

# **Jump Start to Educational Excellence**

## **Grainger County Schools Early Childhood Centers**

Bean Station Elementary  
Rutledge Primary

Joppa Elementary  
Washburn School

## **Parent Handbook**



***A Place to Discover Fun in Learning***

**2025-2026**

## **Welcome to Jump Start to Educational Excellence**

The Grainger County Department of Education is working extremely hard to provide a quality preschool experience for children. Selecting a preschool is an especially important decision. We believe you will discover our preschool program will provide meaningful, early learning experiences for your child in a warm, nurturing, and supportive environment. We will work diligently to provide your child with the educational experiences that will provide a successful transition to kindergarten.

The activities of the early childhood program are designed with child development in mind and are based on current research of how young children best learn. We believe that children learn best through active engagement and exploration. We want your child to develop confidence, independence, and other skills as he or she participates in a variety of individual or group activities that develop language, reading readiness, and concepts of math. Just as important, the activities are designed to enhance physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth, and to develop skills and attitudes that will expand your child's potential. However, we recognize that you as the parent have the most profound influence on your child's development and education. To optimize the preschool learning experience, we encourage you to become an active participant in your child's education. There will be many opportunities for you to volunteer in the classroom, chaperone field trips, share special talents and interests, and participate in other parent activities.

We are incredibly pleased that you have chosen our program for your child. It is our desire that we work cooperatively with you for the well-being and success of your child as our guiding goal.

This handbook has been developed to answer some of the questions that you may have concerning the program and to inform you of our policies and procedures. These policies have been developed to help us provide your child with a wonderful learning environment that is safe and secure. Please review the handbook and keep it in a convenient place as a ready reference. If you have additional questions, concerns, or suggestions, feel free to share them with your child's teacher.

## **Curriculum**

Daily lesson plans are designed around the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (TN-ELDS). These standards are written to provide high quality, developmentally appropriate early learning experiences for children before they begin kindergarten and align with the content areas found in Tennessee's state English language arts and mathematics standards as well as the Tennessee state standards for kindergarten.

TN-ELDS Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds include developmental standards in:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Early Literacy
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- Creative Arts
- Physical Development

## **Eligibility**

Children are admitted to all services without regard to race, color, national origin, creed, religion, gender, age, disability, or handicap. Our preschool program will make reasonable accommodations as described by the *Americans with Disabilities Act* to serve all children and families. Children with special needs are routinely integrated into all classrooms.

Available openings are dependent on the following:

- Age of the child
- Program eligibility requirements mandated by contracts held by the agency with funding sources
- Admission priorities established by the Grainger County Department of Education
- Capacity of the site

Participation is limited to children whose custodial parent or guardian is a resident of Grainger County. Proof of residency is required.

Documentation may be requested for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to verifying income, family size, social security numbers, or place of residence.

## **Enrollment**

To enroll, a student must be four years of age on or before August 15th of the current school year. Only parents/guardians who reside in Grainger County may register children in the program. The following will be required at registration:

- Birth Certificate or Birth Record
- Immunization Record
- One proof of Residency (The following items will meet the requirement for proof of residency: tax bill, rent receipt, utility bill, or official proof of mailing address.)

Each student will be required to show proof of a physical after March 1 of the year they are attending Pre-K. A completed set of enrollment forms is required for each child attending the early childhood program. A child can attend the program only after all forms are completed and returned. Parents and guardians are expected to keep enrollment form information current.

The Tennessee Department of Health requires that children who enroll in public preschool programs provide an up-to-date immunization record. The Tennessee Preschool Immunization Certificate must be completed.

The Grainger County Schools Early Childhood Program is licensed by the Tennessee Department of Education. The number of program participants is restricted based on licensing criteria. Enrollment will not exceed twenty (20) students per classroom. Should the program not be able to accommodate every applicant seeking to be enrolled, a waiting list will be established from those students whose parents or guardians choose to do so at the time of registration. Students on the waiting list will be notified of the availability of an opening in the program. If the parent or guardian declines participation in the program after notification of an opening, that child's name will be removed from the waiting list.

Parents or guardians will receive notification via phone call or via mail of their student's acceptance into the program.

## **Calendar and Hours of Operation**

The Grainger County Schools early childhood classrooms will operate on the same calendar as Grainger County Schools. When it is necessary to close schools for inclement weather, the center will also close. If it should be necessary to close schools, please tune in to local media outlets, and our social media page for announcements. Parents are expected to pick up children immediately upon dismissal of school.

You will find a copy of the school calendar attached to the handbook

### **Arrival and Departure**

8:00-2:00

Parents are responsible for transportation to and from school. It is important that your child arrives on time for all the day's activities.

Children must be picked up no later than 2:00 pm. It is especially important that your child is not left waiting for his or her ride, as this can be very upsetting for a child. A written note is required in advance if your child is to be picked up by anyone other than the parent or those indicated on the emergency information card.

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures**

Specific instructions for driving patterns and the drop-off and pick-up of children will be provided by the site administration at parent meetings.

### **Custody**

Those parents who have custody issues should consult with an attorney regarding legal protection for their children. To help us protect the rights of you and your child, please provide the program coordinator with any court documents relevant to visitation and the rights of parents.

### **Late Arrival**

It is particularly important for your child to arrive on time each morning. As we are an early childhood education program and not a childcare center, our staff creates very in-depth lesson plans for each day. It is unfortunate when children miss exciting activities. Students who arrive after the start of school must be escorted to the school office by parent/guardian for sign-in.

### **Early Dismissal**

If your child is being picked up or dropped off by someone other than the parent, guardian, or those listed on the Emergency Card, you must:

- a) Inform the office and/or teacher of the name of the person who will be transporting your child by written notice. Verbal notices will only be accepted in cases of extreme emergencies.
- b) Please inform the person transporting your child that visitors to the school must first sign in at the office to obtain a visitor pass and present appropriate identification at the time of pick-up. This is for the safety of your child.

- c) Please inform the person transporting your child of the pick-up and drop-off procedures established by the administration.

### **Health and Safety**

If your child has a known medical condition, please be sure the preschool personnel know what to do if a problem should occur during program hours. Parents and guardians must make sure that any medication is available and that the forms for its use have been completed.

In case of serious accident or illness, parents will be called immediately. However, if we are unable to contact you or other emergency contacts, we will seek emergency care for your child.

Caregivers are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse. This includes the reporting of parents and guardians who are impaired by drugs or alcohol. Program staff will make every effort to keep a child from getting into a car with a parent or guardian who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or who seems unusually angry or violent.

### **Health and Illness**

For your child's protection as well as for other students and our staff, you will need to keep your child home if he or she has any of the following:

- Sore throat or cough accompanied by a fever or difficulty in breathing (wheezing)
- Unusual discomfort on the part of the child
- Discharge from the eyes or ears
- Severe nasal discharge
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Temperature of 99 degrees Fahrenheit
- Undiagnosed rash
- Contagious disease

**Any child who has a fever (temperature above 99 without medication), diarrhea, or has vomited must be kept at home for 24 hours after all symptoms have subsided. In case of contagious disease, please contact your child's teacher immediately. If your child contracts any of the following, notification is necessary: measles, mumps, RSV, chicken pox, head lice, or strep throat. All other parents will be notified as soon as possible. Your child's name will remain confidential. Your cooperation is appreciated.**

### **Illnesses and Medication**

The early childhood program is not equipped to provide for sick children. Please do not send your child to school if he or she is ill. We are concerned about the health

and general welfare of each child; therefore, we require that your child be picked up as soon as possible if he or she becomes ill while in attendance.

If your child is required to take prescribed or over-the-counter medicine(s) during program hours, an Administration of Medicines form must be completed and signed by the parent or guardian. In the case of prescription medications, the physician must also sign the form. The child should not bring medication to school. Medication must be brought to school and signed in with the school nurse and picked up by a responsible adult.

### **Clothing**

Our preschool program is marked by its high degree of activity and child engagement. Clothing that provides freedom to learn and play is very important. In preschool, dressing for success means providing clothing that is easy for the child to manage and which can protect from harm in play. Your child may come home with evidence of their activity, including dirt from the playground or paint from art activities.

Please provide tennis shoes or other closed-toed shoes to help your child safely run and climb. Shoes that cover the toe and have a back are necessary for admittance into the classroom.

Mark all your child's clothing with permanent ink or name labels. This includes sweaters, jackets, hats, mittens, and gloves. We encourage all children to care for their clothing and other belongings, but we cannot take responsibility for items that are lost at school.

Some children will need an extra set of clothing in his or her cubby that is appropriate to the season. This will ensure that your child has dry clothes in case of water play or a toileting accident. On these occasions, please wash and return a set of clothes for the cubby the next day.

Play is a critical component of the day's activities. Outside playtime will be scheduled through all seasons of the year. Please check the daily forecast and provide long pants, sweaters, jackets, hats, and mittens, as required by weather conditions.

### **Absences**

If your child will not be attending the program because of scheduled appointments, vacations, illness, injury, or other planned absence, please notify the program coordinator as soon as possible. This impacts the teachers' planning and preparation for the day. Should you have any unusual circumstances regarding absences, please discuss these with the coordinator as soon as possible.

Doctor's excuses are expected in case of student illness. Three (3) consecutive days of absence without notification can be considered voluntary withdrawal by the parents. Unexcused absences will result in the following procedure:

**First unexcused absence** – parents will receive a verbal reminder and be provided with a copy of the attendance policy.

**Second unexcused absence** – a letter stating the policy and consequences will be sent home from the teacher and principal.

**Third unexcused absence** – a conference will be held with the parent, teacher, and principal with possible dismissal from the program

If a child misses five or more days in a three-month period, the site-level administrator, or designee, will contact the family to develop an attendance plan.

- a. The attendance plan will be designed to help the family establish regular attendance or, if necessary, to plan for alternative services. The attendance plan will be developed by the family and appropriate school personnel, including, but not limited to: the child's primary Pre-K teacher; the site-level administrator; the IEP team (if applicable); and additional staff serving the school and family, which may include a counselor, social worker, family support personnel, teacher assistant or other school staff supporting the child and family.
- b. The plan must identify the reasons for the absences; include a specific plan and date for establishing regular attendance or alternative services that meet the child's educational goals; include documentation of services and student outcomes to determine effectiveness of the attendance plan.
- c. Every effort will be made to ensure your child has access to a quality school program. However, VPK seats are limited and are made available through a state grant. A child, who has more than five unexcused days per month, or 10 unexcused days in a year, may be terminated from the program for failure to follow the attendance policy.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips provide a wonderful extension to classroom learning. Parents will be informed about field trips through announcements and through newsletters. Permission slips must be completed for children to participate.



## **Meals and Snacks**

Nutrition is an important part of your child's development. A well-balanced meal is important to start the day off right and to sustain energy for active learning. Breakfast and lunch are available through the Grainger County School Nutrition Program. This program encourages children to try new foods and enjoy foods that are traditional favorites of young children. Mealtime is for socializing and modeling good habits. Meals will be served in the school cafeteria where students will go through the lunch line to gain independence and become acquainted with kindergarten activities. Students can bring lunch from home. For your convenience, the program coordinator will provide monthly menu plans to help you decide whether your child will eat the school lunches or send one from home. All students will receive free breakfast and lunch.

## **Food Allergies**

It is very important for us to know about your child's food allergies. An allergy form must be completed and signed by your child's health care provider.

## **Discipline**

The policies and procedures concerning discipline are designed to promote the safety, health, and well-being of each child. The development of self-discipline, self-esteem, and responsibility is perceived as an ongoing process in a child's growth and is an integral part of school success. Children are encouraged to problem-solve and cooperate. Positive behavior in the class will be encouraged through modeling, reinforcement, redirecting, and alternate activities. Parents will be informed if their child is having adjustment difficulties. The staff will work with parents to positively address the situation.

## **Termination of Services**

Termination of services can occur for the following reasons:

- Failure to provide required documentation.
- Failure to complete required paperwork in a timely manner.
- Failure to provide verification of child's physical examination.
- Failure to provide updated immunization records.
- Failure to abide by the guidelines under Absences in the handbook.
- Failure to adhere to the policies and procedures of the Grainger County Board of Education.
- Group settings are not appropriate for all children. If our program is not appropriate for your child, or if your child constitutes a safety or legal hazard to himself, other children, staff, or the program, we reserve the right to withdraw services.
- Ineligibility for services due to laws, regulations, or other legal requirements.

Documentation of phone calls, letters, and parent conferences concerning the cause for termination of services will be kept by the teacher. A conference will be held in all cases where termination is being considered. The principal, teacher and parents will attend this conference. Failure of parents to attend the conference may result in automatic termination.

### **Parents and Guardians**

Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in their child's education. If you wish to discuss classroom activities or your child's progress, please reach out to the teacher. To ensure a safe and secure learning environment, all visitors to Grainger County Schools must first sign-in at the office and obtain a visitor's pass.

### **If You Experience Problems**

Parents and guardians are encouraged to schedule conferences with the classroom teacher whenever they are experiencing child or classroom related problems. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem or, when indicated, make appropriate referrals to other helping agencies within the community.

### **Jump Start to Educational Excellence Grainger County Early Childhood Centers Hours of Operation**

School hours are as follows:

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Drop-Off          | 8:00 AM          |
| Breakfast Service | Varies by school |
| School Day Starts | 8:00 AM          |
| School Day Ends   | 2:00 PM          |
| Parent Pick-up    | 2:00PM           |

# Grainger County Schools 2025-2026

## Academic Year Calendar

Teachers Return Tuesday, July 29, 2025  
First Student Day is Monday, August 4, 2025 (Early Dismissal)  
Last Student Day... May 22, 2026 (Early Dismissal)

| August 25 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su        | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|           |    |    | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1  |
| 3         | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10        | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17        | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24        | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31        |    |    |    |    |    |    |

| September 25 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su           | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|              | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| 7            | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14           | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21           | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28           | 29 | 30 |    |    |    |    |

| October 25 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su         | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|            |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4          | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11         | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18         | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25         | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

| November 25 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su          | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|             |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2           | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9           | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16          | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23          | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30          |    |    |    |    |    |    |

| December 25 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su          | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|             | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| 7           | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14          | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21          | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28          | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |    |

| January 26 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su         | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|            |    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| 3          | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10         | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17         | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24         | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31         |    |    |    |    |    |    |

| February 26 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su          | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|             | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| 7           | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14          | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21          | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28          |    |    |    |    |    |    |

| March 26 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su       | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|          | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| 7        | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14       | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21       | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28       | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |    |

| April 26 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su       | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|          |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 5        | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12       | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19       | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26       | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |

| May 26 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Su     | M  | Tu | W  | Th | F  | Sa |
|        |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2      | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9      | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16     | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23     | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30     | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |

### 9 Week Terms

1<sup>st</sup> – Aug 4 – Oct 8  
2<sup>nd</sup> – Oct 9 – Dec 19  
3<sup>rd</sup> – Jan 6 – Mar 6  
4<sup>th</sup> – Mar 9 - May 22

### Mid-Term Ends

September 10  
November 12  
February 4  
April 15

### Mid-Term Reports

September 17  
November 19  
February 11  
April 22

### Report Cards

October 22  
January 9  
March 13  
May 22

Kindergarten and Pre K students begin full time – August 18, 2025

## Important Dates

### No School-Students/Staff

Labor Day - September 1-2, 2025  
Fall Break – October 13-17, 2025  
Thanksgiving – November 26-28, 2025  
Christmas – Dec 22, 2025 - Jan 2, 2026  
MLK Day – January 19, 2026  
Presidents' Day – February 16, 2026  
Spring Break – March 30 - April 3, 2026  
No School – May 5, 2026 (Election Day)

### Staff Development Days (7.5 hrs.) (No School for Students)

Friday, October 24, 2025  
Monday, January 5, 2026  
Friday, February 13, 2026

### Teacher Inservice Days (6 hrs.) (No School for Students)

Tuesday, July 29, 2025  
Wednesday, July 30, 2025  
Thursday, July 31, 2025  
Friday, August 1, 2025  
2 PALS – (3 Hours) at each school  
Dates TBA

### Administrative Days (7 hrs.) (No School for Students)

Friday, August 8, 2025  
Thursday, May 21, 2026

### Parent-Teacher Conferences (School Dismisses at 2 PM)

Thursday, October 23, 2025  
Thursday, February 12, 2026

### Abbreviated Days (School Dismisses at 11:30 AM)

Monday, August 4, 2025  
Friday, December 19, 2025  
Friday, May 22, 2026