

I have read and understand the Early Childhood Parent Handbook to its entirety. I agree to follow all the rules, policies, and guidelines. **I understand that the first month's tuition and the deposit is non-refundable and there are no refunds during the school year.** I understand that my child cannot attend The Mokena Community Park District Early Childhood Program (Preschool) until all of the proper paperwork is completed and turned in. Including this Handbook sign off sheet.

I understand my child needs to be fully potty trained to attend preschool in the fall.

Child's Name: _____

Program Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (Print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____



Preschool Handbook 2026-2027

10925 W. La Porte Road
Mokena, IL 60448
(708) 390-2401

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Mokena Community Park District Preschool! We are so excited to have your family join our community of learners, explores and friends. Our program is designed to foster a love of learning in a safe, nurturing and enriching environment where children can grow socially, emotionally and academically through play and discovery.

At the Mokena Community Park District we believe in the importance of building strong partnerships between families and educators. Together, we can create a foundation for success that supports each child's unique journey. Our caring dedicated teachers strive to provide meaningful experiences that inspire creativity, curiosity, and confidence.

This handbook is designed to give you an overview of our preschool program including policies, procedures, and expectations. Please take the time to review it thoroughly, as it will serve as a valuable resource throughout the school year. Should you have any questions need clarification, don't hesitate to reach out to our staff we are here to support you and your child every step of the way.

We look forward to an exciting year filled with laughter, learning, and memorable moments. Thank you for trusting us to be part of your child's early education. Let's make is a fantastic year together.

Warm Regards,
Nita Ragsdale
Preschool Teacher
MCPD

Communicable Diseases

To ensure the health and safety of all children and staff, parents must immediately report any communicable diseases, such as measles, chickenpox, COVID-19, strep throat, pink eye, head lice, or mumps, to the preschool staff.

If your child is ill, **please do not send them to class**. When in doubt about the severity of your child's illness, err on the side of caution and keep them at home until they are well enough to attend.

Health Guidelines:

- **Fever:** Children must be free of an elevated temperature for **24 hours** without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- **Antibiotics:** Wait **24 hours** after starting antibiotics before sending your child to school.
- **Nasal Discharge:** If your child has thick, colored mucus from their nose, please keep them at home.
- **Vomiting/Diarrhea:** Children must be free of vomiting or diarrhea for **24 hours** before returning to school.
- **Rashes:** If your child has a rash, they may not attend school unless a doctor confirms the rash is not contagious. Rashes, whether they cover the entire body or just a small area, must be cleared or receive a doctor's approval before the child returns to school.

Thank you for helping us maintain a healthy environment for all students and staff.

Illness and School Attendance

For the protection of all children, **your child must be kept at home or will be sent home** if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- **Elevated temperature** in the past 24 hours
- **Vomiting or diarrhea** within 12 hours of school
- **Any undiagnosed rash**, especially a "weeping" rash
- **Sore eyes or ears**, or discharge from the eyes or ears
- **Profuse nasal discharge**

If a child is determined to be ill by the preschool staff, a **parent or guardian will be contacted immediately** to pick up their child. If a parent/guardian **cannot be reached**, the following emergency contacts will be called in order:

1. Guardian 1
2. Guardian 2
3. Emergency Contact 1
4. Emergency Contact 2
5. Emergency Contact 3

Class Offerings

3's Preschool (Tuesday and Thursday) 9:00-11:30am

Our 3-year-old class is designed to provide young learners with a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment where they can begin their educational journey. At this stage, children are encouraged to develop social, emotional, and early academic skills through play-based learning and hands-on exploration.

The program focuses on helping children build independence, practice sharing and cooperation, and develop self-confidence. Activities are tailored to promote growth in key areas such as language development, fine and gross motor skills, and creative expression.

Daily routines include a mix of structured and unstructured activities, such as circle time, Storytime, art projects, music and movement, and free play. These experiences foster a love of learning and provide opportunities for children to discover their interests while forming friendships with peers.

Pre-K 4 Year old (MWF) 9:00-11:30am

Our 4-year-old preschool class is designed to prepare children for the transition to kindergarten by building on the skills they have already developed. Meeting three days a week, this program provides a balance of structured learning and play-based exploration to foster growth in all areas of development.

In the 4-year-old class, children will:

- Enhance social skills by working collaboratively with peers and participating in group activities.
- Develop early literacy and math skills through engaging lessons, stories, and hands-on activities.
- Explore problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity through art, science, and dramatic play.
- Strengthen fine and gross motor skills with writing practice, cutting, building, and active movement.
- Practice independence and responsibility through classroom routines and self-help activities.

Our caring and experienced teachers create a positive and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to ask questions, try new things, and build confidence in their abilities. This program emphasizes curiosity, teamwork, and a love for learning, all while ensuring your child feels supported every step of the way.

Kinderbridge– 4 year old (M-F) 12:30-3:00pm

Our 5-day-a-week 4-year-old preschool class is designed to provide children with a comprehensive and consistent learning experience that prepares them for a successful transition to kindergarten. This program offers a structured yet playful environment where children can build confidence, independence, and a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

In the 4-year-old class, children will:

- Develop and strengthen pre-reading and early math skills through daily lessons, stories, and hands-on activities.
- Engage in creative problem-solving and critical thinking with science experiments, art projects, and imaginative play.
- Enhance social and emotional skills through cooperative play, teamwork, and conflict resolution activities.
- Refine fine motor skills with writing, drawing, cutting, and other hands-on tasks, and boost gross motor skills with active movement and outdoor play.
- Build independence and responsibility through daily routines, self-care tasks, and classroom responsibilities.

With five days of consistent interaction and exploration, children in this program benefit from a deeper level of learning and practice. Our experienced and dedicated teachers foster curiosity, creativity, and a sense of belonging while ensuring each child feels valued and supported.

Note: Children do not need to have attended a previous class to join this program.



Absences

If your child will be absent, please notify their teacher through Class Dojo before the start of class, including the reason for the absence.

Important Notes:

- If your child has a contagious or communicable illness, a doctor-signed explanation may be required for them to return to school.

Prompt communication helps us maintain a healthy and safe environment for all children.

Health

To ensure your child has a safe and positive learning experience, please inform staff of any specific physical or medical conditions your child may have.

Important Notes:

- If your child has any allergies, notify the teacher immediately.
- If your child requires medication, such as an inhaler or EpiPen, additional forms will need to be completed by the parent. These forms provide consent and detailed instructions for administering the medication.

The safety and well-being of your child are our top priorities. Please communicate any health concerns promptly to help us provide the best care possible. We maintain a healthy and safe environment for all children.

Food Allergies/Special Diet

If your child has any food allergies, it is essential to notify the school. A list of all foods your child is sensitive to must be included on the registration form.

Important Notes:

- For children on a special diet due to medical reasons or religious beliefs, a written notice must be provided to the Park District at the time of registration.
- This information helps us ensure your child's safety and accommodate their needs appropriately.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated as we work together to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all children.

Late Drop off policy

To ensure the safety and supervision of all children, timely arrival is required. The preschool Program center is staffed by one teacher and one aide, who are responsible for supervising children and answering the door. Repeated late drop offs require staff to step away from the classroom, which disrupts instruction and compromises supervision.

Late Drop off– Allowance

- Each child is permitted two late drop– off per month as no charge.
- A late drop– off is defined as arrival after the schedule class start time.
- This allowance is intended for occasion, unavoidable circumstance, not habitual lateness.

Late Drop off Fee

- After the monthly allowance has been used, a one time fee of \$15.00 will be charged for each additional late drop off occurrence.
- Fees will be billed to the account on file are non-refundable and non-waivable.

Additional procedures

- Parents must escort their child into the program center and sign them in for any late drop– off.
- Due to supervision responsibilities, staff may not be able to immediately answer the door.

Frequent late drop-off

- All late arrivals will be documented
- Continued late drop off may result in

⇒ **Dismissal from the program if habitual lateness continues.**

Inclement Weather Days

In the event of inclement weather, notifications will be sent through **Class Dojo** if there is a weather emergency and school is closed.

Important Notes:

- We do not schedule make-up classes or provide refunds for closures due to inclement weather.

Please ensure you are signed up for Class Dojo to receive timely updates and notifications.

Tuition Fees

Monthly tuition fees are due in full the first of each month beginning with September through April (a total of nine months that includes the registration payment), whether the child is in attendance or not. *Please note tuition is due one month in advance.* The fee paid at the time of registration is a non-refundable deposit. (Should you decide your child will not attend Mokena Park District Preschool after registration, your entire deposit will be forfeited.)

Monthly payments can be made in person at the Park Office, by mail, on your Civic Rec account, or by automatic monthly deduction from a bank account or credit card. A monthly discount of \$5 will be applied to those who sign up for automatic monthly deduction.

Absenteeism due to illness or vacation will not warrant a credit or adjustment in the monthly fees. Days missed due to extreme weather conditions or other unforeseeable circumstances, will not be made up.

A late fee of \$10 will be assessed if payment is made after the 4th day of the month. After the 10th day of the month a \$25 fee will be added on. Failure to make payment prior to the 20th day of the month will result in your child being removed from the classroom. A child on the waiting list will then be accommodated, since this is a limited enrollment program. You will also be liable for any collection fees, reasonable attorney's fees, court costs and any other expenses incurred by the Park District in collecting an overdue account.

Please notify the Park Office immediately if you are withdrawing your child from the program.

- **3's Preschool: Fee R/NR: \$145/\$160**
- **Pre K– 4's Fee R/NR: \$185/\$200**
- **Kinderbridge: Fee R/NR: \$280/\$300**

Registration and Deposit Policy

A **non-refundable deposit** of \$50 (registration fee) plus the **first month's tuition** is required to secure your child's spot. **The entire deposit is non-refundable.**

Age Requirements

To be eligible to enroll in classes during the school year, the following requirements must be met:

- **Every child must be toilet trained and capable of caring for their bathroom needs at the start of the program.**
- 3 year old must be three on or before September 1, 2026
- 4 year old must be four on or before September 1, 2026

Required Forms and Information for Registration

The following forms and documents are required at the time of registration. Please note that your child's spot in the program will not be secured without these items:

Early Childhood Registration Form:

- Must be completed in full.
- Include any medical conditions to help us better serve your child.
- Provide emergency contact information and a list of individuals authorized to pick up your child.
- Refusal to complete or sign the form may result in denial of program participation.

Copy of Your Child's Birth Certificate:

- A copy is required at the time of registration for verification purposes.

Immunization Records:

- Records must be signed by a healthcare provider and meet the immunization requirements outlined in this handbook.

Please ensure all documents are submitted during registration to avoid delays. We appreciate your cooperation in helping us provide a safe and organized program for your child.

Late Pick-Up:

- If you are going to be late, please notify us as soon as possible.

Early Dismissal:

- If you need to pick up your child before the end of class, inform a staff member in advance.

Important Safety Measures:

For the safety of all children, all entry doors will remain locked during school hours.

Class Times

- **Morning Class:** 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- **Afternoon Class:** 12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

It is important that your child arrives on time for class. Our days begin promptly, and late arrivals can be disruptive to the learning environment for all students. If you anticipate any difficulties with arriving on time, please speak with the preschool staff so we can address any concerns. Your cooperation ensures a smooth and productive start to each class session.

Late Pick-Up Policy

It is essential to pick up your child on time to ensure their comfort and minimize disruption to our staff and other programs. Late pick-ups will incur the following fees:

5–15 minutes late: \$5.00 charge

16–30 minutes late: \$10.00 charge

31–45 minutes late: \$15.00 charge

46–55 minutes late: \$20.00 charge

Additional Procedures:

- If a child is not picked up within **25 minutes**, they may be taken to the Administration Center to wait for their parents, especially if another class is starting.
- If a child is not picked up within **55 minutes** and staff has contacted the parents with no response, the Mokena Police Department will be notified.

Important Notes:

- Children can become very anxious when parents are late. Please make every effort to pick up your child promptly.
- For safety reasons, children will not be released to anyone not listed on the Registration Form without prior written permission.

Separation Anxiety

It is common for children to experience separation anxiety when coming to class for the first time or during their first few days. In most cases, children adjust within minutes of their parent's departure.

To make the transition smoother:

- **Say goodbye with confidence:** Leave your child with a smile and a kiss, reassuring them that you will return.
- **Be firm but loving:** While tears may come, a confident goodbye helps your child feel secure and understand that they are in a safe environment.
- **Trust the process:** If your child becomes upset, know that sending them to class is helping them build independence and social skills.

Our staff is well-prepared to handle these situations and will provide comfort and support to your child. Rest assured that we will do everything possible to help them adjust. If we are unable to calm your child after some time, we will contact you. While this may feel like one of the most challenging moments, it will get easier for both you and your child with time. Thank you for trusting us to guide your child through this important transition.

Drop off/Pick up

To ensure the safety and well-being of all children enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program, the following drop-off and pick-up procedures have been implemented:

Parking:

- Please park in designated parking spaces and walk your child into the building.
- Do not park in handicapped-accessible parking spaces unless you have proper authorization and a permit.

Drop-Off:

- Drop off your child at the Classroom entrance with their teacher.
- Walk your child to the classroom door, where a teacher will greet you and escort your child inside.

Pick-Up:

- An ID will be required at pick-up. Teachers will only release your child to individuals listed on your authorized pick-up form.
- If you need to add someone to your authorized pick-up list, you must provide a written note with the person's name and phone number.

Immunizations Requirements

Children entering preschool must comply with the following school-age immunization requirements. Immunization records must be signed by a healthcare provider who administered or can verify the dates of the immunizations. These records must be presented at the time of registration. A child cannot be registered without this documentation.

Required Immunizations:

- **DTP/DTPaP (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus):** Must have received 3 doses by 1st birthday and 4th dose by 2nd birthday.
- **Polio (OPV, IPV):** Must have received 2 doses by 1st birthday, and 3rd dose by 2nd birthday.
- **Measles (Rubeola):** 1 dose on or after 1st birthday (MMR Vaccine)
- **Mumps:** 1 dose on or after 1st birthday (MMR Vaccine)
- **Rubella (German Measles):** 1 dose on or after the 1st birthday (MMR Vaccines)
- **Hib (Haemophilus Influenzae Type B):** Series completed with doses at appropriate ages
- **Hepatitis B:** Must have received 3 doses, appropriately spaced.
- **Varicella (Chickenpox):** 1 dose on or after the 1st birthday
- **Pneumococcal (PCV):** 24-59 months without a primary series must show proof of at least one dose after 24 months.

Note:

The Will County Health Department offers an immunization clinic where vaccines are provided at a minimal cost. A parent or guardian must accompany the child and bring the child's previous immunization records. For further information or to schedule an appointment, please contact the Will County Health Department at **815-740-8143**.

School Calendar

The 35- week program begins the day after Labor Day (September) and continues to Memorial Day (May) The following holidays are observed

- Labor Day
- Columbus day
- Veterans Day / Election Day
- Thanksgiving Break 1 week
- Winter Break 2 Weeks
- Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
- President Day
- Spring Holiday
- Spring Break 1 Week

** Dates are subject to change so please check the monthly school calendar .*



Contact information:

Nita Ragsdale
Preschool Teacher

nragsdale@mokenapark.com
(708) 390-2407

Kara Bartnik
Superintendent of Recreation

kbartnik@mokenapark.com
(708) 390-2409

Administration Building
10925 W. La Porte Rd

Info@mokenapark.com
(708) 390-2401

Staff members will not assist with personal hygiene beyond basic guidance.

We understand that occasional accidents happen, and we are prepared to handle these situations. Each child is required to keep a set of spare clothes in their backpack. This should include a shirt, pants, underwear, and socks appropriate for the current season.

If an accident occurs:

- The child will be given their spare clothes to change into independently.
- Parents will be contacted if further assistance is needed for personal cleanliness.

If your child needs help with buttons, snaps, zippers, or belts, the teacher will gladly assist them.

Behavior Policy

To ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for all participants, appropriate behavior is expected at all times. Our program encourages fun and learning for everyone, but participants who engage in inappropriate or potentially harmful behavior may be asked to leave a class or facility. Refunds will not be provided in such cases.

For many children, preschool is their first experience in a structured school setting. Our program is designed to teach children how to:

- Interact responsibly with others.
- Respect others' belongings and personal space.
- Cooperate as part of a group.

Addressing Inappropriate or Disruptive Behavior:

- Minor incidents will be addressed with verbal reminders and redirection to another activity.
- Serious inappropriate or disruptive behavior will be reported to parents.
- Teachers will use firm but positive statements or redirection to guide behavior.
- If necessary, a child may be removed from the group activity temporarily to help them regain control.

We strive to create an atmosphere of cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect. Children are given reasonable opportunities to resolve conflicts and participate in resolving disputes with guidance from teachers. By working together with parents and students, we aim to promote a positive learning environment where all children can thrive.

Clothing

Children are encouraged to wear comfortable play clothes and gym shoes to preschool. Daily activities often involve interactive and sometimes messy play, and we want children to feel free to enjoy themselves without worrying about their clothing.

Clothing Guidelines:

- Choose clothes that your child can easily pull up and down to promote independence during bathroom breaks.
- Fancy dress shoes and sandals are not recommended, as they are unsafe for running and playing. Gym shoes are the best option.
- Please pack a full change of clothes in your child's backpack, including socks and underwear, in case of spills or accidents.

All personal belongings, including school bags, jackets, boots, hats, mittens, and scarves, must be clearly labeled with your child's name.

Personal Belongings

Children are discouraged from bringing personal belongings from home, except on designated "Show and Tell" days. If items are brought to school, they should be clearly labeled with the child's name.

Please note that the Park District cannot assume responsibility for any loss or damage to personal belongings brought to school. Additionally, candy, gum, and toy weapons are not permitted at any time.

Bathroom Break and Personal Hygiene

All preschool participants must be fully toilet-trained before the beginning of the school year. A completely toilet-trained child is one who:

- Wears regular underpants (not pull-ups, diapers, or training pants).
- Recognizes when they need to use the restroom without prompting.
- Can independently manage clothing, including pulling pants and underwear up and down.
- Can independently complete toileting procedures, including wiping themselves.
- Does not have frequent or ongoing toileting accidents during the school day.

Children will be encouraged to use the restroom at least once per class or as needed. They will also be reminded to wash their hands properly.

Starting School

Parent Orientation Day

Parent Orientation will take place during the evening and is designed to last approximately one hour. To best support families, we offer two separate orientation sessions: one for New Parents and one for Returning Parents. These sessions provide an opportunity for parents to learn about our program policies, procedures, and expectations. During orientation, parents will also meet the classroom teachers, who will share important information about the preschool experience and daily routines. We strongly encourage all parents to attend the session designated for their family. Please note that Parent Orientation is intended for adults only. We kindly ask that preschoolers and siblings remain at home during this time. To help make the first day of school run smoothly, we recommend bringing your child's school supplies with you on Orientation Day. An invitation with the date and time for the appropriate Parent Orientation session will be included in the welcome email.

Meet and Greet Open House for Students

The Meet and Greet Open House is a wonderful opportunity for your child to meet their teachers, connect with new classmates, and explore their new classroom. You and your child are welcome to visit the classroom during school hours for a relaxed and informal introduction to the preschool environment. This event is optional but highly encouraged, as it can help ease the transition into the school year and make your child feel more comfortable on their first .

School Supplies

A school supply list will be posted on Class Dojo to all parents in August, along with a welcome letter containing important details about the upcoming school year. Please note that additional supplies may be requested periodically throughout the year for special classroom activities. These requests are completely voluntary, and we sincerely appreciate any donations that help support our program. Thank you for your cooperation and generosity in ensuring a well-prepared and engaging classroom environment for all students!

Children's Schoolwork

Your child will frequently bring home schoolwork and projects. They are often excited to share their creations with you, so please take the time to praise and encourage their efforts. While homework is not mandatory, it may occasionally be sent home to reinforce concepts such as letters and numbers.

Curriculum

Our Early Childhood Education programs focus on fostering social development and the importance of learning through play and hands-on experiences. Activities are carefully chosen to be developmentally appropriate and emphasize concrete, experiential learning.

Our program includes:

- **Free Play:** Opportunities for children to explore and engage in unstructured activities.
- **Learning Activities:** Focused on early academic skills such as letters, numbers, and problem-solving.
- **Circle Time:** Group activities for songs, stories, and discussions.
- **Gross Motor Activities:** Physical activities that build coordination and strength.
- **Art:** Creative projects that encourage self-expression and fine motor skills.
- **Literacy:** Foundational reading and writing skills through interactive lessons.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Activities that promote cooperation, sharing, and understanding emotions.

Assessments

Teachers will conduct formal evaluations at three points during the school year: November, February and May. Progress reports will be sent home after each evaluation. These assessments are designed to provide insights into your child's social and cognitive development as observed in the classroom. Please note that some children may demonstrate skills at home that they do not display in the classroom setting. The assessments are a guideline to help you understand what has been covered in class and what your child has shown us during the evaluation process. Parents are welcome to schedule an appointment to meet with teachers and discuss their child's progress at any time.

Parent Volunteers

Parents are welcome to volunteer in the classroom to help with upcoming projects, assist with activities such as guest reading, holiday parties, and board games. **Volunteering is not mandatory**, but it is greatly appreciated. If you would like to volunteer, please note:

- All volunteers must complete a **background check, application** and receive approval before volunteering.
- Forms need to be submitted to the Admin Building.

Approval may take a few weeks, so please plan accordingly if you wish to volunteer for a specific event.

Communication

Program updates, classroom photos, and important reminders will be shared regularly through **ClassDojo**. This platform allows families to stay informed and connected to classroom activities in real time.

At the beginning of the school year, families will receive detailed information on how to set up and access ClassDojo. Our staff is always available to assist with questions or concerns. If you need more than a few minutes to speak with a teacher, we kindly ask that you call or email to schedule a mutually convenient time to meet.

Communication Guidelines:

- You can email the teacher or send messages via Class Dojo for quick questions or updates.
- Please allow up to **24 hours** for teachers to respond to inquiries.
- Teachers will respond to messages **only during school hours**, as those are their designated working hours.

Snacks

Each child is required to bring **one snack** and a **water bottle** to school each day. Due to various allergies, we strive to maintain a **nut-free** environment.

Snack Guidelines:

- Send **only one snack** per day.
- Your child must bring a **filled, spill-proof water bottle** (no glass bottles).
- **Water only** is allowed in the bottle—no juice, milk, or flavored drinks. Please **label** your child's water bottle with their name.

Birthday Celebrations

We love celebrating birthdays in our classroom! Each child will have the opportunity to bring in a **special treat** to share with their class.

Guidelines for Birthday Treats:

- All treats must be **store-bought and prepackaged**.
- **No cupcakes or cake**, as they can be too messy.
- Parents may send in **treat bags** to be sent home with classmates.

Scheduling Birthday Celebrations:

- School-year birthdays will be celebrated **as close to the actual date as possible**.
- **Summer birthdays** will be recognized on or near the child's **half-birthday**.

Birthday Invitations:

- If you wish to send birthday invitations, they will be placed in children's folders to be sent home.

Teachers **do not discuss invitations** with students or families.