

Hillsboro PreK Handbook '24-'25

Coffeen Early Childhood Center • 200 School Street • Coffeen, IL 62017 • (217)532-7822 • www.hillsboroschools.net

HILLSBORO EARLY CHILDHOOD PRESCHOOL FOR ALL PROGRAM

Hillsboro Early Childhood Program (Preschool For All-PFA) is an Illinois State Board grant funded preschool program for children 3-5 years of age. Our classrooms are located at 2 attendance sites in the district, Coffeen Early Childhood Center (Coffeen School) and Hillsboro Community Child Development Center (HCCDC) on the Hillsboro hospital grounds. Both sites offer the same family involvement activities, parent resources, developmentally appropriate curriculum, certified Early Childhood teachers and state certified teaching assistants. Our district provides the least restrictive inclusionary setting for all children, regardless of their developmental level or disability.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Hillsboro Early Childhood Programs to facilitate the development of children and to strengthen and support families in their efforts to prepare their children for future school success, using research based, developmentally appropriate methods and fully including all children.

Your child will benefit from an enriching preschool environment and experience the joys of making new friends, the excitement of learning new skills, and the opportunity to develop independence. Activities are always aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Our curriculum is entirely *play-based* and assessment is *authentic* in the natural play setting using appropriate practices for preschool age children as outlined by The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 6th Edition.

IMPORTANT DATES AT BEGINNING OF SCHOOL YEAR

Registration: Registration is completed online @ www.hillsboroschools.net by clicking on “Skyward Access”. ALL students, new and returning, must register yearly. Students wishing to enroll AFTER the start of school will need to call the PreK Office @ 217-532-7822 to schedule a screening and for information about registering.

Documents Required for Enrollment:

- Completed Physical/Immunization/Lead Screening Form(s)** (*new students only*)
- Accurate address(s) for transportation** (*if using bussing*)
- Birth Certificate** (*unless previously provided*)
- Proof of family income (*new students*)** by providing any 1 of the following: W-2s; 1 month of pay stubs; medical card; SNAP/TANF/WIC benefit documentation, or front page of previous year income taxes. (These documents will be kept safely and confidential. They will be shredded upon exiting our PreK program. **Students without proof of income on file will be placed on a waiting list.**)
- DCFS Authorization Form** (*if applicable*)

Home Visit: Your child’s teacher will be calling you mid- August to schedule a brief visit so that your child can meet them and see their face. This will take place prior to the first day of school.

Orientation: Orientation is held for Parent/Caregivers new to Hillsboro PreK. Your child’s teacher will share with you the information you need to access the online orientation. If you are unable to access the online version of the orientation, please read this handbook carefully, as most details are provided here. (We request that only adults attend Orientation.)

Open House: CHILDREN *and* PARENTS are asked to come to drop by your classroom for a few minutes to see the school, your teacher, and to drop off any donation supplies in their classroom. Open House is typically held 2 days before the start of PreK. (Refer to letter for date/time.)

YOU AND YOUR CHILD

You are your child's first teacher. Parents are THE most important people in a child's life. Everyone needs help being a parent! None of us are born parents. We learn to be parents by:

1. Talking to and watching other parents.
2. Reading books.
3. Listening to the advice of doctors and other professionals.
4. Remembering how our parents raised us.

Parents teach their children by PLAYING with them, TALKING TO and EXPLAINING things to them, and by SETTING CONSISTENT LIMITS. We believe that parents are the biggest influence on their child's school success. For that reason, we find as many ways to communicate with you as possible. Because there is NO COST for the pre-Kindergarten Program, we REQUIRE parents to volunteer in some way. Your child's teacher will provide you with a list of ways that you can be involved.

COMMUNICATION

We encourage you to **visit** your child's school anytime. It is best to wait until after the first couple weeks, until they have established a routine and feel comfortable with teachers and peers.

All of our teachers use the "**Remind App**" to communicate with parents **via text** and is one of our easiest and most utilized forms of communication. Teachers welcome you to text them any time using this app and will be in contact with you as soon as they can. We also utilize **private classroom Facebook groups** for communication. We invite you to "Like" and "Follow" our **Hillsboro Pre-K Facebook page!** You can also explore the PreK pages on our district website @ www.hillsboroschools.net/coffeenprek

You will receive a **monthly calendar** from the main office with Pre-K news, family events, parent workshops, and attendance schedules. You will also receive a **bi-weekly calendar** from your classroom teacher with classroom activities and reminders.

Our **phone contact and email information** is provided on your monthly calendar if you need to speak with the PreK Coordinator/Instructional Leader, Mrs. VanMiddendorp- "Miss Sarah", or Principal/Early Childhood Director, Mrs. Gutierrez, for any reason, at 217-532-7822.

CLASS SCHEDULES

Coffeen Early Childhood Center (CECC) offers half-day sessions, AM and PM. They meet 5 days per week, Monday - Friday. The **AM session is 8:15am-10:50am**, and **PM session is 11:50am-2:30pm**. Hillsboro Child Development Center (HCCDC) is a daycare located on the Hillsboro Hospital grounds. This center is part of the HCCDC daycare program. All pre-k children at this site must be enrolled full-time in the daycare center. Miss Shelby's HCCDC class is provided free of charge on-site for families paying for daycare by the Pre-Kindergarten grant to eliminate transitions during the child's day for families that need before and after-school care. This class meets 5 days per week, Monday - Friday and also offers an AM & PM session. There is no bussing to or from this center.

FEES AND CHARGES

There are no fees or charges for Pre-K. We are funded through grants from the Illinois State Board of Education. All school supply or wish lists sent home by teachers are *donations, and not required* for attendance. If your child attends HCCDC, all 3-5 year olds participate in the preschool program and automatically receive a discounted monthly fee from their daycare fees.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS—EARLY DISMISSALS

A parent alert broadcast with any changes in school closing times due to snow, ice, fog, or emergencies will go out to the first 2 primary contact numbers on file for each student. It is very important to keep contact numbers up to date and on file in our office so **please call and update any time your phone number changes.**

School closings or delayed opening times will usually be broadcast from 6:00 a.m. until school opening time. In the event of early dismissals, the call will go out as soon as the decision is made from the Unit Office during the school day.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Our parking lots can become very congested at arrival and dismissal times. If you are transporting your child to or from school, please pull up in line in the circle drive, and wait in your car until a teacher is outside to greet them. Drop-off is between 8:00-8:15 a.m. or 11:50-11:55 p.m. **If you are arriving at a time outside of the normal drop-off or pick-up times, please ring the doorbell, and staff will assist you.** Pick-Up is at 10:50-7am & 2:25pm. You may park across the street and walk up to the front door to wait outside for your child. Please do not park in the circle drive car line. You may pull up in the car line and a staff member can bring your child to your car if it is a hardship to get out and meet us at the door.

If someone other than parents are to pick up your Pre-K child, you **MUST** *notify us in writing, or give us a call* if you have not sent a note. We will not send a child with anyone other than parents or those designated by the parents or guardians in writing.

BUSSING

ISBE Preschool For All funding does **not** require that school districts provide bussing for preschool aged children. With the rising cost of transportation, bussing is not necessarily provided from the door of every home to and from school. You will receive information about transportation at Open House.

- HCCDC daycare center Pre-K children are only transported to and from school by parents. No bussing is available to the center.
- Coffeen ECC students are offered bussing from anywhere in the school district Monday through Thursday, but may have **designated bus stops** for children in some areas. Your child's teacher will discuss the designated location with you prior to enrollment.
- Bussing for students residing in Witt, Irving, Donnellson, and Panama is provided in the PM session only. Parents may choose to transport if they prefer to enroll in the AM session.
- **No bussing is provided on Fridays.** Families choosing to have their child attend school on Fridays will be expected to arrange transportation for their child to and from school. As transportation may be a hardship or difficult for some families to arrange, attendance on Fridays is not required. Families will be asked to enroll for 4 days or 5 days. Those choosing 5 days will be expected to have regular Friday attendance. (Bussing for students with full IEP services IS provided on Fridays.)

All school buses are equipped with radios with a base unit located at the bus garage and all attendance centers. If at any time you are concerned about your child's late arrival, call the Pre-K Office and we can contact the bus driver directly!

SCHOOL BUS INFORMATION (Coffeen Only)

You will be notified at Open House as to the exact time and place your child will meet the bus & be dropped off.

1. Have your child at the bus stop at least 5 minutes **before** your scheduled pick-up time. Children should be ready for the bus (coats and backpacks already on) before it arrives. (Bus times may vary 5-10 minutes, so please be watching for the bus early, and also know that it may run behind at times.) Bus drivers request that you be outside, or have a front door open so they can see you as they approach. If they do not see anyone, they may slow down and stop briefly, but are NOT required to stop for any length of time or to honk and wait.
2. Remind your child to follow the bus rules, especially: **STAY IN ONE SEAT. REMAIN SEATED AT ALL TIMES. KEEP HANDS TO YOURSELF. USE YOUR QUIET VOICE.**
3. A responsible person **MUST** meet the bus and see the child home safely. A bus driver **CANNOT** drop off a preschooler unless he/she **sees** that an adult is at the bus stop to meet the child. If no one is there to meet the preschooler, the child will be kept on the bus and taken to the bus garage at the high school or returned to their school or after-school program. You will be called and it will be your responsibility to pick your child up. **You will only be allowed to have this happen two times. If it happens a third time, your child may lose bus privileges and be required to pay after-school care fees.**
4. Please notify the school and bus garage AHEAD OF TIME if your child is ill or unable to attend so that the bus driver can be notified and not stop to pick up your child.
Bus garage: 217-532-6012 Coffeen School: 217-532-7822.
5. If your child is to be picked up or dropped off at a different location other than their regular bus stop, you need to make these arrangements in advance with the Pre-K Office unless it is an emergency.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The teachers and assistants value the privacy of your child and your family. Our staff is trained and carefully follows our confidentiality policy. You can be confident that no staff member will discuss your child in any way at school unless it pertains to their educational plan. You can also be confident that they will not discuss any child outside of the school setting. It is just as important that when you visit your child's school that you respect the privacy of all children and families. When you visit you will see many children who are just beginning to develop the social skills of turn taking, sharing, interacting with peers and following a routine.

All children have emotional ups and downs as they learn, just like at home. They are likely to act very differently when parents are present at *their* school. We find that children fully accept and understand their peers at this early age, no matter what the behavior, delay or disability may be. Please do not make judgements or comments about others. When you visit our classrooms, please fully respect the privacy of all families and children. Every child and family deserves the same respect that you want others to have for your own child and family.

OTHER VISITORS

Hillsboro PreK is a reputable PreK in the central/southern Illinois regions and is considered a "model preschool." As a result, we do regularly host college students training to become teachers, completing field experience and/or student teaching. We also periodically host preschool teachers or early childhood professionals from other school districts who have requested to observe our preschool to gather ideas for implementing a quality pre-k program. These visitors are held to the same

confidentiality standards as our parents and staff and are always under the supervision and company of Coffeen PreK Staff.

DRESS

Please dress your child in comfortable clothing that they can learn to manage themselves in the bathroom. They also need comfortable shoes, as part of their program involves large motor skill development of running, jumping, hopping, skipping and riding bikes, all of which we do daily. Tennis shoes are recommended. Cowboy boots and fancy dress shoes are discouraged.

We go outdoors until temperatures/wind chills fall below 25 degrees! Please send the appropriate gloves, hats, and jackets as the weather requires. (You may place these in your child's backpack if they aren't wanting to wear all of them on the school bus, but please have them available for the playground!)

SNACKS

Students will be provided a nutritious snack and drink each day at school. This is NOT a meal, so be sure your child eats a good breakfast and/or lunch before coming to school. We serve our snacks "family style" so your child will have the opportunity to practice serving themselves, pouring from a small pitcher, and waiting for food to be passed. The whole class is served the same food option. We encourage children to try a bite of any food we serve, but we do not force them. If your child is very picky, you may want to be sure they have filled up before school. Teachers will send home a list of snacks being served on their weekly calendars.

SPECIAL POLICIES

1. Please **do not send toys** with your child to school. Remind them that it may get lost or broken and that we have plenty of toys at school.
2. Each teacher will inform you by her calendar how she will celebrate each holiday. We are very careful to respect the traditions and beliefs of all families. We are also careful to make **holidays** fun, not stressful or confusing to young children. Your teacher can explain this.
3. **Birthdays** will be celebrated by each teacher in a special way, which may include sending a store-bought packaged treat, or special plates/napkins, etc. (Ask your child's teacher how they celebrate.)
4. We do not serve children sugary unhealthy **snacks** like candy or treats with icing in our classrooms. Our "special treats" may include ice cream, yogurt, popsicles, jello, pudding, etc.

HEALTH, IMMUNIZATIONS, MEDICATIONS

Your child's health is very important! Good health will make it easier for him/her to succeed and protect the health of others in the classroom. Children need to develop good health habits at an early age and YOU are the teacher they learn from the most! Please set a good example for your child.

1. Before your child begins school, he/she will need a current PHYSICAL EXAM completed by your doctor. The IDHS physical form is required for all Illinois schools. A visit to the dentist is recommended, but not required. Your child's immunizations, including the lead screen portion of the form, parent signature and physician signature, **MUST be turned in to the school by the first day of attendance, or your child will not be allowed to attend.**
2. Children DO NOT need to be "potty trained" to come to school! We are ready for your child wherever they are in the many stages of toilet training. We will partner with you in toilet training when your child is ready!
3. Please ensure your child bathes regularly. Teeth should be brushed 2 times daily. Children, even at age 3 and 4, are extremely honest and verbal about what they see and smell and can make a child who has poor hygiene feel bad unintentionally. Children of this age take pride in being able

to bathe and help brush their own teeth, and develop a sense of confidence and good self-esteem as they learn to care for their own needs.

4. Preschoolers need at least **ten hours of sleep per night**. Going to school is a big job and children need lots of energy to be ready to go each day. If bedtime is a problem, please discuss this with us as we have had lots of success with some solutions to this common problem.
5. **DO NOT send your child to school if they are SICK or have:**
 - a. a fever of 100.4 or higher (within 24 hours)
 - b. a bad cold or cough
 - c. diarrhea (within the last 24 hours)
 - d. sore throat
 - e. been vomiting within the last 24 hours, or has a severe stomachache
 - f. a rash of unknown cause
 - g. has live head lice or nits (lice eggs)
 - h. a severe toothache, earache, or headache
 - i. watery, red, swollen eyes of unknown origin
 - j. taken Tylenol/Ibuprofen/aspirin in the last 4-6 hours to keep fever down
6. **It is extremely important that you share with your child's teacher AND the school nurse any allergies your child has to food or the environment!**

The official policy of the Hillsboro School Board is that all medication that a child needs to receive during the day must be left with the school nurse or designee. All medication should be in its original container or prescription bottle with the child's name, doctor's name, contents, and dosage clearly marked as appropriate. **NO MEDICATION CAN BE ADMINISTERED WITHOUT A SCHOOL MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM** signed by the parent and physician.

PRE-K VISION & HEARING SCREENING

Vision and hearing screening is mandated for preschool and school age children (according to Illinois Child Vision and Hearing Test Act (410 ILCS 205)). These screenings are performed at school by a certified school nurse/screening technician.

In lieu of the hearing screening services required, a completed and signed report form, indicating the child had an ear examination by a physician and an audiological evaluation completed by an audiologist within the previous 12 months, is acceptable. In lieu of the vision screening services required, a completed and signed report form, indicating that an eye examination by an eye doctor or a licensed optometrist has been administered within the previous 12 months, is acceptable.

Permission to participate in this screening is signed by parent/legal guardian at the time of initial PreK screening and again at district registration/enrollment. The parent or legal guardian of a student may object to hearing or vision screening tests for their children on religious grounds. If a religious objection is made, a written and signed statement from the parent or legal guardian detailing such objections must be given to the school.

Parents/legal guardians of children whose test results meet referral criteria are notified by the school nurse and referred to an eye doctor or family physician for further evaluation.

EXPULSION AND SUSPENSION

It is the policy of the Hillsboro Early Childhood Program, and in compliance with the Illinois State Board of Education-Preschool for All Grant, that **no preschooler shall be expelled or suspended from preschool**. Exclusionary discipline practices deprive children of valuable early learning experiences and

teach them to believe that there is something wrong or bad about them. When children are excluded from learning environments by being suspended or expelled, they miss valuable educational opportunities and are at greater risk of disengagement and diminished educational opportunities. Our teachers and staff are trained and experienced in implementing a wide variety of positive behavior modification strategies to help each child have a successful preschool experience.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Hillsboro PreK is a fully inclusive preschool program, which means that students with special education services are enrolled in classrooms with their same-aged, typically developing peers. Hillsboro CUSD#3 does not have *any* self-contained special education classrooms. Each classroom serving students with special needs is staffed with a blend of regular education and special education staff. Special services such as speech, developmental therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy, as well as any needed individualized supports and accommodations are provided within the child's regular classroom with their peers to the greatest extent possible. Parents are always informed of how their child is performing in their classroom, and will only receive special services if parents have been a part of a formal evaluation process and have given their consent to receive such services and been included as part of the decision making team to determine their child's individual learning plan and goals.

PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION PLAN

Fall/Winter

- Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten teachers meet on a School Improvement Planning day to discuss expectations for the children going into Kindergarten.
- The Kindergarten/Pre-Kindergarten teachers discuss their expectations and what they believe the students need to be learning.
- They compare expectations and create an appropriate list of expectations agreeable to both groups of teachers and align to the IL Early Learning Standards and IL Early Learning Kindergarten Standards.

Spring

- Four to six weeks prior to the last day of preschool, a parent/teacher conference will be held to review portfolios with parents. The teacher will discuss your child's progress and show evidence of their strengths from photos, documentation, and skills checklist. She will discuss skills that are still emerging and provide suggestions of ways you can help your child over the summer months to continue to encourage the development of these skills.
- Two to three weeks before the last day of preschool, teachers will begin incorporating activities and discussions into the daily routine about the transition they will be making to a new teacher, classroom, and in some cases, school. Children will be reading related books, participating in group activities, and taking active roles in group discussions about transitioning to Kindergarten. Each class will visit a Kindergarten classroom and other "new" areas of the school (ex. cafeteria, music room, library, etc.)
- One to two weeks before the last day of preschool, we will hold a Kindergarten Transition parent meeting to discuss the expectations of Kindergarten with you. During this meeting, you will have a chance to meet and speak with the teachers and learn the health requirements for attending Kindergarten. Your child will visit a Kindergarten classroom, read a related book, and participate in a few learning center activities related to the book. Each family will receive a copy of the Kindergarten Transition book to read and discuss Kindergarten with your child throughout the summer, and your family will get a tour of the building to familiarize you and your child with the building they will be attending in the fall.

Summer

- Parents are encouraged to visit the school and play on the playground periodically. Take frequent walks or drive by the school so that your child can become comfortable with the new surroundings.
- Parents of K-bound will be notified in mid-August by letter from the Elementary Building principal of the school they will attend regarding Kindergarten entry, registration, and any first week activities, including meeting their child's teacher and visiting the classroom for the first time.
- Pre-Kindergarten teachers meet with Kindergarten teachers at the beginning of the school year to review student portfolios and focus their discussion on your child's strengths and how they learn best, giving attention to any special circumstances that may impact your child's learning.

