FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

KINDERGARTEN

TRANSITION HANDBOOK



Welcome from
The Fox Chapel Area School District

On behalf of the Fox Chapel Area School District, welcome! We look forward to joining you and your child on the exciting path ahead.

Transitioning to kindergarten is a major step for young learners and their families. Whether your child is coming from preschool, daycare, or home, the adjustment to elementary school is unique. To ensure a smooth start, our district provides a tailored transition plan across all of our elementary schools, complete with supportive activities for your family.

This booklet is designed to guide you through the transition and offer a closer look at our kindergarten programs. It provides:

- Essential transition details and key timelines
- Engaging school-readiness activities for your child
- An overview of the daily kindergarten schedule and classroom routine
- Information regarding our curriculum and progress reports
- A directory of helpful district resources

Your feedback and communication are incredibly important to us. If you ever need assistance or have questions that aren't answered here, please reach out so we can support you.

Thank you for enrolling your child in our District and letting us be a part of their growth.

Alison Francis, Ed. D.

Kindergarten Transition Facilitator

Transition Activities

Parent Orientation

Designed especially for guardians, this evening event is a first step into our school community. You will learn about the elementary school your child will attend, learn about the registration process, and pick up your registration packet. To help you fully focus on connecting with our staff and fellow kindergarten parents, we kindly ask that this remain an adults-only evening.

Story Time

We can’t wait to welcome your future kindergartener to our schools! Story Time is a special opportunity for your child to explore their new school, listen to a fun story, and meet our kindergarten teaching team.

Discover Kindergarten

This exciting day is all about letting your child explore their future classrooms! Through playful, engaging activities, your little learner will meet their peers and teachers in a relaxed, friendly environment. It is a fantastic way for your child to build confidence before the first day of school, and it gives our teachers a chance to begin building a special bond with your child.

Registration

We look forward to officially welcoming your child into our district family! We encourage you to register by the deadline, as early enrollment allows us to properly staff our classrooms and secure the very best educators and resources for our incoming students. To support your family's busy schedule, we are pleased to offer flexible daytime registration hours directly at your home school, as well as convenient evening registration sessions in the community.

To get dates and times of all events for your specific school, please visit kdgfcasd.com.

Ready for School

Starting school is a major transition, and our goal is to ensure your child is prepared to enter a structured social and educational environment.

A child's readiness is influenced by multiple areas of development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and motor skills. These are shaped by their early experiences at home, with parents, and in preschool.

Because children develop and learn at different rates, we accommodate a wide variation in skills. Our kindergarten program is designed to meet children where they are, ensuring that our expectations are age-appropriate and respectful of individual differences.

To help support your child's transition, here are a few practical activities you can practice at home to build confidence and independence before the school year begins:

Early math skills[1]

- Count objects out loud together
- Compare sizes and amounts ("which has more?")
- Simple puzzles and sorting games
- Notice numbers in everyday life (house numbers, prices)

Early literacy skills[2]

- Read together every day
- Play with rhymes, songs, and silly words
- Point out letters in signs and books
- Talk, ask questions, and tell stories

Attention and self-regulation[3]

- Practice staying with a task until it's done
- Play games with rules (board games, card games)
- Help them name and manage big feelings
- Consistent daily routines build self-control

Language and communication[4]

- Have real conversations — ask about their day
- Use descriptive words and new vocabulary
- Let them explain their thinking out loud
- Listen actively and respond thoughtfully

Social skills and emotional maturity[4]

- Practice taking turns and sharing
- Encourage play with other children
- Help them work through disagreements
- Talk about how others might feel

Curiosity and persistence[3]

- Praise effort, not just results
- Let them struggle a little before stepping in
- Follow their interests — curiosity drives learning
- Model trying hard things yourself

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[1] Duncan et al. (2007); McClelland et al. (2006)

[2] Duncan et al. (2007); Connecticut State Department of Education Early Skills Report

[3] Blair & Raver (2015); Jones et al. (2017); McClelland et al. (2006)

[4] Janus & Offord (2007); Davies et al. (2016)

Fox Chapel Area School District Curriculum Overview

The Fox Chapel Area School District is dedicated to maximizing student learning, achievement, and personal development. In alignment with this mission, our kindergarten curriculum focuses on cultivating lifelong learners and responsible citizens who embody our core district values: respect, responsibility, and integrity.

To ensure the highest academic quality, all kindergarten programming is research-based and explicitly designed around the Pennsylvania Core Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

English Language Arts

The HMH Into Reading program balances explicit instruction in foundational skills (phonological & phonemic awareness and high-frequency words) with rich literature to build early reading comprehension, vocabulary, and content knowledge. The Writing Workshop guides students through forms of written expression.

Core Skills Encompassed

- **Foundational Reading Skills:**
    - **Print Concepts:** Understanding book orientation, tracking print from left to right, and recognizing that letters form words.
    - **Phonological & Phonemic Awareness:** Moving systematically from larger sound units (rhyming, syllables) to individual sounds (isolating, blending, and segmenting phonemes).
    - **Phonics:** Explicitly linking letter names, forms, and handwriting to their corresponding letter sounds. (Fundations Curricular Resources are used for phonics)
    - **High-Frequency Words:** Developing early automatic word recognition to build a baseline for text fluency.
- **Reading Workshop & Comprehension:**
    - Utilizes read-alouds and student "decodable readers" organized into thematic modules.
    - Teaches young learners to ask and answer questions about text, identify characters and settings, and retell central ideas.
- **Vocabulary & Language Development:**
    - Introduces "Power Words" in context to expand academic and oral language.
    - Integrates social-emotional learning and themed content knowledge spanning science, social studies, and the arts.
- **Writing Workshop:**
    - Guides students through early forms of written expression, beginning with drawing and oral storytelling and transitioning into structured writing tasks like narrative, informational, and opinion pieces.

Mathematics

Great Minds Eureka Math builds deep conceptual understanding through hands-on exploration, visual models, and mathematical discourse. The program intentionally moves students from concrete objects to pictorial representations and, finally, to abstract numerical symbols.

Core Skills Encompassed

- **Counting & Cardinality:**
    - Developing automaticity with the count sequence (counting forward and backward to 100 by ones and tens).
    - Understanding the relationship between numbers and quantities (connecting a spoken number to a physical group of objects).
    - Writing and representing numerals from 0 to 20.
- **Algebraic Thinking (Composition & Decomposition):**
    - Understanding addition as putting together or adding to, and subtraction as taking apart or taking from.
    - Decomposing numbers up to 10 into number pairs in multiple ways (e.g., understanding that 5 can be 3 and 2, or 4 and 1) using visual models like "5-groups" and finger patterns.
- **Measurement & Data Comparison:**
    - Classifying and sorting objects into categories by shared attributes (color, size, shape) and counting the total within each category.
    - Directly comparing two distinct objects using measurable attributes (e.g., identifying which object is *longer than*, *shorter than*, *heavier than*, or *lighter than* another).
- **Geometry & Spatial Relations:**
    - Identifying, describing, and analyzing two-dimensional flat shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, hexagons) and three-dimensional solid shapes (cubes, cones, cylinders, spheres).
    - Using positional words (above, below, beside, in front of, behind, next to) to describe the relative layout of objects in space.

Science

The OpenSciEd curriculum uses phenomenon-based learning to engage kindergarteners in scientific inquiry and engineering design. As students investigate real-world questions, they simultaneously build essential early literacy and math skills.

Social Studies

myWorld curriculum focuses on introducing young learners to the foundational concepts of community, citizenship, geography, and history. The program is designed to bring learning to life through storytelling, active play, and literacy integration, with a primary goal of helping students understand their place in the classroom, their families, and the wider world.

Social and Emotional Development

Students' social and emotional development is as much a focus as their academic development. In addition to using either the Heartwood Ethics Curriculum or the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, teachers create a caring classroom community through clear, consistent expectations for each student. In addition, the school counselor provides lessons through the Second Step curriculum, in which students develop essential skills in positive behavior, build a sense of belonging, and foster readiness to learn.

Special Area Classes

Students participate in one special area class daily, which includes art, computer science, library, music, and physical education. Additionally, students receive weekly World Language lessons for one trimester, focusing on early language development and cultural awareness.



Kindergarten Assessment/ Report Card

Kindergarten report cards are issued three times a year (January, March, and June) using the following grading scale. The curriculum goal is for all students to achieve "Meets Expectations" (ME), indicating they are performing at grade level.

- **Behaviors that Promote Learning:** Evaluated as Meets Expectations (ME), Approaching Expectations (AE), or Below Expectations (BE).
- **All Other Academic Areas:** Evaluated as Exceeding Expectations (EE), Meets Expectations (ME), Approaching Expectations (AE), or Below Expectations (BE).

Behaviors That Promote Learning

Listening
Participation
Task Persistence
Making Appropriate Choices
Exhibiting Self-Control
Organization
Cooperation and Collaboration
Respecting the Rights, Feelings and Property of Others

Integrated STEM

Demonstrates understanding of concepts and vocabulary through participation in inquiry-based learning

Social Studies

Demonstrates understanding of concepts and vocabulary through participation in inquiry-based learning

English Language Arts

Foundational Skills
Print concepts
Demonstrates understanding of organization and basic features of print
Identifies upper case letters
Identifies lower case letters
Phonological Awareness
Demonstrates understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds
Phonics and Word Recognition
Associates sounds with corresponding letters
Reads grade level high-frequency sight words with automaticity
Reading Informational Text & Literature
Listens and responds to text read aloud applying comprehension strategies
Reads grade level text proficiently to support comprehension
Writing
Uses a combination of drawing, dictating, and/ or writing to compose
Creates clear message with a sentence
Uses appropriate capitalization, punctuation, and spacing
Speaking and Listening
Expresses thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly
Asks and answers questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally

Mathematics

Counting & Cardinality
Knows number names & the count sequence
• Counts by ones and tens
• Represents a number of objects with a written numeral
Counts to tell the number of objects
Compares numbers
Operations & Algebraic Thinking
Understands addition as putting together and adding to
Breaks down numbers less than or equal to ten into pairs
Number & Operations in Base Ten
Works with numbers 11-19 to gain foundations for place value
Measurement & Data
Describes & compares measurable attributes
Classifies objects and counts the number of objects in each category
Geometry
Identifies and describes shapes
Analyzes, compares, creates and composes shapes

The Kindergarten Classroom Environment

Our classrooms are thoughtfully designed to balance whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction. Children are actively engaged in hands-on learning experiences that naturally encourage peer collaboration and language development.

The Meeting Area

The meeting area is the heart of our classroom community. This dedicated space is used for whole-group instruction, morning meetings, interactive storytelling, songs, movement, and group games. It is a place where students learn to listen, share, and connect.

Learning Centers

To support diverse interests and learning styles, each classroom is divided into daily learning centers. Students explore these areas based on their academic needs and personal choices. Standard centers in every classroom include:

- **Dramatic Play & Blocks:** Encouraging creativity, spatial awareness, and cooperative problem-solving.
- **Art & Writing:** Developing fine motor skills and self-expression.
- **Books & Science:** Fostering early literacy, curiosity, and hands-on discovery.



A Sample Day *

Morning Meeting

Students gather to plan the day, review the calendar, discuss daily topics, and practice social skills.

Math

The students work with a variety of hands-on math manipulatives to learn math concepts.

Phonics

The students work in whole-group, small-group, and individual activities to promote reading and writing readiness.

Lunch

The students have a 30-minute lunch period.

English Language Arts (ELA)

The students work on phonological awareness, vocabulary, fluency, high-frequency words, grammar, and writing to increase reading readiness skills.

Special Area Class

Students have one special area class a day.

Social Studies/Science

A variety of science and social studies topics are taught through games and hands-on activities.

Recess

The students have a 30-minute recess period in which they go outside unless there is inclement weather or extremely low temperatures.

Snack

Quiet Choice/Rest

Students are given the opportunity to lie down to rest or choose a quiet activity during this time.

Literacy/Math Centers

The students work in whole-group, small-group, and individual activities focusing on phonics skills and phonemic awareness.

Free Choice

Students explore classroom materials and practice social skills with others.

**Schedules vary by classroom to best meet the needs of the students. This is just one of many possibilities.*

Additional Notes About Your Child's Day

School Bus & Transportation

We encourage all kindergarteners to ride the school bus. To help them adjust, staff will personally escort your child from the bus to their classroom during the first few weeks. Adults are always present to manage morning arrival and afternoon dismissal. Specific bus stop locations and schedules will arrive in the August mailing.

School Breakfast

Breakfast is available at school every morning before the instructional day begins. Families can purchase breakfast daily, and meals are provided at no cost to families who qualify for the free or reduced-price meal program.

Cafeteria Accounts & PINs

Every student is assigned a food services account and PIN. Parents can pre-fund this account online, and students will enter their PIN to buy meals. Cafeteria staff are always available to help children who forget their numbers. Account details and PINs will be included in the August mailing.

Before & After-School Care

Before- and After-School Care is provided at some schools by the *YMCA*. This care is based on community need and is contracted out to the YMCA. The YMCA may add or cancel care at its discretion. Contact the PNC YMCA to enroll your child in before or after-school care (https://pittsburghymca.org/base).

After-School Care is also provided at the *Lauri Ann West Community Center*. Buses run from the schools to the center. Contact them for more information (https://lauriannwestcc.org/).

Who's Who in Your Child's School?

Your child's school is filled with dedicated professionals who support their academic learning, social-emotional growth, and daily routines. Below is an overview of the teaching staff, administrative teams, and district-level organizations here to help. Consider keeping this guide handy throughout the school year as a quick reference.

Classroom Teachers: Instruct students in all core academic subjects, including mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies.

Special Area Teachers: Provide instruction in specialized areas across the school, including art, computer science, library, music, physical education, and world languages.

Reading & Math Teachers: Provide targeted, small-group instruction for students who need extra academic support. Parents are welcome to contact a specialist directly with questions regarding their child's progress.

Learning Support Teachers: Special education teachers partner with families and general education staff to develop and implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). They ensure a supportive general education experience and meet regularly with parents to share progress updates.

Gifted Education Teachers: Collaborate with kindergarten teachers to enrich learning for students who are reading significantly above grade level. They also facilitate the screening process for gifted services in accordance with Pennsylvania school law and district policy.

ELL (English Language Learner) Teacher: Supports students who speak a language other than English at home. They specialize in helping students master English language proficiency and academic content to ensure a smooth, successful transition into the general education classroom.

School Counselor: Delivers a preventative guidance curriculum through classroom lessons, small groups, and school-wide programs while supporting students' social and academic success.

School Nurse: Provides acute and preventive medical care, administers medications, and acts as the primary responder for health or injury situations.

School Psychologist: Partners with teachers and families to support student learning and behavioral growth. They lead the evaluation process for special education or gifted services.

Teacher Aide / Assistant / Instructional Aide: Supports classroom teachers with clerical and instructional tasks, providing extra individual attention to students and assisting in the cafeteria.

Speech-Language Pathologist: Diagnoses and supports students with speech, language, or voice communication needs, including articulation and comprehension.

Occupational Therapist (OT): Helps students develop fine motor skills and adapt to classroom equipment to improve daily school participation. *(Requires an IEP or 504 Plan)*

Physical Therapist (PT): Focuses on gross motor skills, mobility, and physical conditioning to help students safely navigate the school building. *(Requires an IEP or 504 Plan)*

Principal: Leads the school's academic and administrative operations, oversees staff, and manages student and parent relations. Available to discuss your child's experience or any school-wide questions.

Program Principal *(O'Hara Elementary only)*: Assists the principal in managing specific administrative areas, including student transportation, cafeteria logistics, and attendance.

Secretary: Manages daily office operations, handles registration and attendance, and coordinates schedules. The secretarial team is your main point of contact for reaching other staff members.

Support Around Your School

PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization): Connects families and school staff through community events, fundraisers, and newsletters. Joining the PTO is a wonderful way to get involved, support school improvements (like playground projects), and build relationships with teachers and fellow parents.

School Board: Serves as the elected governing body responsible for the district's policies, budget, and long-term planning. Public meetings are held regularly, and schedules are available on the district website. Community members are welcome to attend and share feedback.



Resources

Fox Chapel Area School District

Main Phone Number	412-963-9600
Fairview Elementary	412-963-9315
Kerr Elementary	412-781-4105
Hartwood Elementary	412-767-5396
O'Hara Elementary	412-963-0333

Kindergarten Transition Information

Alison Francis, Ed.D.

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Ashley Constantine, Ed.D.

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412-967-2411

Director of Special Education and Pupil Services

Timothy A. Mahoney, Ed.D.

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412/967-2435

DART- Preschool Early Intervention

https://www.aiu3.net/Page/1216

Food and Nutrition Services

412-967-2502

School Cafe

https://www.schoolcafe.com/

Lauri Ann West Community Center

1220 Powers Run Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15238

412-828-8566

LEAP- (Learning Experiences: an Alternative Program for preschoolers and parents)

https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/

412-781-1708

PA Common Core Standards

http://www.pdesas.org/Page/Viewer/ViewPage/11

YMCA

Before & After School Enrichment (BASE) Programs

https://www.pittsburghymca.org/base

412-573-4166



Kindergarten Suggested Reading List
The Fox Chapel Area School District

Our Library Department encourages students to explore these wonderful books, as well as other titles by these authors and others.

Alborough, Jez	*Duck in the Truck*
Bayer, Jane	*A My Name is Alice*
Brett, Jan	*The Three Snow Bears*
Brown, Marc	*Arthur for President*
Bryan, Ashley	*Beautiful Black Bird*
Carle, Eric	*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*
Cohen, Miriam	*When Will I Read?*
Crews, Nina	*The Neighborhood Mother Goose*
Dillion, Leo	*Rap a Tap Tap*
Eastman, P.D.	*Go Dog Go!*
Ehlert, Lois	*Oodles of Animals*
Falconer, Ian	*Olivia Forms a Band*
Fleming, Denise	*Beetle Bop*
Friend, Catherine	*The Perfect Nest*
Henkes, Kevin	*Old Bear*
Jenkins, Steve	*Move!*
Keats, Ezra Jack	*Peter's Chair*
Lehman, Barbara	*The Red Book*
Martin, Bill	*Baby Bear, Baby Bear, What do You See?*
Murphy, Jill	*Five Minutes Peace*
Numeroff, Laura Joffe	*If You Give a Pig a Party*
Prelutsky, Jack	*Read A-Loud Rhymes for the Very Young*
Rosoff, Meg	*Jumpy Jack and Googily*
Seuss, Dr.	*Horton Hears a Who*
Taback, Simms	*There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*
Willems, Mo	*Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*
Wilson, Karma	*Bear Snores On*
Wells, Rosemary	*Yoko*
Yolen, Jane	*How do Dinosaurs go to School?*

Family Pledge

I pledge to help my child prepare for kindergarten by:

- Making sure my child has a healthy, nutritious breakfast before school every day.
    - This will give my child energy to stay focused and learn.

- Teaching my child to practice good hygiene (like brushing teeth, bathing, and wearing clean clothes).
    - This will help my child feel better about themselves.

- Teaching my child good habits (like washing hands, covering the nose and mouth when sneezing, and closing the mouth when chewing).
    - This will help keep my child healthy and prevent the spread of germs.

- Creating a routine bedtime, making sure my child gets at least 10-12 hours of sleep each night.
    - This will help my child be well-rested and ready to learn.

- Reading with my child every day.
    - This will help my child recognize words and allow me to spend quality time with my child.