



Kindergarten 101 - Version 2.0

Parent Frequently Asked Questions

Everything added to this document in PURPLE has been updated to include many of the wonderful questions parents asked while in attendance at Kindergarten 101. Thank you for coming! I had a wonderful time with you and we loved meeting your children.

Welcome to Willow Grove Early Learning Center! The “first day of school” is a great milestone for your child. We hope that this overview will help you acclimate to our routines and answer any questions you may have. We are thrilled to be teaching your son/daughter as they begin an exciting new school year. On behalf of the Willow Grove staff and myself, we welcome you, and want you to know that we will do everything we can to make your child’s early learning experience successful.

Office

Jenny Smith, Principal
Karen Graham, Administrative Assistant
Karen Fagel, Office Clerk
Susan Boyce, School Nurse
24-Hour Attendance Line

jsmith@kcsd96.org
kgraham@kcsd96.org
kfagel@kcsd96.org
sboyce@kcsd96.org
(847) 541-3660 ext. 3

Important Dates for School Opening

Date	Event	Description/Details
Aug 15 10-11:00 a.m.	Meet the Teacher (Bring your child!)	Bring your child to meet the teacher, see the classroom, confirm transportation plans, and pick up your child’s bus tag.
Aug 17	First Day of School	- Early Release at 2:00 p.m. for Full Day Kindergarten -Half Day will release at standard time of 11:50 a.m.
Sept 7 6:30-7:30 p.m.	Curriculum Night (Parents only)	Learn more about the kindergarten curriculum and your child’s teacher’s routines.

Important Reminders of “Things to Do”

- ☐ Turn in required physical forms by August 4th or you will not have access to teacher placement. You may do this at Willow Grove during June/August or at Ivy Hall in July (1072 Ivy Hall Lane, Buffalo Grove) *If your child has a summer birthday during the month of August, please have your doctor fax us that your child has an appointment scheduled very near to your child’s birthday, indicating the date and time. The fax needs to come from the doctor and faxed to our nurse at 847-821-7572.*
- ☐ Complete the Transportation Form link that was emailed to you. This will also be available on our Willow Grove website or through ENews.
- ☐ Access the District calendar online and mark non-attendance days, early release and half days are in your calendar. Early Release gets out at 2 p.m. Half Days release at 11:45 a.m.

- ❑ Complete the Kindergarten Questionnaire from the link that was emailed to you. Also available on our website or through ENews.

Communication

- ENews: District weekly message to your email. Includes lunch menus and other district news.
- Principal's Message: Weekly message to your email. Includes building news, events, and links to PTO information
- Website <http://www.kcsd96.org/wg> Access all information, and includes the Virtual Backpack where most forms can be found.

School Hours

Full day 9:00 a.m. - 2:45 p.m. (drop off beginning at 8:45 a.m.)

Half day 9:00 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.(drop off beginning at 8:45 a.m.)

Tardiness is a disruption to the learning environment. Please be conscientious of time. If dropping your child off, arrival between 8:45-8:55 a.m. is appreciated. Bus students arrive with plenty of time. Bussing is encouraged.

Bus Service

All Willow Grove Kindergarten students are assigned a bus route. At dismissal, bus students are walked to lines where attendance is taken for each bus. You must meet your child at their bus drop off point, near the street. Do not stand in your garage or a great distance away from the curb. The driver must see the adult or they will continue on their route. If there is a change in who will be meeting your child at their bus stop, please notify us ahead of time, as early as possible.

- Upon arrival, we walk your child from the bus into the school and help them find where they are going.
- Late busses: In the morning we do our best to notify you of late busses, but we only know what the bus company has let us know. In the afternoon the large majority of times we have a bus leaving significantly late, we will send a text alert message to you.
- If a bus didn't show up or seems really late, call our building to speak with our front office, or our business office at (847) 459-4260, ext.8001, and we'll help figure out what is going on.
- Our district website has a link to parent Frequently Asked Questions for transportation with a lot of valuable information. [Click here!](#)
- What do I do if I find out there was a dispute between my child and another when on the bus? Part of growing up is learning to navigate social situations where we may not agree, independently. Talk to your child and guide them around decision-making. If you continue to have concerns, email/call me. If you ever have a major concern, always reach out to me.

Arrival and Dismissal Plan

All families must complete the Willow Grove Transportation Form (link provided through email and on website) to communicate your child's daily transportation/dismissal plans. Parents dropping off their child are not allowed to escort their children to their homeroom. If a child is tardy to school, parents must park, bring their child into the office and sign them in. If you are dropping off or picking up your child, please park and bring them into the front office vestibule at the main entrance. You must provide your licence or ID at pick-up. If someone other than yourself or another specified caregiver will be picking your child up, please inform the office with a note, telling us who the person is, and have that person bring their ID to pick-up. Never park in the front circle drive; this is for busses or emergency vehicles only.

- Parents dropping their child off at school may not walk into the building with their child. See the last page for more information (The First Days of School and Separation Anxiety).

Changes to Transportation Routine

The Transportation Form notifies us of your daily plans. Changes to your child's afternoon transportation routine must be provided to the school by written note (**not email**). Children attending Willow Grove may change from bus to parent pick-up, however, we cannot accommodate temporary changes to place a child back on a bus route if your routine plans are different. Students attending Willow Grove are not allowed to ride a bus other than the one to which he/she have

been assigned, or to leave the bus at a bus stop other than his/her assigned bus stop under any circumstances. If your child routinely takes the bus, please do not come to parent pick-up without first notifying the school. Coming at parent pick-up time without first having notified us delays our transportation routines greatly. We do not need to know if your child's arrival transportation routine is changing.

- Can my child ride on a friend's bus? No
- Can my child get off at another child's stop if they are on the same bus? No
- Can my child's arrival plan vary (change from day-to-day)? Yes, we take attendance every morning and check the whereabouts of all children if not accounted for. However you get your child to school is fine, we just ask that you are on time (arriving between 8:45-8:55 is best).

Attendance

In the event that your child will be absent from school or have a late start, please call our 24-hour attendance line at (847) 541-3660 ext. 3. Your help in calling our school when your child is out, dramatically improves the working flow of the school office, as we have to reach any family who does not call. Children with temperatures of 100 degrees or above should not be in school. A child with a temperature of 100 degrees or more should stay home for 24 hours after his or her temperature returns to normal without the use of fever-reducing medications.

- I referred to additional information related to health/illness. Here are some great resources found on our website, and linked here for your convenience:
 - [Health Guidelines: To send to school or keep home?](#)
 - [Information about required Health Forms](#)
 - [Food Allergy Management Information](#)

Lunch

All full day students have a "debit-like" bar-coded card assigned to them. These remain at school. You can monitor and/or pay for your child's account online through LunchPrepay.com. Information will be coming to you at the beginning of the school year regarding this program, and we urge you to register online. You do not have to pay online to use this service; checks can be sent to school and should be made out to "School District 96". On the envelope, be sure to include your child's name and teacher. Menus are posted on the District website. First thing in the morning, the teacher will ask students if they need hot lunch, and if yes, their choice of entrée. At lunch, students are given their card to turn in at various stations in the lunchroom depending upon if they ordered a hot lunch, just a drink, options, or no choices at all. We support the children to learn these routines and they do very well! It is very much appreciated to consider the way in which you pack cold lunch items. Please consider containers that are easy for your child to open and prepare foods in a way that is easy for your child to consume (such as cutting fruit).

- Your child's schedule for bringing in their own lunch or purchasing our lunches may vary. It can change from day-to-day.
- If your child is bringing in a lunch, help them learn how to open their own containers, baggies, etc. It's good for them to develop independence, however, we will never let them go without food and will always help them, if needed.
- Children can purchase a "drink only" if bringing in a cold lunch
- Monitor your child's lunch account online. It will show you what they are purchasing.
- Unlike the other D96 schools, there are not "snack options" at the kindergarten level.
- Children may bring in anything you want them to eat, if packing a lunch from home. It does not have to follow specific guidelines (i.e., no peanuts). We take food allergies very seriously and have precautions in place for children with life-threatening allergies. We have peanut-free tables if parents choose to have their child use that. Parents of children with life-threatening food allergies should contact the school nurse before school starts for any questions/concerns. Unlike lunch, children MAY NOT bring in anything they want for Daily Snack (see below).

- If sending a water bottle in your child's lunch box, it should fit into your child's lunch box. Disposable water bottles at lunch are fine (only in cafeteria). See "Daily Snack" for additional water bottle information.
- Children do not have access to microwaves. If you would like to pack warm food, a thermos is recommended.
- We do not refrigerate lunches from home. Use an ice pack to keep the lunch cold.
- We cannot monitor children's choices for family lifestyle health preferences. There are too many dietary preferences for us to possibly manage this. My suggestions would be to preview our menu with your child and discuss the choices with your child and what you would like them to have, or pack a lunch from home.

Daily Snack

Children are provided an opportunity for snack daily, which you choose and provide for your child from our *District 96 Approved Daily Snack List*. This will be available online as we get closer to the school year. Snacks that are not from this approved list will not be permitted and will be sent home. **If packing a lunch from home for your child, snacks must be packed separately than your child's lunch.**

- We do not provide daily snack. Parents must provide daily snack from home, off of the approved list, on a daily basis for their own child.
- The approved list online now is NOT for the upcoming school year. I will link the approved list to an email for all parents as we near the start of school.
- May our children have water bottles in the classroom? Many children do not have a water bottle.

Children have access to water from our drinking fountains and have many breaks to take advantage of them. If you do send a water bottle in, our requirement is that you make sure it is NOT glass and does NOT have an open spout. It should have a flip up straw, sports bottle top, etc. The water should not spill out when dropped. Children may not take water bottles from place to place, including from class to lunch. If you want a water bottle in your child's lunch and accessible from class, pack one daily in their lunchbox and another can stay at school and refilled from our water fountains.

**Yes:
Non-spill**



YES



YES



YES



YES



YES

**NO:
Open top
Glass**



NO



NO



NO



NO



NO

Recess

Recess is 20 minutes, daily. Students have outdoor recess during each school day except in the most inclement weather. Please make sure you child is prepared for very cold weather throughout the cold months, as the do go outside nearly daily. When the temperature or wind chill is **below 0-10 degrees**, students will have an abbreviated outdoor or indoor recess. To play in the snow, students must be prepared with mittens/gloves, snow pants, boots, and a hat. If they are not prepared, they will still go outside in the "blacktop only" area.

- Parents may not have their child stay in for recess when they choose. This requires a doctor's note. We do not have supervision adequate to allow for this.
- Children may keep a set of the required items to play in the snow at school in their cubby throughout the winter months.

Clothing/Shoes

All children are encouraged to dress themselves for going outdoors, changing shoes for PE, and bathrooming. Students should wear coats/jackets that they can put on and zip/button up by themselves; this minimizes frustration and builds independence. We will always help them to make sure they are properly dressed for outdoor weather. A change of clothes is also necessary to have at school in case of accidents or spills. Please send an extra set of clothes in a large, clear zip lock bag labeled with your child's name. We have gym every day, and we ask that children have an extra pair of gym shoes at school.

Birthdays

Food is not permitted to be shared with the class. If you choose to send something in to recognize your child's birthday, non-disruptive and safe non-food items are acceptable (pencils, erasers, party store favors, etc.).

PTO Volunteer Opportunities

The Willow Grove Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) wants YOU! Our PTO plans and organizes many wonderful events and fundraisers throughout the year including: Pizza Bingo, Monthly Dessert Days and Dinner Mingle Nights, Scholastic Book Fair, creating the yearbook, D96 Dash, End of the Year Party, Staff Appreciation, Movie Night, Ice Cream Social, and so much MORE! If you would like to help with any of these events/fundraisers, learn more about them, or are curious to hear about other wonderful PTO opportunities, please contact Jenny Share at iamfancy02@yahoo.com or Lindley Caldwell at lindley.caldwell@gmail.com. Any amount of help you can give would be beneficial and appreciated. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Teacher Assignment & Busing Information

Parents will access their child's teacher assignment through our online database. You will receive an email with instructions shortly before Meet the Teacher. Busing information will come to you through email as well.

MISCELLANEOUS ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

- How do I know what school supplies to provide and when do we bring them to school? [Click here](#) to see our school supply list. Bring the supplies to Meet the Teacher. If you ordered a supply kit through our PTO, it will be delivered to your child's classroom and ready for you at Meet the Teacher.
- What happens if we take a family vacation? First, we ask that you plan all vacations outside of our days of attendance. Winter break and spring break, along with long weekends due to days off are the best time to schedule a vacation. While your child is out, school is continuing without them. We will not provide you with work while away, other than the suggestion to keep reading (as always) with your child and any routine practice you choose to do (i.e., sight word practice, letter/number/sound recognition practice, etc.). If your absence is over 10 school days, you will be unenrolled and need to re-enroll when you start back to school. Your child may have gaps on his/her progress report (report card), as they weren't in attendance for the teacher to gain an accurate assessment of the learning targets they missed.
- ALWAYS CALL (no email) our 24-hour attendance line when your child does not come to school or is late.
- What parts of the school day do students attending half-day miss? Specials (PE, Music, Book Checkout, Learning Center), lunch/recess, science, and intervention/playful learning block. They attend school for literacy and math.
- How many students are half day in comparison with full day? Last year we had 260 students, of which 10 were half-day. So far this year our numbers are about the same (a couple less).



The First Days of School and Separation Anxiety

The first day of school can be exciting and even frightening for both children and parents, especially if your child struggles with separation anxiety. We offer some tips for the first day to reduce separation anxiety.

Many parents ask if they can walk their child to their classroom. This isn't something we are able to accommodate. There are obvious security reasons of opening our doors to the community with a building full of children we are just getting to know. In addition, this excitement heightens emotions and can unsettle your own child or others, as much as it is meant to comfort them. We strive as a staff community to provide a calm and peaceful entry into school for all children. Children are comforted by predictability and routine. We begin this routine on the first day of school.

Following are some suggestions to support your child's entry into Willow Grove on the first days of school:

- **Prepare them for departure.** Help your child to know ahead of time what their morning on the first day will look like, communicate confidence in our ability to take care of your child, and let them know how their end of the day routine will look. I.e. *"We're going to go to the school where we'll see a lot of buses full of children and other children being dropped off. You'll go into school when the teachers and principal say it's time. They'll take such good care of you to get you to your classroom and you'll have fun all day! When you ride the bus home, I'll be waiting to hear all about your fun day."*
- **Don't drag out goodbyes.** It's natural that some children will struggle to say goodbye. The best thing you can do if you find yourself in this situation is find a staff member (there will be many of us!) and say goodbye lovingly, yet confidently, expressing that they'll be o.k. Long goodbyes do not support the transition into the school day, and only prolong the crying cycle, making it harder for your child to relax. Almost all children settle down within a very short period of time. If your child is struggling with the separation, we will always call you if we find that your child is not comforted after an extended period of time.
- **Consider starting your daily routine from the first day.** We know that the first day of school is a major celebration and we feel grateful to be a part of it! It's helpful if your routine on the first day is what your child will do daily. If your child will take the bus to and from school, have them take the bus. You can still celebrate this occasion at home with a special breakfast, a first day of school book, taking pictures, or just lots of hugs. Again, routines are important for children, and are best to start early. The more you change their plans, the longer it takes to get settled. Also, you must always notify the school of departure changes of routine prior to pick-up.
- **Take a deep breath.** We know it's hard, but if possible, try to show your child the confidence you have in them and our school, and keep your own emotions in check until your child is out of sight. It frightens children when they see their parents upset, and even tears of joy or pride are perceived as being upset. Please also keep in mind that the first day of school is a very special moment for everyone, which can escalate emotions for adults, as well as children. Please be patient with us and one another. Routines will settle in by the end of the second week, but the first weeks of school, expect the unexpected (i.e., tears, late buses, a congested parking lot, etc.).

We look forward to a wonderful year ahead and hope to make your child's experience at school welcoming, fun, and full of learning. Thank you in advance for your support and assistance. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the school.