

Title I Pre-K Handbook

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS IN THE KENAI PENINSULA
BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT



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Mission Statement

The mission of KPBSD's Title I Pre-K program is to introduce the child, parent, and community to the school experience. Through developmentally appropriate practices, the learner will engage in activities that stimulate the growth of the whole child. This program will build a foundation for future success.

Program Goal

The KPBSD Title I program is made available through federal grants to improve the academic achievement of students in schools of high poverty. The Title I program is designed to help students be more successful in school, and KPBSD offers a targeted assistance program that focuses on early literacy and Pre-K. Title I funds are allocated annually to neighborhood schools based on economic need, which is determined through free and reduced lunch enrollments at schools.

KPBSD chose to allocate Title I funds to targeted assistance Pre-K programs in recognition that early intervention is the best way to promote success for children who are at risk of struggling in school and because there are not enough funds available to offer Pre-K opportunities for all children in eligible schools. Ensuring children who are at significant risk of struggling in kindergarten have access to supportive and nurturing early learning environments that promote balanced development is essential to the health and well-being of our communities.

Increasing the likelihood of later success by providing an enriched, positive, and developmentally appropriate environment, with the goal of preparing four year olds for kindergarten is the focus of KPBSD's Pre-K program. Kindergarten preparation does not maintain an exclusive focus on academics; rather, KPBSD's Title I Pre-K teachers employ developmentally appropriate practices to help students progress in multiple domains, including social and emotional development, motor development, cognition, and more. As a district that focuses on targeted assistance programs, only schools in eligible communities can offer this opportunity, and the opportunity to apply for enrollment is limited to children who reside in the attendance boundaries for the qualifying school.

Program Eligibility

Parents/guardians must complete a Pre-K application and schedule a screening appointment for the child at the school in whose boundaries the child resides. Application forms are available in the school office and are also available online at <https://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/Workarea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=31340>. Screenings dates are determined each spring, with a fall date scheduled at sites that still have openings for the current school year. Families who move mid-year into the attendance area of a school with a Title I Pre-K program can request a screening appointment upon enrollment. Families or children who move frequently due to migrant status, homelessness, or foster care, are eligible

for a variety of supports including access to a school's Pre-K program when a need that can be met by the program is identified and space is available. Families with children of school age who experience homelessness may be eligible for support through the District's Students in Transition Coordinator, who can be reached by calling 907-714-8888.

To qualify for enrollment in a Title I Pre-K program, children must:

- Be 4 years old on or before September 1. (Children who turn 5 on or before September 1 are not eligible for Title I Pre-K. Children may not enroll in Title I Pre-K for a second year.)
- Participate in a screening appointment and demonstrate the presence of substantial needs that can be met through the Title I Pre-K program's areas of focus.

Student eligibility is determined by a team of qualified educators who review the scores of all children screened within the school's attendance boundary. Student eligibility is not influenced by family income. The children with the lowest screening scores are considered for enrollment first, with attention given to data that indicates a child may have uneven development across the domains assessed. The screening team makes recommendations regarding enrollment to the school's principal and the district's Director of Elementary Education. The teacher then contacts the families of all children screened to inform them of their enrollment status: admitted, waitlisted, or declined.

Enrollment for Admitted Students

Parents/guardians of children admitted to the program must complete all required enrollment paperwork at the school's office before the child may attend school. If a family does not complete registration paperwork in a timely manner (including providing evidence of required immunizations, residency in the school's attendance boundary, and other required registration paperwork,) or if a family cannot commit to regular attendance at school, the child's spot may be filled by another student in need. While every effort is made to work with families in these circumstances, failure to make progress towards meeting the expectations can merit the principal notifying a family that a child's spot in the program will be given to the next child waiting for admission. Questions regarding required paperwork should be directed to the school secretary, while questions regarding required immunizations should be directed to the school nurse.

In very rare circumstances, a student may be referred for additional evaluation by members of the district's special education department. In these situations, a spot is held for the child in the Title I Pre-K program, pending the outcome of the additional evaluations. Sometimes the evaluation provides additional information about how the child can be better supported at home and at school, while sometimes the evaluation reveals a child has multiple or substantial developmental delays that are more appropriately served in the district's special education Pre-K program. In these situations, the school staff and family work together to ensure a successful

transition for the child into the special education program, which offers a variety of additional support not available in the Title I Pre-K program.

Waitlist Information

Children on the waitlist may be admitted at a later date if space remains available after the end of September, or may be invited to enroll should a space become available later in the year. A child's position on the waitlist will change anytime additional children are screened for the program. For example, a child may be first on the waitlist in August, but if a child with greater need is screened, he or she would be moved to the top of the waitlist. Questions regarding the waitlist, a child's position on the list, and the likelihood of gaining admission from the waitlist should be directed to the school's principal.

Declined Students

The quality of the KPBSD's Title I Pre-K program and the use of developmentally appropriate practices ensures that any child admitted to the program will benefit. However, limited funds to support the program mean that space in the program must likewise be limited to a maximum of ten children in a class. Children who have been declined entrance may have exhibited a low to moderate need for the program, may have exhibited a very balanced level of developmental progress, or may have simply excelled in the areas targeted and assessed by the program.

Program Overview

Title I funded programs are required to utilize effective, research based instruction, and must also provide evidence that students receiving Title I support are showing academic growth. Such evidence is gathered through regular observation and assessment of students in the classroom.

Programs are 2.5 hours in length with start times that vary by site and by class. While a snack is offered, neither breakfast nor lunch are served during the program.

Due to requirements for bus safety belts and harnesses for small children, bus transportation is not available.

Programs focus on the five domains of development identified in Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines. The domains are:

- Domain 1: Physical well-being, health, and motor development
- Domain 2: Social and emotional development
- Domain 3: Approaches to learning
- Domain 4: Cognition and general knowledge
- Domain 5: Communication, language, and literacy

Students are assessed at least three times during the school year, with reports provided to parents showing the child's development in key indicators from each domain. Data from each school (without student names or other identifying information) is reported to the district's Director of Elementary Education, who uses the information to plan professional development activities for teachers that target the needs of the current year's students, and to report annually on the overall impact of the program. The annual report, in addition to the screening application and information on which schools have programs, are regularly updated and posted online at <http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/departments.aspx?id=28323>, which is the homepage for the KPBSD's Department of Elementary Education.

Enrollment Boundaries and Participating Sites

Enrollment boundary areas can be found online at <http://bit.ly/1qabT2M>. KPBSD schools with Title I Pre-K programs are:

- Chapman Elementary in Anchor Point 235-8671
- Mt. View Elementary in Kenai 283-8600
- Nikiski North Star Elementary in Nikiski 776-2600
- Ninilchik School in Ninilchik 567-3301
- Paul Banks Elementary in Homer 226-1801
- Redoubt Elementary in Soldotna 260-4300
- Seward Elementary in Seward 224-3356
- Soldotna Elementary in Soldotna 260-5100
- Sterling Elementary in Sterling 262-4944
- Tustumena Elementary in Kasilof 260-1345
- Voznesenka School in Fritz Creek 235-8549

Action Steps for Interested Parents/Guardians

1. Contact the child's attendance area school. (See the provided list or go online to <http://bit.ly/1qabT2M>.)
2. Complete a Pre-K application. The school office will provide applications, or parents/guardians may download a Pre-K application from the KPBSD website at <https://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/Workarea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=31340>.
3. Return the application to the child's attendance area school office during school hours.
4. Schedule the child's assessment prior to the date for your neighborhood school's screening.
5. If offered a spot in the program, get the school's registration paperwork from the school's office.

6. Complete all enrollment paperwork and return it to the school secretary, along with any required documentation, such as an immunization record, proof of physical residency in the attendance area, and the child's birth certificate.

Parent Involvement

KPBSD and Title I place great importance on parent involvement in the education process. Research confirms that when parents are partners in their children's education the results are increased motivation, higher self-esteem, improved achievement, better attendance, reduced dropout rates, and decreased delinquency.

Parents play a dominant role in influencing a child's confidence and motivation to become a successful learner. When students see that education is important to the adults in their lives, it becomes important to them as well. The reward for becoming more involved in the education process is a more successful, safe and self-confident student.

Ways to be involved in the education of your child:

- Be a positive role model; stress the importance of a quality education
- Stay in touch with the school – call, e-mail, or visit
- Limit appointments and absences during the school day
- Take time to review homework – set and enforce homework standards
- Offer praise and encouragement
- Create a warm and supportive home atmosphere
- Read a book together
- Regularly attend Title I meetings, parent activities, student conferences and other school events

Child Find

Child Find refers to the district's responsibility to identify and serve children who are not yet old enough for kindergarten but who have special education needs. The district's Child Find Coordinator works with families of children who are not yet old enough for kindergarten to identify areas of concern and determine if any screenings or formal assessments may be warranted. A child who is assessed and found to be eligible for special education services from the public school system may begin service as soon as the child's third birthday, although the development of the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may occur before then. Receiving or being eligible for private therapy services such as speech therapy or physical therapy does not mean a child automatically qualifies for an IEP. If you have any questions regarding Child Find, please contact KPBSD's Child Find Coordinator by calling 714-8930.

Special Education Pre-K Program Information

Special Education Pre-K is available for children who are at least 3 years old and who are identified as having substantial developmental delays that are being targeted through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Programs are approximately 3 hours in length with times and days of the week that vary by site and by class. Transportation via special education busses that are equipped with size-appropriate safety belts is provided for students who are identified as requiring it through the IEP process. The instructional program within a special education Pre-K classroom is driven by the strengths and needs of the children being served.

Resources for Parents & Guardians

KPBSD's Elementary Education Department webpage- information about KPBSD's pre-K program and resources <http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/departments.aspx?id=28323>

US Department of Education – Especially for Parents, features checklists, tips, tool kits and more for helping your child.

PALS (Parents as Liaisons in our Schools) - information and guidance needed in support of their child's education.

Alaska Parent Involvement Recourse Center – (AKPIRC) <http://www.akpirc.org>

Threadalaska.org - Link to a child care and resource referral organization for Alaska.

Bestbeginningsalaska.org - Link to Best Beginnings, a resource for information on kindergarten readiness and child development.

NAEYC.org - Link to a national organization that researches and supports the education of young children.

Websites that offer free educational programs and games:

- <http://www.brainpop.com>
- <http://www.clicknkids.com>
- <http://www.crayola.com>
- <http://www.funbrain.com>
- <http://www.kidsreads.com>
- <http://pbskids.org/>
- <http://www.starfall.com>
- <http://www.seussville.com>
- <http://www.storylineonline.net>
- <http://www.scholastic.com/kids/>