



Kindergarten 101 & Parent Frequently Asked Questions

A Message from Willow Grove Principal, Jenny Smith:

Welcome to Willow Grove Early Learning Center! The first day of kindergarten 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 and one that ignites a love for school and learning.

Office

Jenny Smith, Principal

Lourdes Albrecht

Kathleen Brady, Office Clerk

Stephanie Petrykowski, School Nurse

Main office and 24-Hour Attendance Line

jsmith@kcsd96.org

Updated August 2020

kbrady@kcsd96.org

spetrykowski@kcsd96.org

(847) 541-3660; Attendance: ext. 3

Important Reminders

- ❑ Turn in required physical forms by August 7, 2020, or you will not receive teacher placement or busing information. You may do this at Willow Grove during June/August or at Ivy Hall in July, at 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 directly to our nurse at 847-821-7572.
- ❑ Complete the [Dismissal Plan](#) link that was emailed to you.
- ❑ Access the [District calendar](#) online and mark non-attendance days, early release and half days in your calendar.
- ❑ Complete the [Kindergarten Questionnaire](#) from the link that was emailed to you.
- ❑ Watch [THIS VIDEO](#) and show your incoming kindergarten student [THIS VIDEO](#).
- ❑ Visit the [PTO Blog](#) to learn about purchasing a supply kit and other opportunities, as well as how to get involved.

Important Dates: As we near the school year, information will be shared about our Meet the Teacher event and Curriculum Night.

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 8:40 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (drop off beginning at 8:25 a.m.)

Half day 8:40 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. (drop off beginning at 8:25 a.m.)

Tardiness is a disruption to the learning environment. Please be conscientious of time. If dropping your child off, arrival between 8:25-8:35 a.m. is recommended. Busing is encouraged.

Arrival

When children arrive at school they enter through a door in the front of the school for parent drop-off or the cafeteria for buses. Parents may not enter the school during our drop off procedures for the safety of our students. Children who ride the bus are met by an adult at their bus and additional staff greet them and help them into the building. Children in the Clubhouse before and after school program are released through the cafeteria and supported by adults, as well. Our hallways are filled with staff welcoming and supporting children. We teach students morning check-in routines, helping them become more and more independent with arrival routines.

If you are dropping your child off, please park and bring them to the designated door in the front of the building. Do not park in our circle drive, over any crosswalk, or in front of the fire hydrant. Our doors open to children at 8:25 a.m., with our official start to school at 8:40 a.m. This time for students to transition into their day provides a calming start to a child's day. It's important to note that parents dropping off their child are not allowed to escort their children to their homeroom, for the security of our building. Also, if a child is tardy to school, parents must bring their child into the office and sign them in.

Bus assignments and times are emailed to parents, along with teacher assignments as we get closer to the start of school, before the "Meet the Teacher" event.

Attendance

When children enter their classroom, teachers have attendance routines in place to account for all children. Absences and late starts need to be called into our 24-hour attendance line by parents. Do not email, as this is not a reliable way for us to receive this message in a timely and orderly manner. There are resources related to health and wellness guidelines on our district website.

- [Health Guidelines: To send to school or keep home?](#)
- [Information about required Health Forms](#)
- [Food Allergy Management Information](#)

Recess

Recess is 20 minutes, daily, for students in the full day program. We have a beautiful space for children to play that includes equipment, grassy areas, and a blacktop area. Students have outdoor recess during each school day except in the most inclement weather. Please make sure your child is prepared for very cold weather throughout the cold months, as they do go outside nearly daily. When the temperature, including wind chill, is below 10 degrees, students will have an abbreviated outdoor recess or indoor recess. To play in the snow, students must be prepared with mittens/gloves, snow pants, boots, and a hat. If they don't have the required snow clothing, they play on the cleared blacktop area. If families choose, children may keep a set of the required items to play in the snow at school in their cubby throughout the winter months. 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.

Lunch

Part of a student's morning routine if they stay for full day kindergarten is to choose what they are having for lunch or indicate if they brought a lunch from home. If a student is purchasing a lunch from school, they also select their choice of entrée. All full-day students have a "debit-like" bar-coded card assigned to them for purchasing a lunch. These remain at school. Students use their cards in the lunchroom if they ordered a hot lunch or just a drink, which students bringing a lunch from home may still access. Students only have their lunch cards in their possession through the lunch line process; adults manage the storage, distribution, and collection of the lunch cards. Once they get their food, children sit in any spot at their assigned classroom tables and eat.

If your child is bringing a lunch from home, you may pack any food you'd like. Our School Nurse and I will work with families to support children who have food allergies to maintain a safe environment for the child. It is very much appreciated to consider the way in which you pack cold lunch items. Please choose 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. Practice having lunch from a lunchbox with your child before the start of school.

The lunch period is 20 minutes in length. We support the children to learn these routines and they do very well! Throughout lunch there are many staff on hand circulating amongst the tables to support children in any way they need. Children are walked back to their classrooms after lunch.

Daily Snack

All children, including those in the half-day program, are provided an opportunity for snack daily, which families choose and provide for their child from the *District 96 Approved Daily Snack List*. This list is reviewed each summer for safety, and 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. Children may bring water bottles from home, however, know that they do have access to our drinking fountains, and it is not required. If you do send a water bottle in, our requirement is that it is not glass and does not have an open spout. Water bottles must have a flip up straw, sports bottle top, or any non-spill top. 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 for the classroom.



Departure

At dismissal, bus students are walked to lines where attendance is taken for each bus. They are then escorted by the teacher to the 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. Bus drivers may not release children to others that have not been arranged directly with the school by the parent or guardian. If a bus is running late, we do our best to notify parents through our texting/email messenger system.

Parent pick-up students are walked to the parent pick-up line and parents retrieve their children from the main office entryway. 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 buses or emergency vehicles only.

Some families utilize the Buffalo Grove Park District program, Clubhouse. These students are walked to our cafeteria for after school care.

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.). We have a Birthday Book Club and information about this opportunity will be shared at the start of the school year.

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, Family Picnic, 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 willowgroveschoolpto@gmail.com. Any amount of help you can give would be beneficial and appreciated. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

School Supplies

[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.

Frequently Asked Questions

Transportation

What do I do if I need to change my child's after-school transportation plan?

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. 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.

Can I have my child get off at a different stop or have them ride a different bus?

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.

What should I do if I need to change my child's morning transportation plan?

We do not need to know if your child's arrival transportation routine is changing. Any way you choose to get your child to school is fine. We ask that you are on time, arriving between 8:45-8:55 a.m.

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 the principal. If you ever have a major concern, always reach out to the principal, immediately.

What do I do if my child's bus didn't show up or seems really late?

Please know that weather and traffic conditions can delay buses, just as they do cars in traffic. We do our best to notify parents when we have learned of a particular circumstance. If you are concerned, 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!](#)

Lunch

How do I pay for a school purchased "hot lunch"?

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 and shared through E-News each week.

Can my child access the school lunch on different days?

Your child's lunch purchasing schedule may vary. You may change each day if you'd like your child to receive the school lunch or bring a lunch.

Is the lunch program similar at kindergarten as it is in the elementary schools?

Yes, the programs are very similar. We use the same vendor, Organic Life. The main difference is that we do not have the snack options at the kindergarten level to simplify the process for our youngest students receiving lunch.

What if my child has food allergies?

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, as those are consumed in the classroom.

May my child bring a water bottle to lunch?

Yes, you may send water with your child. It should be packed inside the child's lunchbox. If you want your child to have a water bottle in class and at lunch, you need to have two water bottles. Disposable water bottles are permitted at lunch, but not to be used during the school day. See "Daily Snack" for further information on water bottles.

Can my child heat their lunch from home, at school?

No, there are no microwaves available for children. If you would like to pack warm food, a thermos is recommended.

Are the lunches from home kept cold?

We do not refrigerate lunches from home. Please use an insulated bag and an ice pack.

My family follows a specific diet. Can the school help my child manage this with their school lunch choices?

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.

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.