–8 Elementary license and/or a special education PreK–12 license, he or she must provide evidence of successful completion of the following:

1. The early childhood alternative licensure program (coursework or OPAL-Online Portfolio route) within two years of hire or implementation of FOCUS; OR

2. A minimum of twelve college credits annually toward a master's degree leading to one of the two early childhood licenses; OR

3. National Board Certification in early childhood education.

Educational assistants must be working towards or have an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education. Educational assistants (EAs) in each preschool classroom must have an Associate's degree (AA) in early childhood education and hold a level 3 educational assistant license from the PED. Any EA who does not currently possess an AA in early childhood education must provide evidence of successful completion of a minimum of nine college credit hours towards the degree annually.

Any teacher or assistant who does not hold the license or degree, must be working toward acquisition thereof. Teachers and assistants must attend continuous professional development training opportunities and maintain individual professional development plans.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

- 3 Year olds with or without Individualized Education Programs (IEPs): May join the program after their 3rd birthday providing they turn 3 on or before September 1, before 12:01 am, unless the child has an IEP.
- 4 Year olds with or without special needs: May join the program if they turn 4 years old by September 1, before 12:01 am, and be eligible for

kindergarten in the fall of the upcoming school year. Our programs are “capped” at 30 students.

- Proof of residency in the Estancia Municipal School District boundaries
- Current immunization records
- State Certified Birth Certificate
- Custody Orders (if applicable)

RECRUITMENT

EMSD’s Preschool Cubs Program will notify the community of openings through postings on the District website and the District Facebook page, as well as signs posted throughout the community and school district. Students must live in the attendance zone of the Estancia Elementary School. EMSD does not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, nor other unique demographics.

EMSD’s Preschool Cubs Program works collaboratively with Estancia Head Start and Alta Mira to ensure that children receive early intervention and education. EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program shares responsibility with Head Start and Alta Mira in identifying children in the community for participation in early childhood and intervention programs. Children who are served in other programs funded by CYFD PreK will not participate in New Mexico PreK at the EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program site.

SELECTION AND PRIORITIZATION

EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program staff will consider the following situations as priority when making participation selections.

- Children who demonstrate a developmental delay and are in need of services.
- Children who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend a quality early childhood education program within the District’s boundaries

- Children who are not already being funded for early childhood education with another funding source.
- Children who will attend kindergarten in an elementary school designated as a Title I school.

ENROLLMENT

The EMSD's Preschool Program will hold pre-registration mid-April/May each year along with the district's Child Find Screening Event. Parents are asked to bring their child to the event for screening. Children will be asked to perform tasks during the screening to determine levels of achievement and developmental skills. These screenings allow the staff to obtain preliminary data for students.

Applications will also be accepted throughout the school year and can be obtained from the Elementary School office or from the district website.

The enrollment of students is based on the number of PreK slots available.

- If the number of students registered is more than the allotted number of slots allowed by the New Mexico Public Education Department, those students will be placed on a waiting list. The District will reserve minimal slots for special education students who may join the program mid-year and require early intervention services.
- Headstart information will be shared with all families whose children are placed on a waiting list.
- As openings become available during the school year, slots will be filled from the waiting list. Children enrolled in Headstart programs will not be eligible to transfer to the EMSD's Preschool Program unless they demonstrate a developmental disability.

SCREENINGS AND REFERRALS

Estancia Municipal School District offers developmental screening for children ages 0-5 twice yearly and as requested by parents. During Child Find Screening Events, district and community service providers conduct vision and hearing, speech and language, fine and gross motor, and developmental screenings to identify students who may be in need of supports or special services to be successful in school. Parents will be notified if their child needs additional assessments or if there is a suspected delay in development. If further assessment results indicate a delay or need in a specific developmental or academic area, the child will be referred to the Special Education Department.

If a child is referred to the Special Education Department, parents will be contacted to attend a meeting to discuss their child's developmental and educational needs. Upon receiving parental consent, parents and the members of the special education team, including the child's teacher, will develop a plan to help the child be successful in the school setting.

All children enrolled in the EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program need to obtain the following health screenings prior to the beginning of the program or within the first three months of attendance:

- physical examination
- current immunizations
- vision screening
- hearing screening
- dental screening

TRANSITIONING FROM HOME TO SCHOOL AND SCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN

Changes can be scary for preschool children and parents alike. The teachers and staff at the EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program will make every effort to make transitions from being at home with parents to preschool or from preschool to kindergarten as easy as possible. When children transition from home to school, teachers will visit the family and provide opportunities for the children to visit the classroom prior to their first day. Children transitioning from preschool to kindergarten will have opportunities to visit the kindergarten classrooms at the elementary school.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to and from the preschool program is provided for preschool students. Children will ride the regular route bus with other children grades preschool through 12. Preschool students will ride in a district provided car seat while being transported by the school district. Parents are responsible for buckling their child into the car seat at the morning pick up and unbuckling their child at the afternoon drop off. PreK staff members will unbuckle and buckle students in as required at school.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is very important to all childrens' success and is mandatory except in the case of emergencies and illnesses. EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program will follow the attendance and truancy policies of Estancia Municipal Schools. Parents will be notified of the third unexcused absence, fifth unexcused absence, and seventh unexcused absence. Upon the tenth unexcused absence parents will be notified

that the student is now considered habitually truant and other agencies will be alerted.

If a child in the EMSD's Preschool Cubs Program misses ten consecutive days without contacting the school, he or she will be dropped from the program and another student from the waiting list will take their place. The name of the student who was dropped will be placed at the bottom of the waiting list should they desire to return.

For your child's safety, please call the office to report all absences at 384-2007

School Day

EMSD's PreK Cubs program follows the Estancia Municipal School District's school year calendar. PreK students attend Monday through Thursday from 8:25 am to 3:05 pm.

SNOW DAYS/WEATHER DAYS/EARLY RELEASE DAYS

Families will receive automatic emails and phone calls via the district's robo-call system informing you of a closure or delay.

DELAYED SCHOOL DAYS - On delayed school days, classes will begin at 10:30 am. This will be announced as a two (2) hour delay. The breakfast program will be canceled on delayed school days. For students riding the bus, individual bus drivers will notify families of their arrival time. If families do not hear from the driver, the bus will be late by approximately two (2) hours depending on the road conditions in the school boundary area.

ARRIVING AT SCHOOL

If your child does not ride the bus, parents are asked to park in the designated area near the Lower Elementary. At 8:20, a teacher or educational assistant will pick up and escort your child to the preschool classroom to begin class at 8:25 am.

DISMISSAL

Dismissal time will be 3:00 p.m. No child will be released to any adult not listed on the registration form, or without prior communication to the office staff and child's teacher. All persons picking up children must have a photo identification card. Please notify the school in the event of custody changes or concerns.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

Estancia Elementary is fortunate to receive funding for a free breakfast/lunch program for our students. Breakfast and lunch for preschool students are served family style in the classroom.

SNACKS

PreK children will receive a healthy snack each day in the afternoon.

NAPS

Preschool students will have a nap time which will take place after lunchtime play and story time, at approximately 12:30. Children who do not nap will still participate in this period of rest.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Students will need:

- A full size backpack (please label with your child's name on the inside of a strap);
- Change of clothes to be kept at school - 2 full spare outfits in 2 separate zip lock bags, with your child's name written on the front. These will be used in the event of a potty accident or other unfortunate mishap;
- Extra underwear if your child continues to work on toilet training;
- Small pillow and blanket;
- Water bottle; and
- A family picture (can be old or new, as long as everyone is recognizable in it).

DRESS CODE

Please dress your child in clothes that can be worn for active and sometimes messy play. Weather permitting, our students play outdoors every day. Please keep in mind the changing New Mexico weather and dress your child to stay warm or cool depending on the weather that day. Dressing in layers works best to accommodate changing weather. Please put your child's name on all outer clothing.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please put your child's name on supplies, water bottles and other items that could be confused as belonging to another child. Do not send your child to school with personal toys or money.

PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Parents and families are welcome in Estancia Municipal Schools. Research and many years of experience tell us that the more familiar and involved a family is with their child's school program, the more the child learns and grows. Parents should plan to attend all Parent-Teacher Conferences and Annual IEP meetings, in addition to other special events held in the classroom or at the school. Our teachers will ensure that parents are aware of any parent/family activities. Parents are also encouraged to attend the monthly parent trainings covering a variety of topics pertaining to preschool children. If a parent would like to volunteer in the classroom, please contact EMSD's Central Office at (505) 384-2001 to obtain volunteer requirements, which includes a background check. Please look for updates on EMSD's District website regarding visitor requirements.

When visiting the classroom, please follow these steps:

1. Report to the school office to sign in as a visitor.
2. Obtain and wear a visitor's pass after signing in and recording your temperature.
3. Please respect student and family confidentiality: teachers will not share information about children with others.
4. Unless otherwise directed, please sit in the chairs or on the floor. Children are more easily distracted by standing adults.
5. Please do not interrupt teaching with questions. Write them down to ask the teacher after students have been dismissed.
6. When entering into children's interactions or play, follow the teacher's directions.
7. Please let the teachers handle misbehavior. Intervene in an emergency situation only at the direction of the teacher.
8. Siblings or other children are not allowed in the classroom during visitation.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

Our teachers use a variety of positive behavioral supports, including verbal and nonverbal praise, behavior cues, and reward systems to teach students appropriate and socially accepted behaviors at school. Students who continue to demonstrate challenging behaviors will be supported by a behavior intervention plan created by parents, teachers, counselors and other support personnel.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held at least three times per year, generally in August (home visit), October, and February. Your child's teacher will contact you to set up a date and time for the conference. You or a teacher may set additional conferences as needed. To set up an additional conference, speak with your child's teacher to determine a day and time in which all those involved may attend.

HOME VISITS

Prior to the first day of school your child's teacher and educational assistant will visit your home or set up a mutually convenient location to meet with you and your child. This gives you and your child a chance to meet the teachers and gives the teachers a chance to learn important information about your child to help them plan instruction for your child's success.

FIELD TRIPS

Our preschool program schedules field trips that support the current unit of study. Parents are highly encouraged and invited to attend field trips with their child, however, due to the nature of field trips, siblings of school age are NOT allowed to attend. If a parent wishes to transport their own child from the field trip site, prior approval needs to take place. Please talk with the teacher to obtain a release form from the school office. Please submit the release form to the teacher prior to the end of the field trip.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

New Mexico law requires that teachers, administrators and other school staff members report all cases of suspected child abuse and neglect to the County Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) immediately. Failure for a school employee to report can result in criminal penalties. School staff will report to CYFD, who will determine if an investigation is warranted.

STUDENT PRIVACY RIGHTS

The EMSD's Preschool Program follows the provisions set forth in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Student education records are official, confidential documents protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 USC 1232g). FERPA defines education records as all records that schools or education agencies maintain about students, and protects both paper and computerized records. For more information on FERPA, contact the EMSD's Preschool Program Principal or the Estancia Municipal Schools District Office.

HEALTH AND ALLERGIES

Please notify your child's teacher and the school nurse of any food or other allergies and any health risks (asthma, seizures, etc.). It is important that you let the teacher and school nurse know of any changes in your child's health.

MEDICATIONS

Over the counter medications: For your child's safety, please do not send any over-the-counter medications (i.e. aspirin, cough drops) to school. Parents are asked to administer medication at home. If it is necessary to administer over the counter medications at school, please contact EMSD's District nurse, at 384-2071 for instructions.

Prescription Drugs: Prescription drugs will not be administered by the school nurse without a written request signed by the parent/guardian and the physician. This must be on file in the school health office. If your child needs to take prescribed medication during the school day, please contact the Estancia Municipal School District's nurse. Our nurse will provide a Medication Authorization Form to be completed and signed by both the parent and doctor, which must be returned to the school nurse before any medication can be administered. All medications will be administered by the school nurse or health assistant in the health clinic.

SICK CHILD POLICY

If your child is sick or not feeling well, please do not send them to school. A child who is not feeling well is not able to benefit from the type of experience gained at preschool and there is risk of exposure to other students. For this reason, it is important to make plans for days when your child may need to stay home. If you do need to keep your child at home for illness, please contact the school if they are exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- Covid-19 symptoms

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Fever (higher than 100 degrees within the past 24 hours)
- Any contagious disease (including, but not limited to: pinkeye, conjunctivitis, lice, strep throat, chickenpox, and flu)
- Symptoms or signs of possible severe illness such as: uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, unusual lethargy or wheezing.

If your child is too ill to play outside or participate in normal activities, they should stay at home until they are symptom free. Your child may return when he/she is symptom free for at least 24 hours, or when a signed doctor's note is obtained.

If a child gets sick at school, parents will be contacted. Please keep and provide up-to-date contact information to your child's teacher and the school office.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of a school emergency such as fire, tornado, gas leak, or any other emergency which requires the school to be evacuated or dismissed early, it is necessary to have an emergency plan for your child. Please have a second person that your child could stay with until you arrive home, listed on your child's emergency information form. If at all possible, this person should be located on the same bus route your child is on. In the event of an emergency, parents will be notified through the district wide calling system, or an EMSD's Preschool Program staff member.

Remember:

- Please call the office at 505-384-2007 if your child will not be attending school.
- Please be sure your telephone numbers, address, and emergency contact information is current and on file at the school. It is important this information is always kept up to date. If there are any changes, please contact the school office with the new information immediately.
- We look forward to a GREAT year!

