



VOLUNTARY PRE-K PARENT HANDBOOK 2023-2024

Florida **VPK**

**OC
PS** Orange County
Public Schools

Family Guide

2023-2024

School Name: _____

School Phone Number: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Teacher's Email: _____

Teacher's Extension: _____

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Welcome to VPK

Your child is about to begin an exciting time of learning. OCPS' Voluntary Prekindergarten Program is designed to prepare children for kindergarten and to focus on early reading, writing, math and social skills. Our program offers high-quality, stimulating and developmentally appropriate practices, which include:

» Encouraging children to achieve their highest potential through healthy, innovative, educational and fun activities.

Modeling the character values of honesty, respect, responsibility and kindness.

- » Building a sense of community among the public schools and families.
- » Encouraging children to learn about their culture, and the culture of others, by exposing them to books, music and toys that celebrate diversity.
- » Extending the range of play and learning experiences outside the classroom through an emphasis on outdoor and natural learning environments, field trips and classroom visits from a wide variety of community resources.
- » Supporting inclusion of children with special needs.
- » Integrating classroom centers that support the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for a 4-year-old.
- » Providing a content-based curriculum with opportunities for language development, early literacy, writing, mathematical thinking, science and social studies.

OCPS District Staff

Early Childhood Senior Administrator
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VPK Program Coordinator
Kimberly Pena-Rodriguez
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School Calendar

2023-2024

Wednesday - Wednesday	August 2 - 9	Pre-Planning; August 7 Professional Development Day
Thursday	August 10	First Day of School
Monday	September 4	Labor Day Holiday
Friday	October 13	End of First Marking Period
Monday	October 16	Teacher Workday/Student Holiday
Tuesday	October 17	Begin Second Marking Period
Friday	October 27	Teacher Professional Day/Student Holiday/Teacher Non-Workday
Monday - Friday	November 20 - 24	Thanksgiving Break
Friday	December 22	End of Second Marking Period
Monday-Friday Two Weeks	December 25 - January 5, 2024	Winter Break
Monday	January 8	Teacher Workday/Student Holiday
Tuesday	January 9	Begin Third Marking Period; Begin Second Semester
Monday	January 15	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday (Schools and District Offices Closed)
Monday	February 19	Presidents' Day/Teacher Non-Work Day Schools Closed/District Offices Open)
Thursday	March 14	End of Third Marking Period
Friday	March 15	Teacher Workday/Student Holiday
Monday - Friday	March 18 - 22	Spring Break (Schools Closed/District Offices Open)
Monday	March 25	Begin Fourth Marking Period
Friday	May 24	End of Fourth Marking Period/ Last Day of School
Monday	May 27	Memorial Day Holiday (Schools and District Offices Closed)
Tuesday - Wednesday	May 28-29	Post-Planning

Prioritized Severe Weather Make-Up Days 2023-2024

Priority	Date	Current Use
1	October 27, 2023	Professional Day/Student Holiday
2	November 20, 2023	Monday of Thanksgiving Week
3	November 21, 2023	Tuesday of Thanksgiving Week
4	November 22, 2023	Wednesday of Thanksgiving Week
5	February 19, 2024	Presidents' Day Holiday
6	March 22, 2024	Friday of Spring Break
7	March 21, 2024	Thursday of Spring Break
8	March 20, 2024	Wednesday of Spring Break
9	March 19, 2024	Tuesday of Spring Break
10	March 18, 2024	Monday of Spring Break

Application Guidelines

The Voluntary Prekindergarten Program has three program options:

- » School Year VPK 540 Hours
- » Summer VPK 300 Hours
- » VPK Specialized Instructional Services

Orange County Public Schools provides parents with three VPK program options that will accommodate their toddlers' needs and prepare them for transitioning to kindergarten throughout the school year.

You can apply for VPK online from a computer or mobile device. The school year and summer VPK program selections include classroom instruction. VPK SIS provides instruction or therapy in a one-on-one or small-group setting format for eligible children with special needs. The child must have a current individualized educational plan (IEP) from a local school district to participate in the VPK Specialized Instructional Services program.

Most Title I schools also offer an additional three hours of Title-I funded instruction during the afternoon.

- » VPK is voluntary and funded by the State of Florida. It is not offered at every public school. A list of schools offering VPK can be found at www.earlychildhood.ocps.net.

Age Requirement

- » State law requires that children must be 4 years old on or before Sept. 1 during the current school year. Parents must complete an online application through the Office of Early Learning's Family Portal: <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com>.

Parents whose children are born between Feb. 2 and Sept. 1 can delay enrollment for their 4-year old until the following year when their child is 5.

Enrollment Information

- » Parents are required to enroll at a public school. Proof of residency and birth are required.
- » Priority is given to students who reside in a school's attendance zone. Please visit the "Student Enrollment" website at www.ocps.net for more information about registering your child and school attendance zones. Parents that are seeking to transfer must complete the request online at the Early Learning Family Portal:
- » <https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com>.

Waitlist

- » If a classroom reaches the maximum capacity of 20 students during the school year program and 12 students during the summer program, then parents have the option of being placed on a waitlist. Students from this list will be added to the class throughout the school year as openings arise.

Application

Guidelines

Exceptional Education

- » All eligible 4-year-old children, including those with disabilities, have an opportunity to participate in either a school year or summer VPK program. VPK programs are operated by early-learning coalitions, and are not considered part of the state's elementary and secondary programs. The VPK program is not a special education program and does not provide specially-designed instruction and related services. However, a child's IEP team may determine that a VPK classroom is an appropriate setting for the child's IEP to be implemented, or that the child should receive extended school year instruction through a summer VPK classroom.

504 Plans

- » A 504 Plan can help students with attention and learning issues and other disabilities who meet certain criteria to access the general education classroom without any barriers. VPK programs are required to adhere to a 504 Plan as described by Florida Office of Early Learning.

For additional information, please visit <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/504-plans.html>.

Attendance *Policy*

Funding for VPK is based on student attendance, which is necessary to ensure your child is prepared for kindergarten. Parents are required to sign the VPK Attendance Policy at the beginning of the year, and the Child Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate (Long Form) at the end of each month.

Absences

Regular attendance is critically important for children to become successful life-long learners. Please make every effort to notify your child's teacher when your child is going to be absent from school. You must provide written documentation every time your child is absent due to an illness. A doctor's note is required for illnesses resulting in absences longer than five school days.

Parents of students who have more than five unexcused absences may be required to participate in an attendance meeting with school personnel. After an attendance meeting, if continued excessive absences occur (either excused or unexcused), it may result in your child being dismissed from the program.

Excessive Tardiness

It is also important that your child arrives promptly to school. Students dropped off late more than five times may be dismissed from the program.

Late Pick Up

There is no staff available to care for your child after the program ends, it is vital that your child is picked up on time. Students picked up late more than five times may be dismissed from the program.

Excused Absence Form

Date: _____

My child, _____, was absent on _____ through _____ for the following reason(s):

Illness/Injury of the child or immediate family member requiring hospitalization and/or bed rest (to include life-threatening illness/injury).

Medical Legal Appointment (i.e. doctor, dentist, court, etc.).

Infectious disease or parasite infection (i.e. lice). Up to four (4) days per school year.

Observation of religious holidays/service instruction, which forbids secular activity on an instruction day.

Funeral/memorial service or bereavement upon the death of a child's immediate family member.

Catastrophic disasters that significantly impact the life of the student (e.g. loss of residence from natural disaster).

*OCPS' practice has been to define immediate family as the student's mother, father, brother, sister, stepmother, stepfather, step-siblings and other relatives who live in the student's home.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Please attach any supporting documents (e.g. doctor's notes, dentist's note, etc.).

Attendance Agreement

Dear Parent/Guardian,

To prepare your child for success in VPK, it is vitally important that he/she attends school every day, on time, and stays for the duration of the day. The OCPS VPK Attendance Policies are listed below.

Initial on each line if you have read, agree to and understand the policy.

- » You are required to fill out an OCPS Excused Absence Form each time your child is absent due to illness. _____
- » You are required to send a doctor's note for absences due to an illness lasting more than five (5) consecutive school days. _____
- » Unexcused absences (more than five) can result in an attendance meeting with school personnel. _____
- » Continued excessive absences may lead to the dismissal of your child. _____
- » Repeated late pick-up of more than five (5) times, may result in dismissal from the program. _____
- » Picking up your child before the end of the school day more than five (5) times may result in dismissal from the program. _____
- » Continued tardiness may result in dismissal of the program. _____

I have read and agree to the terms of the OCPS VPK Attendance Policies.

Child's Name: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

School: _____

Name of Teacher: _____

Signature of Teacher: _____

Classroom

Guidelines

Introduction

The VPK classroom is designed to be a home away from home for your child. You will see learning centers filled with interesting games and materials that will spark your child's imagination and make learning fun. Each child needs to be in school on time every day so valuable learning experiences are not missed.

Calendar & Hours

VPK will operate according to the approved school district calendar from Aug. 10, 2023 through May 24, 2024. Daily school hours can differ from school to school, so contact your child's school for specific hours.

Class Size Student Teacher Ratio

Ratios are 1 instructor to 11 children; class size will not exceed 20 children in the school year program, and 12 children for the summer program.

Dress Code

Children should be dressed in comfortable clothes, including closed-toe shoes, as defined in the OCPS Student Code of Conduct. Students will be participating in activities such as painting, outdoor-learning experiences, sand and water activities and cooking. Parents are encouraged to provide an extra set of clothes, including underwear, socks and shoes.

Nutrition

Please report all food allergies or special nutritional needs to your child's teacher. Students will receive breakfast and lunch at VPK/Title I schools. Breakfast is before VPK starts and lunch is after the morning VPK block. Meals are not provided for the VPK half-day programs. If you prefer to pack your child's meals, then please make sure they contain healthy selections. Parents may donate snacks that meet the district standards, but this is not a requirement for the VPK Program.

Information regarding breakfast and lunch programs is located at:

https://www.ocps.net/departments/food_and_nutrition_services/breakfast_and_lunch_prices.

Toileting

Children may use the restroom as needed throughout the day. Due to health and safety concerns, VPK staff members are not responsible for changing children's clothing should an accident occur. The parent will be contacted if the child is not able to change his/her own clothes. Parents are required to provide current phone numbers in case of emergencies. Parents are encouraged to provide an extra set of clothes, including underwear, socks and shoes.

Curriculum

Guidelines

Curriculum and Standards

OCPS has approved the Frog Street Press materials for the VPK programs. Frog Street Press fosters the social-emotional, intellectual and physical development of children while nurturing natural curiosity and sense of self to build a foundation for lifetime learning. The Frog Street materials are aligned with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for 4- and 5-year-old children.

The standards can be found at: <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/families.html>.

In Fall 2017, Florida adopted the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards. The standards and benchmarks reflect the knowledge and skills that a child, on a developmental progression, should know and be able to do at the end of an age-related timeframe.

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards are grouped around eight domains of early learning and development:

- I. Physical Development
- II. Approaches to Learning
- III. Social and Emotional Development
- IV. Language and Literacy
- V. Mathematical Thinking
- VI. Scientific Inquiry
- VII. Social Studies
- VIII. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Young children learn by doing. Worksheets are not developmentally appropriate and are not part of the VPK expectations. Report cards and grades are also not used in VPK.

Daily Routine

The teacher will post a daily schedule of activities in sequential, pictorial form. This will help children learn time concepts, planning and predicting skills.

Large Group (Circle Time)

Daily, the entire class will gather for group activities that encourage relationship building, turn taking, music, storytelling and other activities that address the VPK standards to prepare children for success in kindergarten.

Small Group Time

Children will spend time with an adult and in a small group learning and practicing skills in early literacy, math, science and social/emotional areas.

Curriculum

Guidelines

Learning Centers

Each classroom will have areas set up where children can go individually or in small groups to read books, build with blocks, use a dramatic play center, listen to music and books, and explore materials in reading, writing, math, art, science and sensory centers. Children are encouraged to make choices, play together, solve problems and practice small and large motor skills.

Outdoor Learning

Children will experience outdoor learning each day. This is a teacher-directed time where children interact to learn how to cooperate with others, increase large motor skills and learn the language of outdoor fun. Nature provides many ways to learn language, science and math.

Field Trips

VPK programs are encouraged to provide field trips for their students. Field trips can take place in the community or perhaps a community member can serve as a “Teacher for the Day” (i.e. Teach-In). Parents will be given advance notice prior to each field trip or event. Any student going on a field trip must submit a properly completed and signed permission slip by a parent/guardian prior to the event in order to participate. While parents may donate money for field trips, they are not required to do so.

Assessment

Star Early Literacy will be used to assess VPK students. Star Early Literacy is a computer adaptive assessment designed to measure early literacy and numeracy skills. VPK students will take the Star Early Literacy Assessment at the beginning, middle and end of the program to measure growth. Star Early Literacy data will support VPK teachers in instructional planning, and measuring student’s growth throughout the school year. VPK programs are required to provide a copy of the Star Parent Report to families within 7 days of each administration Progress Monitoring period.

Developmental Screening

The Battelle Developmental Inventory is a comprehensive developmental screening tool used to guide instruction and to identify young children who may be in need of additional services and/or assessments.

VPK Supply Wish List

The following is a list of suggested supply items needed during the year. These supplies will be collected and shared in the class throughout the year as community supplies. Please do not label class items with student names. Please put your child's name on backpacks, and any clothing that can be taken off during the day.

1 set of change of clothes (shirt, pants, socks and underwear) labeled in a Ziploc bag

1 full-size backpack without wheels 1 bottle of hand sanitizer

1 box of tissues

1 boxes of crayons (24 Count)

1 box of washable 8 Count classic markers

1 box of Expo dry erase markers assorted colors

4 large glue sticks

1 bottles of Elmer's glue

4 vinyl folders with pocket

1 container of disinfecting wipes Paper plates (boys)

Paper towels (girls)

Ziploc bags in a variety of sizes

Headphones

Red and blue plastic sleep mat (Full day programs only)

These are just the basic, general supplies. Teachers may ask for individual items in addition to this list at Meet theTeacher or during the first week of school. Supplies are not mandatory, but your donations are greatly appreciated.

Positive Discipline

Policy

It is the goal of the VPK program that children are successful and attain the skills necessary to be successful in kindergarten.

For all children to be successful, classroom rules will be established. Classroom rules will be based on respect, courtesy, self-discipline, and may vary from class to class. The rules will be posted in each classroom. Positive discipline techniques will be used to help students learn to make appropriate decisions and choices regarding their behavior. Student behavior will be managed through positive reinforcement, redirection, conflict resolution and modeling.

The following interventions may occur if a child's behavior is detrimental to the learning process and/or the child becomes injurious to him/herself, other students or staff members:

- » Parents will be contacted via written notification and/or phone call.
- » Parents will be asked to participate in a parent-teacher conference.
- » Parents may be asked to pick up the child from school.
- » Teachers and parents will work together to design and implement specific strategies to help promote positive behavior.
- » If the interventions listed above are not successful at correcting the child's behavior, then your child can be dismissed from the VPK program.
- » Only the school or district administrator has the authority to dismiss a student from the VPK program for non-compliance of the program policy.

Be assured that age-appropriate strategies will be utilized to maintain student behavior. Children will not be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating, frightening or developmentally inappropriate.

Discipline Agreement

The following interventions may occur if a child's behavior is detrimental to the learning process and/or the child becomes injurious to him/herself, other students or staff members:

- » Parent will be contacted via written notification and/or phone call.
- » Parent will be asked to participate in a parent-teacher conference.
- » Parent may be asked to pick up the child from school.
- » If the interventions listed above are not working to correct the child's behavior, then they can be dismissed from the VPK program.
- » School-based administrators have the authority to dismiss a student from the VPK program for non-compliance issues of this discipline policy.

I have read, agreed to and understand this Discipline Policy.

Name of Child: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

School: _____

Name of Teacher: _____

Signature of Teacher: _____

Name of School Administrator: _____

Signature of School Administrator: _____

Health

Guidelines

After being notified, a parent must pick up a sick child as soon as possible. Please make sure the teacher has your most current phone numbers. If the child has been exposed to a communicable disease, then the parent must notify the school.

Medical Emergencies

The school will contact the parent immediately if a serious accident or injury occurs. If there is a minor injury, then the parent will be notified by the end of the day.

Please make sure your emergency contact information is always up to date with your child's teacher and the staff in the main office at your child's school.

Parent Guidelines

Parents are a significant part of a child's education. You are the first and most important teacher for your child. Your input and guidance are vital to your child's education. We encourage parents to maintain communication with the school and your child's teacher.

Home Visits/ Meet the Teacher

The transition from home to school can be frightening for a young child. To make this easier, the teacher will conduct a home visit or an orientation at school before the school year begins. The VPK teacher and teacher assistant will provide activities designed to ease you and your child into a new school experience.

Contacting the Teacher/Conferences

Teachers will notify you as to the best way to contact them. Please make an appointment to meet with the teacher before or after school, so the teacher can focus on the children during the school day.

Two to three parent-teacher conferences are required per year. The purpose of these conferences are:

- » For the teacher to share information about your child's progress in school.
- » For the teacher to provide you with information, ideas and activities to do at home. This reinforces skills taught at school.
- » For you to share information or concerns with your child's teacher that may assist with providing the best experiences for your child.

Classroom Visits

Your involvement and support are important to the quality of this program. Volunteers must be registered through the ADDitions Volunteer Program. You can visit the ADDitions website at: <https://volunteer.ocps.net> or call 407-317-3323. You can ask your child's teacher or visit the school's office for more information. Please note that volunteers are subject to a background check as required by law.

Parent Activities

to Support Instruction

- » Talk to your child about school, ask questions, show them that you are interested in their learning, and be excited about what they are learning.
- » Provide learning experiences outside of the classroom. Visit the Orlando Science Center, the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens, art and history museums and the library. After your visit, have your child draw pictures or write about what they had experienced or what was their favorite (or least favorite) part.
- » Read to, read with and talk to your child about what you are reading and ask questions while reading. Reread favorite books, then have your child change the ending or act out a play in your living room based on the books.
- » Encourage your child to draw. Talk and write about what he/she drew. Provide art materials for him/her to express themselves freely. Display works of art created by the whole family around your house, even sculptures made from clay.
- » Limit TV and computer time. Both can be educational in limited amounts of time. Spend the extra time talking about school.
- » When papers come home from school, discuss the papers with your child. This communicates that school is as important to you as it is for them. Don't forget to return papers as well.
- » As you read with your child, have them point out such things as front and back covers, the title and where you should start reading on a page. Have your child point out the names of authors and illustrators and tell what those people do.
- » Sing or say nursery rhymes and songs. Play word and board games. Playing games with your child teaches them about turn taking and the importance of not winning every game.
- » Count everyday objects (like buttons, crayons, grapes, etc.), then take away some of the objects or add more. Talk about what "take away" and "add to" mean. Use math words with your child to build their academic vocabulary.
- » Teach and use a calculator with your child.
- » Use shapes to create more shapes, talk about the differences between shapes, and the difference between 2-D and 3-D shapes. A circle and a sphere are not the same.
- » Join the PTA.
- » If applicable, have your child participate in an after-school club or sport.

Transportation

Guidelines

For the safety of VPK students, the following guidelines apply to transporting children:

Transportation

Parents are responsible for their child's transportation to and from VPK.

Walkers

Children who walk to school are required to be accompanied by an adult. The child must be signed in and out by a parent or designated adult who is at least 18 years old. Siblings and other family members under the age of 18 may not assume this responsibility.

Car Riders

Children who are driven to school must be signed in and out by a parent or designated adult who is at least 18 years old.

Late Pick-Up

Picking up a child late is not acceptable. Staff members are not available to watch a child after school. Students who are picked up late more than five times may be terminated from the program.

Child Care Van

The driver of a childcare van is responsible for keeping a daily log of VPK children riding in the van. The driver is responsible for signing the children in and out.

Extended Day

Please contact the school's Extended Day Coordinator for information regarding before- and after-care programs.

Model Release Form

Consent, Waiver and Release

Note to parents/legal guardians: We promote Orange County Public Schools ("OCPS") students and programs through photos, videos, on Facebook, on our website, in the newspaper, and by any other means available. This form gives us your permission for your child to be in OCPS informational or promotional sites or materials for current or future use.

For and in consideration of benefits to be derived from the furtherance of the educational programs of the School Board of Orange County, Florida (the "Board"), I(We), personally and on behalf of

_____ ("Student"), do hereby consent, authorize and grant permission to the Board and OCPS and their respective members, superintendent, agents, employees, and representatives of each to take photographs, video, footage, or likenesses with or without sound (collectively, "Images") of the Student, and do further consent that such images may be broadcast or published in perpetuity by all public media now known and in the future including, but not limited to, local newspapers, the Internet, websites, online, television, or any other type of social media or any duplication of same for any purposes the Board and OCPS deem appropriate.

In granting such permission, I(We) give the Board and OCPS all right, title, and interest I(We) may have in the pictures, negatives, reproductions, or copies of the images and waive any and all right to approve of the use of the images and waive any right to compensation for the publication or other use of the images. The parent or legal guardian releases, discharges, covenants not to sue, indemnifies, and holds harmless the Board and OCPS and the respective members, superintendent, agents, employees, and representatives and assigns of each (collectively, the "Released Parties") from any and all claims, damages, injuries to persons or property, causes of action, threats of litigation, loss, costs, expenses (including attorney fees), and liabilities of any nature whatsoever arising from or in any way related to the use of the images.

Parent/Legal Guardian Agreement

I consent to student's photographs, video, footage, or likenesses with or without sound in OCPS informational or promotional materials for current or future use.

_____ I agree _____ I do not agree

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent Agreement Form

Initial each statement that you read, agree to and understand. As a parent/guardian of a VPK student, I will:

- Sign and adhere to the OCPS VPK Attendance Policies and I have received a copy of the policies. _____
- Supplies are donations and not required. _____
- Ensure that a designated adult, who is at least 18 years old, will sign my child in and out of the classroom daily. _____
- Sign the Child Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate (Short Form) at the end of each month. _____
- Sign and adhere to the OCPS VPK Discipline Policies and I have received a copy of the policies. _____
- Attend at least two parent/teacher conferences. _____
- Ensure that my child's school has current contact information. _____
- Participate in a parent orientation. _____

I have read, agree to, understand and initialed each item listed above.

Name of Child: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

School: _____

Name of Teacher: _____

Signature of Teacher: _____

Name of School Administrator: _____

Signature of School Administrator: _____