

Alton Community Unit School District #11

Early Childhood Center



“Where we hold your child's heart in our hands”

Family Handbook

Godfrey Site #1

6008 Godfrey Road
Godfrey, IL 62035
(618) 463-2166

Alton High School Site #2

4200 Humbert Road
Alton, IL 62002
(618) 474-2267 or (618) 474-2262

Revised 08/14

The Early Childhood Program

The Alton Community Unit School District's Early Childhood Center is a school that serves children ages 3-5. As such, we understand that this may be your first experience with our School District. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and express our goal to provide a unique and enriching experience for you and your child that will create a solid foundation for your child's educational career.

The Early Childhood Program is a family focused program that provides support for both children and families. Research tells us a child's family has the greatest influence on his or her education. As families of children in our program, you attend orientation meetings, parent/teacher conferences, classroom activities, scheduled family/child events (held both during the day and evening), and home visits. The benefit of this involvement is life-long.

Children are eligible to attend either the Early Childhood Preschool for All Program or Early Childhood Special Education Program. Half day classes are offered five days a week to provide a balanced educational experience.

Preschool for All Program

The Preschool for All Program is designed to engage three- and four-year-olds in the early learning experiences they need to succeed in school and life. Our program brings together a highly qualified staff, a researched based curriculum - Creative Curriculum, and parent involvement to help prepare your child for success in school. The program meets the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Preschool and has achieved the ExceleRate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality rating under the state's new quality rating and improvement system for early learning programs. The program is made possible through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education.

A child is found eligible for the program through a screening/assessment process. Each child is assessed using a developmental questionnaire (ASQ) which looks at five areas of development (gross motor, fine, motor, communication, problem solving, and personal-social). Once the questionnaire is completed, a parent interview is conducted to review the social and health history of both the child and family. The information obtained during the screening process is then used to determine eligibility based on a priority of needs.

Special Education Program

As a result of a disability and the adverse affects of the disability, some children require specialized instruction in order to benefit educationally. Illinois Special Education Rules and Regulations and Federal Law require public schools to provide a free and appropriate educational program to anyone between the ages of 3 years old and until the day before their 22nd birthday who has been identified as eligible for special education services.

Eligibility for Early Childhood Special Education is determined through a case study to identify a child's unique needs. A multidisciplinary team of professionals will meet with the family to review the findings of the case study and determine the child's needs using disability criterion determined by federal, state and local guidelines. If it is determined that a child requires specialized instruction, an Individualized Education Program will be written and the child will receive the appropriate educational services. The Early Childhood Center provides a variety of services for students found eligible for special education. Parents are provided written copies of their Rights and Responsibilities, and staff is available to discuss any questions or concerns.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide appropriate experiences for each child within a safe, stimulating environment with parents, professionals, and community members working as partners to establish a foundation for lifelong learning.

Our Philosophy

We believe all children are entitled to the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential through successful experiences. Our school is designed to meet the individual social, emotional, physical, nutritional, and intellectual needs of our children through developmentally appropriate tasks. Play is the primary tool for learning as we provide a safe environment with activities to stimulate natural interest and promote discovery while building on children's strengths. Parents and educators work together to provide the best possible environment at home and school to foster self-esteem and child-centered learning. Teachers work with parents to support their roles as the child's first teacher by offering resources and opportunities to enrich their child's development.

Program Goals

1. To meet individual needs of children relative to their developmental goals.
2. To develop the children's self-esteem through school and home activities.
3. To support parents in their role as their child's first teachers by increasing parental involvement and awareness of children's development.
4. To promote children's socially appropriate behavior.
5. To utilize community resources for the family's needs.
6. To have fun with the children and enjoy experiences related to developmental learning.
7. To develop children's positive attitudes toward school and life-long learning.

Program Hours

Site #1 Godfrey

Half-Day Program*

Monday thru Friday

Morning Session 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Afternoon Session 12:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Site #2 Alton High School Site

Half-Day Program*

Monday thru Friday

Morning Session 8:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

Afternoon Session 12:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.

***Note: Student's placement (a.m. or p.m.) depends on home address or bus pick-up/drop off location.**

Fees

Children in the **Preschool for All Program** do not pay a material fee; it is covered in the Illinois State Board of Education grant.

Children in the **Early Childhood Special Education Program** pay a material fee of \$75.00 per year. Fee deferment forms are available upon request.

Curriculum

Three, four and five year old children learn best by exploring and "discovering their own learning" through a carefully designed classroom environment and program. Children who attend the Early Childhood Program will have opportunities to explore the many centers provided in each classroom environment: blocks, dramatic play, cooking, art, science, math, manipulatives, woodworking, music, and literacy/language. Children will also have opportunities to play outside.

Our curriculum (Creative Curriculum) is designed to meet the individual needs of each child based on that child's strengths and abilities. Teachers and par educators provide opportunities for large and small group activities as well as many opportunities to work one on one with your child.

The children's active participation in their learning helps them prepare for Kindergarten by becoming thinkers, problem solvers, and independent learners. Through Path's Curriculum students are also guided to develop social skills by working and playing cooperatively in a group.

Children have opportunities for:

- Journal writing
- Drawing and art experiences with various art media
- Identifying environmental print (common signs, popular food labels, etc.)
- Writing and listening centers, taking walks to name objects, recognizing labels of classroom objects
- Listening to and reading books
- Learning to handle books with care
- Dictating stories & making class books/story
- Recognizing their own and other's names
- Printing their own first name
- Making classroom charts/graphs
- Clapping rhythms
- Learning finger plays & rhymes
- Making predictions during story reading
- Participating in storytelling with puppets & flannel boards
- Matching letters to the sound they make
- Participating in large and small group discussions
- Using language when sharing ideas and answering questions

The Early Childhood Program uses center time activities to introduce, teach, and reinforce number concepts, cause and effect, object permanence, discovery and invention.

Children have opportunities to learn math and science concepts through:

- Assembling puzzles
- Using manipulatives that stack, hook, snap together
- Classify by color, shape, and size
- Explore various texture mediums: sand, sawdust, cornmeal, flour, rice, water, paper, dried corn, etc.
- Use toys and equipment that lift, bend, turn, roll, flip, expand, and shrink.
- Play games that promote meaningful counting.
- Observe natural phenomena such as caterpillars changing to butterflies.

Materials in the classroom are selected to build upon children's natural curiosity, broaden interests and vocabulary, and strengthen skills needed for learning.

Assessment

The Early Childhood Program uses several models to provide on-going assessment of your child. The purpose of assessment is to follow your child's progress and to make any necessary adjustments that will encourage and challenge your child to want to learn more and continue to grow intellectually and socially.

The Center uses Teaching Strategies GOLD Child Assessment Portfolio to monitor development in:

1. Language and Literacy
2. Mathematical Thinking
3. Personal and Social Development
4. Scientific Thinking
5. Social Studies
6. The Arts
7. Physical Development

Developmental Guidelines and Checklists provide a framework for observation. Developmental Guidelines give teachers a set of observational criteria that are based on National and Illinois State Standards and knowledge of child development. Teachers' observations are recorded two times each year on the Developmental Checklists. In using the Guidelines and Checklists as the basis of their professional judgment, teachers use explicit criteria to make decisions about student's behavior, knowledge, and accomplishments.

This information is used to determine your child's progress that is reported on their individual progress reports and shared at parent conferences.

In addition, Portfolios are used as purposeful collections of children's work that illustrate students' efforts, progress, and achievement. Two types of children's work are collected over the school year:

1. Core items which show growth over time and quality of work within domains.
2. Individualized items portray the unique characteristics of the child and reflect classroom activities that integrate many domains of curriculum. Students and teachers work together to design and evaluate the Portfolios.

Summary Reports

Progress Reports are completed two times a year, in the fall and in the spring. Teachers compile information from the Developmental Checklist and Portfolios, and using their knowledge of child development, assess student performance and progress. Ratings and brief comments describing the student's strengths and areas of concern are written. These reports are shared with parents during conferences.

Individualized Education Program

Children with IEPs will be included with the portfolio assessment as well as documenting their progress regarding their individual goals and objectives. Annual reviews will be held to discuss the specific goals and objectives in addition to parent conferences.

Materials/Supplies Needed for School

Put your child's name on everything coming to school, including backpacks, coats/jackets, umbrellas, etc.

- Book Bag: Large enough to hold 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " X 11" papers and notebooks. Backpacks are preferred. **NO ROLLING BAGS ARE ALLOWED.** (This has been a safety issue). Decorations on book bags must be preschool age appropriate, no violent or sexually oriented decorations.
- Check your child's book bag daily for their work and important letters, notes, flyers from school.
- An extra set of clothes (appropriate for the season), including underwear, socks, pants and shirt. These must be labeled with your child's name. Place all clothing in a zip-lock bag with your child's name on the front of the bag.
- Your child's teacher may have list of suggested items for donation.

Items from Home

Please discourage your child from bringing toys or other items to school, as we will not be responsible for lost or broken items from home. Parents are welcome to bring items and other interests (new babies, pets, etc.) to school, but first check with your child's teacher. Toy weapons of any type are not allowed on the bus or at the school. They will be taken away and held in the Principal's office for parents to pick up.

Student Conduct

The Early Childhood Program participates in the school district's Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) system, which uses positive reinforcement and encouragement "to do the right thing", make good choices, and follow school rules. We have two primary rules at the Early Childhood Center:

BE KIND-BE SAFE

We currently have a school mascot, "Beatrice Bee", who helps the children remember the school rules. Our school PBIS universal coach and social skills tutor spend time with the children helping them to learn about being kind and safe. The children's classroom teachers instruct and reinforce these rules throughout the school day. We also meet in the gym once a month to learn "cool tools" which also help reinforce Be Kind-Be Safe.

We believe that young children will begin to make good decisions about their learning, making friends and demonstrating feelings, if given the opportunity and adult support. Teachers and staff are here to serve as models for these behaviors and encourage children in developing these social skills. The Center uses the PATHS curriculum (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) to help reinforce positive behavior skills.

Parent Involvement

New Pre-K students must have teacher approval before bussing can start.

Parents are needed and wanted in the Early Childhood Program. We cannot provide the best education possible for your child without you! Children learn best from those they love and trust.

You are your child's first and most important teacher!

We ask parents to be actively involved in the education of their children. Parents at the Early Childhood Center are offered the following opportunities to be involved:

- Orientation/Open House
- Home Visits
- Parent Teacher Conferences
- Family Events
- Parent Education Opportunities
- Classroom Visits
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Parent Teacher Group

Parent Responsibility

1. Complete and provide all required paperwork for child's registration including:

- Birth Certificate (certified copy with "SEAL" printed on it.)
- Shot Record (updated immunizations)
- Copy of Physical Exam form (within the last year)
- Two proofs of residency in Alton School District (Utility bills, mortgage payment, rent receipt, or Public Aid Medioplan Card)
- Child's social security card
- Parent/Guardian's driver's License

2. Update all information as needed during the year with the office **AND** your child's teacher. This includes any changes in address, phone/cell phone and emergency contact persons (and their telephone numbers).

3. For your child's best interest, please ensure that you:

- Put your child to bed early. Young children need 10 hours of rest each night.
- Dress your child for play; clothes that can be washed easily and are comfortable for climbing, running, etc. Your child should wear clothing that he/she can easily manage in the bathroom. Dress clothes should be reserved for "Picture Days" which occur in the fall and spring.

- We recommend closed-toe shoes (ex. tennis shoes) on the playground. Sandals, dress shoes, and flip flops are discouraged and are not safe for active play.
- Remember to dress your child for the weather. Students will play outdoors every day the temperature is between 25 and 90 degrees and the playground is dry.

School Calendars

Each family will receive a school district calendar which will indicate holidays and other district-designated days off from school. The Early Childhood program follows the district schedule unless you receive a notice of change. The district calendar also includes the district handbook which provides important general information, health information and specific information about each school building.

Our program frequently sends announcements and center event flyers home in your child's backpack. Also, many teachers send home regular classroom notes or calendars to inform parents of activities. **Please check your child's backpack daily.** Please keep both the district calendar and school notes to reference throughout the year.

Attendance

To ensure school success, daily attendance is encouraged. Parents have the responsibility for their child's regular attendance at school. When it is necessary for a student to miss school, a parent must call the school and report the absence. Please try and call the school before 9:00 AM/1:00 PM when your child is not present on attendance days. If you arrive 15 minutes after class begins, your child will be marked tardy. It is very important that your child be on time as late arrivals are disruptive to the learning environment. Excessive unexcused absences may result in your child being dismissed from the program. Students will be dropped from our enrolment after 10 consecutive days of absences without any contact.

Examples of excused absence:

1. Illness
2. Death in the family or of a close friend
3. Critical illness of relative
4. Medical appointment
5. Transportation (beyond parental control)

Examples of unexcused absence:

1. Visiting friends or relatives
2. Vacations

If bussing is provided, please call the bus garage and let them know of the absence at (618) 466-5400.

Building Security

It is our pledge to provide for the safety of your child while in our care. We have instituted a sign-in, sign-out policy in our office for parents who are bringing their child to school or coming to pick him/her up.

Any parent/care givers who will be dropping off/picking up are required to bring a photo ID to show office personnel.

If an occasional caregiver comes to pick up a child they must:

- Be on the approved pick-up list provided by parent.
- Be able to provide a Photo-ID.

The School will not release a child to anyone who does not meet the above listed requirements.

Entry and exit from the building is only through the northeast doors (by the office). This door is locked at all times. Parents are required to press the intercom button and look at the camera above the door in order to be identified and allowed into the building. Everyone is expected to sign-in at the office before proceeding to a classroom. If you are staying in the building for a length of time, you must sign-out when leaving.

Do not attempt to exit any of the other doors in the building. A number of them have magnetic closure that can be activated in an emergency by staff only.

Parent Transport

Parents who bring children to school may park and bring their child into the building. First, stop at the office for sign-in and verification. If parents arrive before the school session starting time, please remain with your child in the school library located directly across the hall from the main office. Children may come into the classrooms at the appropriate times (8:30 am for morning session; 12:30 pm for afternoon session).

If parents wish to "drop-off", they may drive into the fenced playground area and get in line with the buses. For your child's safety, a staff member will take your child from your vehicle at the west entrance.

When bringing children to school, accompany them into the building and down to their classroom, unless you choose to drop them off in the bus line. Share this information with any caregiver who may bring them to school. Never leave other children in your vehicle unattended while bringing a child into the building. Do not allow your child to exit the vehicle unaccompanied. Parents must come into school to pick-up their child.

Godfrey Road Site

AM Session: 8:30 am - 11:00 am

PM Session: 12:30 pm - 3:00 pm

High School Site

AM Session: 8:15 am - 10:45 am

PM Session: 12:15 pm - 2:45 pm

Bus Transportation

Illinois Central Bus Company is our contracted bussing service.

You may reach them at (618) 466-5400

The bus manager is Sheri Kelley.

- Door-to-door bussing within the school district boundaries is offered.
- Prekindergarten eligible children will be provided bussing on an "as-needed" basis. If you can transport your child one or both ways, you will be expected to do so.
- Pre-K students need to meet with their teacher before bussing can start.
- Early Childhood Special Education children will be provided bussing as part of their Individual Education Program. If you have more than one child in the program and one of them is eligible for Early Childhood Special Education, then all of your children will be eligible for bus services, if needed.
- Parents will be given bus information directly from the bus garage before their child starts school. The bus number and approximate pick up and drop off times will be provided.
- Pick up and drop off points must be consistent. You may not make "occasional" changes to fit home schedules.
- If changes in bussing are needed, parents are required to go through the Early Childhood Center Office. No changes will be made after May 1st.
- Any changes must then be confirmed with Illinois Central Bus Company and the school office.
- Allow 3-5 working days for bus changes. The time required for making changes may be longer at the beginning of the school year. No changes may be made for bussing for the last 3 weeks of school.
- Please look for your child's bus at least 15 minutes prior to their coming home. You are to physically go out to meet the bus and show a photo I.D. This applies to anyone you designate to take your child off the bus.

- Your child will be returned to school if :
 1. No one was home who is authorized to receive your child. If this occurs, your child be returned to the school office and will remain at school with Office Personnel until you or an authorized person comes to pick them up. After the 3rd time of being brought back to school bussing may be stopped.
 2. If no one can be contacted to pick-up or receive your child by 4:30 p.m., Alton Police/Madison County Sheriff's office will be contacted.

If neglect is suspected, DCFS will be contacted.

Illinois Central Bus Company policy prohibits parents and siblings from riding the school bus, to and from school.

School Bus Rules

- Seat belts must be kept on at all times.
- Children in car seats must remain seated at all times.
- "Inside voices" must be used while on the bus.
- Students are to be respectful to the driver and bus monitor and each other.
- Students violating bus rules will be reported to the school principal, who will:
 1. Talk to the child regarding behavior.
 2. Talk with child's parent/guardian if behavior continues.
 3. Discontinue bus service if necessary & notify parents of this decision.

Health Matters

Parents are required to keep their child home for any of the following symptoms/conditions:

- Fever/Pain (needs to be fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication)
- Diarrheal (symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication)
- Vomiting (symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication)
- Constant sneezing
- Persistent Cough
- Swelling/Redness of Throat
- Skin Eruptions/Rash
- Strep Throat*
- Head Lice*
- Pink Eye *
- Ringworm*
- Scarlet Fever*

*These conditions require a doctor's written permission for a child to return to school or sign of treatment.

Our school nurse or staff member will contact you if your child should become ill or injured at school. The nurse will also administer any medication that a doctor requires a child to take during school hours.

Other trained medical technicians will administer medication in the nurse's absence. Any child requiring medication at school should have a district form signed by the child's physician. Parents are responsible for bringing medication to school. Children may not bring any medication to school with them, or transport medication back home. The school nurse will also contact you if there are any concerns regarding your child's physical exam report and immunization record.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding health matters refer to the District's school calendar for District policies. **Remember to report to the School Office (463-2166) when your child will be absent, before class each day.**

If a child gets sick at school he/she will remain in the nurse's office until someone can pick him/her up. **The school must have a current, working phone number of an adult who can come if needed.** If you cannot be reached, your emergency contact person will be called.

School Snacks

Please feed your child prior to coming to school each day, as we only provide a snack during the two and a half hour session.

*****PLEASE LET YOUR TEACHER KNOW IF YOUR CHILD HAS ANY FOOD ALLERGIES. *****

Our goal is to offer children more opportunities to try a wide variety of foods that are highly nutritious.

The reasoning behind school snacks is to provide more classroom time for the children, as well as the added bonus of less carbohydrates and sugars in their systems. Research shows that foods high in carbohydrates and sugars affect behaviors, including mood swings, as well as dental and digestive problems.

The concern for the health and safety of all children within the program has prompted the district to adopt a policy requiring only commercially packaged foods items be sent to school. Please keep this in mind if you choose to donate items for snack.

Celebrations

Holidays will not necessarily mean your child's classroom will have a party. The only district approved holiday party will be in December. Individual classroom teachers may choose another way to celebrate or parent involvement events may be scheduled. Your child's teacher will communicate these plans with you either by letter or through the monthly calendar that will be sent home.

Parents, who want to celebrate their child's birthday, are allowed to bring in a reasonable, **commercially packaged**, birthday treat. We encourage parents to consider a healthy snack which supports our focus on nutrition. Please discuss your plans with the teacher prior to the day of the celebration. Parents are asked to drop the treats off and allow the teacher to serve them when convenient.

Home and School Opportunities

Parent Teacher Group: A team of parents and staff meet throughout the school year to coordinate family participation for Early Childhood Center families. The Participation is open to all families with children in the Center's programs. The ECC PTG assists with planning and organizing activities, fundraising, and providing volunteers for program events.

Parents as Teachers: Parents as Teachers is a voluntary education and school readiness program that provides information and support to families with children from birth to 3 in the Alton District. The program is based on the philosophy that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. We provide choices for family participation through:

- Home Visits: Monthly personal visits that offer parents of children 0-3 year's information on each stage of their child's development and ways to encourage learning.
- Family Activities: Daytime and evening activities for families of young children that are fun and informative.

Teen Parent Services: Conferences/home visits made with teenagers who are pregnant or parents that attend Alton High School. Teen Parent Group meets to share information and support for Alton High School teen parents.

Family Resource Center: A combined Early Childhood family resource center is located at the Godfrey site, across from the office. Materials, books, pamphlets, videos, toys, manipulatives, and games are available for families. All materials are free to borrow and may be checked out through the Early Childhood staff in the resource center.

Statement of Non-discrimination

Alton Community Unit School District #11 does not discriminate in the administration of its admissions and educational programs, activities or employment practices on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, marital status and any other basis prohibited by law. This statement is a reflection of Alton Community Unit School District #11 and refers to, but is not limited to, the provisions of the following laws:

- Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Age Discrimination Act of 1967
- Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1975

For questions or additional information, please contact Marc Lambert, Section 504 Coordinator at (618) 474-2600 x. 50301.

Illinois State Board of Education Preschool Program provided through State grant funding:

Preschool for All

Parents as Teachers

Special Education Program provided through local District and Federal funds administered through the Illinois State Board of Education:

Early Childhood Special Education may include the following services:

Specialized Classroom Instruction

Speech and Language Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Physical Therapy

Social Work Therapy

Hearing Impairment Services

Visual Impairment Services

Notes