

2022-2023 VPK HANDBOOK



**WASHINGTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN
PROGRAM**

Welcome to the WCSD Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Program! The Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program is designed to help prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond. Each child is unique and special. It is the goal of our prekindergarten to provide individual instruction and tools for each child to be successful in future years. Our VPK classes provide a rich learning experience and caring environment.

Although enrollment in the program is voluntary, families are **expected to abide by WCSD Policies and the VPK Parent Handbook.**

WCSD offers a School Year Program and a Summer Program.

SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAM: The school year program consists of 540 free school hours with an option to pay for the remainder of the school day. This school year VPK is offered on both VES and WVPK campuses. The school year program is limited to space available. Not all eligible children can be served during the school year program. A waiting list of all age-eligible children will be maintained. All children not served during the school year have the opportunity to participate in the summer program. VPK instructional hours are 8:00 – 11:00.

SUMMER PROGRAM: The summer program consists of 300 free hours. The location and times for the summer program will not be established until spring. There is 1 teacher per 12 children. All eligible children, that **did not** receive their free VPK during the school year, are provided a space to be served during the summer at either WVPK or VES.

PURPOSE OF VPK: The Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program is designed to help Florida's children to develop the skills they need to become good readers and successful students. It includes high literacy standards, strict accountability, appropriate curricula, substantial instruction periods, manageable class sizes and qualified instructors. Instructional time for VPK is comprised of planned activities and experiences that prepare children for early literacy, enhance the age-appropriate progress of children attaining the performance standards adopted by the Department of Education/Office of Early Learning for eight domains, and prepare children to be ready for kindergarten.

VPK STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM: The Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards Four-Year-Old to Kindergarten (2017) describe skills that four-year-old children should know and be able to do by the end of their prekindergarten year and are designed to guide prekindergarten administrators and teachers in designing and implementing appropriate early learning activities. Pre-K is a hands-on “learning through play”; however, the standard curriculum used in every classroom is *Frog Street Press*. Learning is a process skill more often than a product. Children learn to be independent, responsible, confident, and ready for success in school. All children are provided opportunities to learn on their individual levels. Since learning is activity based there are not many papers for your child to bring home, but the papers that come home are products your child created. The work will not look like the work of an adult. We want your child to do the best he/she can do on his/her developmental level and be proud of what he/she has accomplished. A comprehensive list of the standards can be found at:
<http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/docs/OEL-VPK154yo.pdf>

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES & TARDIES: Lifelong habits are set at a very early age. Attendance is of utmost importance to remain in the VPK program. Teaching your child that regular attendance and promptness is important. This is best done by ensuring that your child is at school regularly and on time. Future success in school may be affected if your child is absent, or is tardy on a regular basis. VPK funding is linked to your child's attendance. Regular attendance also helps ensure success upon entrance to kindergarten. If your child is not in regular attendance both funding and success are affected. The number of allowable absences for the entire school year is limited to **30** days. Failure to meet this requirement may result in dismissal from the program. The State of Florida provides strict attendance policies to follow. If your child is running a fever, has a bad cold, head lice, diarrhea, or a contagious disease, please do not send him/her to school. Please see our **WCSD Health Policies section**. Please arrive on time. Delayed arrivals are disruptive to the group in progress and also difficult for the arriving child. We understand that it is occasionally unavoidable to be "running late." This practice should not become a regular occurrence. If your child is tardy, you must follow the school's procedures for getting your child to class.

A student may be dismissed from the program, at the District Administration's discretion, if the student is tardy more than 5 days per month and/or has 30 days of absences.

LATE FEE: If a parent/guardian is late picking up his/her child after the end of the program (**free hours or enrichment**), a late pick-up fee will be charged. After the first 10 minutes, parents will be assessed a \$1.00 late fee for every minute past the ending time of the program. **The child will be taken back to the classroom until the parent arrives.** Check with your child's teacher to determine the exact pick-up time and time when late pick-up fees will begin. This fee is to be paid on the day it is charged. If the parent/guardian cannot pay on this day, the date due may be extended only to the next school day.

A student may be dismissed from the program, at the District Administration's discretion, if the student has more than four (4) late pick-up occurrences or unpaid late fees.

ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION: The VPK personnel will ask you to sign a verification form at the end of each month. The purpose of this is to verify our records and the reporting of your child's attendance. This is required by The Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida and the Office of Early Learning. Please sign and return the form promptly. Sample verification form attached.

EMERGENCY: In case of an emergency, we will call you first. If we are not able to reach you, we will call the numbers you have listed in **Parent Portal**. Please list only those people who live near and are available to come get your child. Make sure emergency numbers are kept current. Notify your child's teacher and update Parent Portal **IMMEDIATELY** if your address or telephone number should change.

CALENDAR/HOURS: The program operates according to the approved school district calendar. Students are expected to be in attendance daily and remain throughout the VPK program day. All Elementary Schools will begin at 7:30 am. VPK instruction will begin

promptly at 8:00 am and end at 11:00 am. WCSD students will attend school for 180 days. Please see attached school calendar.

ASSESSMENTS: Florida law requires VPK providers to administer progress monitoring three times a year to all children attending a VPK program. The requirements include the use of Florida's VPK Assessment. State law also requires every child admitted to kindergarten to participate in a statewide readiness screener; regardless whether the child is admitted to kindergarten in a public or nonpublic school. The screener is used to calculate a VPK provider kindergarten readiness rate. The VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rate measures how well a VPK provider prepares four-year-olds to be ready for kindergarten based on the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year Olds. These assessments also help teachers understand what your child knows and can do, which helps in instructional planning.

PARENT PARTICIPATION: Parents are encouraged to sign up for Parent Portal. Parent Portal is a complete online system which allows the parent access to their student's information including, but not limited to: student schedules, discipline, and attendance.

TRANSPORTATION: Florida law specifies that each parent is responsible for the transportation of his or her child to and from the VPK program. WCSD provides limited free transportation. Transportation is only to and from regular school bus stops during the regular school times.

BUS STUDENTS:

BEFORE SCHOOL: Parent/designated adult must remain with the child until the child is seated on the bus.

AFTER SCHOOL: Parent/designated adult must be at the bus stop to receive the child at the arrival time each school day. If a parent/designated **adult is not at the bus stop**, the pre-k child will be returned to the school. If the child is returned to the school several times, they will lose the privilege of riding the bus.

***All Pre-K children are required to wear a nametag, containing needed bus information, to and from school.**

EARLY CHECK-OUT: If you need to check your child out of school early, go to your child's school office and sign him/her out.

WITHDRAWAL: If a child is to be withdrawn from the program before the end of the term, at least one week written notice should be given. Only the parent/guardian who registered the student may withdraw student.

CLOTHING, BATHROOM PROCEDURES AND ACCIDENTS:

- Send your child to school in clothing he/she feels comfortable wearing while playing and painting. Accidents happen and nice clothes can get ruined.
- Flip-flops of any kind are against school rules.

- Dress your child in appropriate clothing for the weather. We go outside every day except when it rains or we have severe weather.
- Label all items such as sweaters, coats and hats with your child's first and last name with permanent marker.
- Children are allowed to use the restrooms as needed during the day. Belts, 1-piece jumpers and clothing that button in the back are discouraged.
- Please send a spare set of clothes with your child on the first day of school with your child's name printed on each item. These clothes will be kept on hand in case of a bathroom accident. If your child should have an accident, his/her soiled clothes will go home in a plastic bag. Remember to send another set of spare clean clothes the next day with your child's name printed on each item.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH: Breakfast and lunch fees are not included in the VPK Program; however, for the 2022-2023 school year all students are eligible for breakfast and lunch at no cost. All WCSD schools are approved for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Program.

A child may be removed from the program, if behavior threatens the safety of him/herself or others and after interventions have been tried and have not been successful. In addition, a child may be removed if the behaviors continue to disrupt the teaching/learning process despite interventions, at the District Administration's discretion.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES: The cooperation of parents/guardians/family members, school personnel, and students is essential if good discipline in the school is to be achieved. Parents/guardians and family members may contribute to good discipline by:

- maintaining a positive attitude toward education;
- showing an interest in their children's progress through regular communication with their children and the school;
- assuring that their children meet the dress code;
- ensuring their children's timely daily attendance;
- teaching their children respect for the authority of school personnel;
- informing the school immediately of any condition or circumstance which may affect their children's ability to learn, to attend school regularly, or to participate in school activities;
- cooperating with school personnel in solving disciplinary problems; and
- not allowing their children to disrupt the education of others.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAM: To complement the free VPK program offered, WCSD also offers an enrichment program. The enrichment part of the day follows the VPK hours in most schools; (check with your school for its specific VPK hours) and is offered from 11:00 a.m. until 2:30. The VPK and Enrichment Program hours provide a seamless 6.5-hour day. All children enrolled in a VPK program are eligible to participate in the enrichment part of the day. The fee

enrichment portion of the program is not supported by the State funded VPK funds or the regular school budget. Therefore, if you want your child to attend beyond the free hours the State provides, it is your responsibility to pay for those additional services. Parent/Guardian **must** provide a rest mat for the enrichment portion of the day.

Enrichment Program Parent Instructions for Payment and Fees

The State sponsored Voluntary PreK (VPK) Program is free. The State of Florida is paying for 540 free hours. WCSD is offering those 540 hours in 180 days for 3 hours (8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.) each day. To complement the free VPK program offered, WCSD also offers an enrichment program. The enrichment portion of the day follows the 3 hr. VPK portion and is offered from 11:00 a.m. until 2:30. The VPK and Enrichment Program hours provide a seamless 6.5-hour day. All children enrolled in a VPK program are eligible to participate in the enrichment part of the day. The fee enrichment portion of the program is not supported by the State funded VPK funds or the regular school budget. Therefore, if you want your child to attend beyond the free hours the State provides, it is your responsibility to pay for those additional services.

GUIDELINE FOR ENRICHMENT PROGRAM –PARENT FEES:

- For a child enrolled in VPK, the fee for attending the enrichment portion of the day is \$50.00 per week. Students whose parent is a full-time employee of Washington County School District will be exempt from these fees.
- When enrolling in the Enrichment Program – Parent Fee portion, parents/guardians must sign a “**Parent Fee Agreement**” confirming that a weekly fee of \$50.00 will be paid for the enrichment portion of the day.
- All payments are due in advance of services. Each payment pays for 5 school days.
- A parent/guardian may pay the fee by cash, check or money order.
- Parent fees are due in advance, every Monday or Tuesday. **If payments become 2 weeks in arrears, a student will only be permitted to attend class during the 3 hours free VPK portion until the account balance is paid up to date.**
- Credits are not issued for days a student is absent. The full weekly fee must be paid even when a student is absent.
- There is no reduction or waiver of fees for vacation, extended illness, surgery, etc. Each child has a reserved place in the program and fees must be paid to maintain the child’s place in the program whether the child is present or not.
- Each time a payment is made via check or money order, WCSD staff will provide the parent/guardian with a written receipt

- Payments may be made in multiples of \$50. \$200 = 4 weeks \$150 = 3 weeks \$100 = 2 weeks \$50 = 1 week
- If you plan to pay with a check, please provide a copy of the driver's license for each person that writes check for the child. Make all checks payable to **WCSD**.
- No cash can be given for checks written for an incorrect amount. Another check must be written or credit for future services must be given.
- The following information must be recorded on each check:
 - Parent/guardian's name, address and telephone number
 - Pre-K student's full name and school attending
- There will not be a refund if a child withdraws before the end of the week. However, if fees for a participating student are pre-paid for more than 2 weeks and the student withdraws from the program, a refund may be given provided prior notice of withdrawal is given, and written request is made to the Pre-K teacher.
- Receipts for fees will be issued to parents/guardians **or** a person financially responsible on the day the payment is received. Please retain your receipts for income tax purposes. Your Pre-K payments may be claimed on your income tax form for child care. We do **NOT** provide print outs of monies paid for tax purposes. Our **Federal Tax ID number is 59-6000898**. Our name is Washington County School District.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION RELEASE

Students' parent(s), as defined by Florida Statutes, shall be notified annually in the Code of Student Conduct that the School Board may release "directory information" to the general public. Directory information includes the following data about a student:

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NUMBERS (If needed)

PARTICIPATION IN OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED ACTIVITIES/SPORTS

WEIGHT AND HEIGHT, IN AN ATHLETIC TEAM MEMBER

NAME OF THE MOST RECENT PREVIOUS SCHOOL OR PROGRAM ATTENDED

DATES OF ATTENDANCE AND DEGREE AND HONORS RECEIVED

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH

Information described in subsections (1)(a), (d), (e), (f), and (g) herein may be published routinely by the School Board in conjunction with press releases about school activities, honor roll announcements, athletic events, and other school-related activities.

Directory information shall not be published when the student's parent(s) submits written notification to the principal within thirty (30) days of distribution of the Code of Student Conduct. Failure to advise the student's principal shall be deemed a waiver of any right to preclude release of such directory information pursuant to Florida Statutes or federal laws.

NO NIT POLICY

Washington County Schools practice "no nit" precautions. Children will be sent home if they are found to have live lice or nits. All nits (louse eggs) must be removed from your child's hair before returning to school. This is an important step for preventing re-infestation.

HB 1557 Parental Rights in Education

In compliance with HB 1557 this statement serves as notification that each school site offers both physical and mental health care services. Parents/Guardians reserve the right to withhold consent or decline any specific service.

Florida Statute 1003.44 – Patriotic Programs; rules:

Each student shall be informed by a written notice published in the student handbook or a similar publication pursuant to s. 1006.07(2) that the student has the right not to participate in reciting the pledge.

Upon written request by his or her parent, the student must be excused from reciting the pledge, including standing and placing the right hand over his or her heart.

**WASHINGTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS’
VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK) PROGRAM**

Please read and initial each item.

As a Parent/Guardian I will:

_____ ensure that my child misses no more than 30 days of the scheduled 180 days of the program. I understand that my child may be withdrawn from the program upon the 31st absence.

_____ see that my child arrives promptly and is picked up on time. I understand that my child may be dismissed after 5 days tardy in 1 month or after 5 late pick-up occurrences. A late fee will be charged for each minute beyond pick up time.

_____ sign and promptly return the Verification of Student Attendance form each month.

_____ notify the school and update Parent Portal immediately if my address or telephone number changes.

_____ ensure that my child participates in the statewide pre-kindergarten and kindergarten assessments.

_____ provide at least one week written notice if my child will be withdrawn from the VPK program.

As a Parent/Guardian I understand:

_____ enrollment in the program is voluntary and that, for the duration of the child’s enrollment, the family will adhere to WCSD Policy and the VPK Parent Handbook.

_____ my child is expected to behave in accordance with the WCSD Code of Student Conduct and Discipline. I understand that my child may be removed from the VPK program if the student’s behavior becomes unmanageable.

_____ excessive absences, tardiness, or late pick up from the program may result in the loss of my child’s VPK enrollment.

_____ if my child stays for the Enrichment Program, I will pay for the services in advance (see Enrichment Program – Parent Fee Instructions and Payments).

_____ WCSD VPK reserves the right to dismiss your child at any time if parents/guardians do not comply with the VPK Parent Handbook or Washington County School Board Policy.

I have read, understood, and *initialed* each item listed above.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Child’s Name

Date