



Hastings Public Preschool 2024-2025 Family Handbook

**Morton Early Learning Center
731 N Baltimore Ave
Hastings, NE 68901
(402)461-7545
Fax (402)461-7616**

The Mission of Hastings Public Schools

Our fundamental purpose is to assure all students acquire the knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential to be successful individuals and responsible citizens.

The Vision of the Hastings Public Schools

As the cornerstone of educational excellence in our community, we will continuously and passionately strive to be high performing. Our Learning Community will effectively meet the unique learning needs of each and every student.

Welcome to Hastings Public Preschool!

Morton Early Learning Center is committed to providing a developmentally appropriate learning environment that is inclusive of all areas of child development. Our preschool program prides itself on creating nurturing and caring environments where children can learn through play and exploration. Parents and families are an important part of our program and we look forward to building strong relationships between home and school.

We believe that all children can benefit from opportunities to explore and make sense of their world. It is our job as educators, to support their exploration through developing the environment and presenting materials that address their questions and interests. The main objective of the early childhood program is to provide a developmentally appropriate and positive learning environment, which encourages children to develop cognitively, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally.

This handbook has been prepared to introduce each family to Hastings Public Preschool and help you become familiar with the program's policies and procedures. We encourage every parent to read this handbook carefully and discuss any questions you may have with the administrator, teachers and staff. This is intended to be a guide and will not attempt to cover every detail that may come up during a school year. Morton ELC follows HPS district guidelines as well as state Rule 11 guidelines.

We are so excited for the year ahead and we are glad you are part of the Hastings Public Schools Preschool Program!

Kerra Robinson
Morton ELC Principal

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Hastings Public School District does not illegally and unjustly discriminate on the basis of sex, disability, race (including skin color, hair texture, and protective hairstyles), color, religion, veteran status, national or ethnic origin, marital status, pregnancy, childbirth, sexual orientation or gender identity, or related medical condition, or other protected status in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Students: Director of Special Education, 1515 W 8th Street, Hastings, Nebraska, 68901, 402-461-7516

Employees and Others: Director of Human Resources and Operations, 1515 W 8th Street, Hastings, Nebraska, 68901, 402-461-7501

Complaints or concerns involving discrimination or needs for accommodation or access should be addressed to the appropriate Coordinator. For further information about anti-discrimination laws and regulations, or to file a complaint of discrimination with the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education (OCR), please contact the OCR at 601 East 12th Street, Room 353, Kansas City, MO 64106, (800) 368-1019 (voice), Fax (816) 426-3686, (800) 537-7697 (telecommunications device for the deaf), or ocr.kansascity@ed.gov.

PRESCHOOL HOURS/SCHEDULE

Hastings Public Preschool provides a morning and afternoon session of preschool. Drop-off and pick-up times are factored into the session times. Please review the Preschool Calendar for more information and preschool closures.

AM preschool is from 8:00am to 11:15am, Monday through Thursday

PM preschool is from 11:55am-3:10pm, Monday through Thursday

Drop-off:

Students may be dropped off **no earlier than 8:00am** for the morning session and **no earlier than 11:55am** for the afternoon session. Parents, or another adult, **MUST** accompany the child to the designated drop-off point outside of the building and wait for their child's teacher to take students inside. Your child will be considered tardy if they arrive at school more than 10 minutes after drop-off time. *Breakfast/lunch may not be available if your child arrives late.*

Pick-up:

Students need to be picked up at **11:15am** for the morning session and **3:10pm** for the afternoon session. Parents will pick-up their child in the same location as drop-off. Please wait until a teacher, or staff member, dismisses your child to you before taking them.

Authorization to Pick up Child:

Your child will only be released to parents or an authorized person. The Emergency Form, included in the initial enrollment packet, should include at least two persons who your child can be released to if you are not able to pick up your child. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone without prior notice from the parents. We recognize that it is

legal for either parent to pick up a child unless we have a copy of a court order restricting contact.

ATTENDANCE

Absences

Students who are absent from school lose out on valuable routines and interaction with their teachers and peers. Preschool has a waiting list so it's important you are sending your child to school daily so they don't risk losing their spot in their class.

- At **five (5) unexcused absences**, a letter will be sent home to alert the family.
- At **ten (10) absences**, a letter will be sent home to alert the family and they may be asked to come in to meet with the teacher/administrator to develop a plan for success.

Notification of absences

If a student will be late or absent, parents/guardians should notify the school before 8:10 a.m. indicating why the child is not in school. If notification is not received from a parent/guardian, the school will call the parent/guardian to communicate that the student is absent.

PROCEDURES

Abuse/Neglect

School employees and all adults are bound by Nebraska State Law LB 28-710 to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect to authorities for investigation.

Change of address / Email / Phone Number

In order for parents/guardians to get full communication from the school, the office needs up to date information when there is a change of address for the student, or parent/guardian telephone numbers and email addresses are changed. Be prompt in making these changes so we can contact students' families when necessary.

Communication

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to communicate with the school via phone, written communication, or electronically through email or an app.

Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year. Please make every effort to attend. These conferences provide parents, teachers, and students with the opportunity to exchange information about student progress.

Disaster Drills

Disaster drills will be held during the school year. Students are to follow the directions of the teacher in charge at the time a particular drill is being held.

Emergency Drills

- HOLD - Used when there is a situation in the halls where passing is not permitted.
- SECURE - Used when a threat is outside the school.
- LOCKDOWN - Used when there is a threat inside the school.
- EVACUATE - To another location.
- SHELTER - Used when severe weather is in the area.

Enrollment

Hastings Public Preschool serves children with a variety of needs. First priority is given to children who are eligible for special education services related to the determined disability. Eligibility is determined through a comprehensive evaluation following the Nebraska Department of Education Verification Guidelines for Children with Disabilities and Rule 51.

Other children accepted for participation in the program are typical children who may be at risk for delay in one or more areas of development or are English Language Learners (primary language other than English). Classrooms are then filled to capacity for additional students who do not meet the eligibility requirements listed previously.

Field Trips

Parents will sign a form at the beginning of the school year to give permission for their child to be taken on field trips and for pictures to be taken for classroom use and public media. Morton principal gives prior approval for transportation and destination.

Illness and Communicable Disease

Viruses spread quickly in the preschool classroom and we do the best that we can to help prevent that with frequent hand washing, table and toy disinfecting, and learning to cover coughs and sneezes. Please carefully consider the well being of your child, classmates, and teachers when deciding how soon after an illness your child should return to school. We expect that children will fully participate in the school day.

If your child has any of these symptoms: above-normal temperature (100° F or more), vomiting, diarrhea, severe cough, unknown rash or skin eruptions, and/or pain or swelling, it is best to keep them home until consulting with your physician. Students may return to school when they are fever and symptom-free for 24 hours.

Children with head lice **must** remain home until treated with an approved shampoo and all nits have been removed.

Lost and Found

All lost and found articles should be taken to, and claimed in the office. Items not claimed at the end of the year will be donated to a non-profit organization.

Meals

Prices will be determined annually and communicated to students and parents/guardians by building principals. Student account payments may be made with a credit card online at **hastingspublicschools.revtrak.net**. Students from families whose income is below certain designated levels are eligible for free or reduced price meals and waived fees. Information concerning the eligibility income scale will be mailed to each household in August. The

application must be completed, returned and approved before receiving the free or reduced price meals. All students eat their lunch in the school cafeteria with their classmates and teachers.

If your child is allergic to any foods or other materials, please let the classroom staff know so that necessary adjustments can be made. Appropriate allergy forms will need to be completed with the school nurse.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or Local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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Medication

- Students are not to have any medication in their possession at school, including cough drops.
- If your child has asthma or allergies and may need assistance at school or uses an inhaler or epipen, please call the school nurse and stop by the office to visit with our school nurse. It is important that we have an asthma/allergy plan in place for each student who needs one, as student safety is our primary concern. There are forms that need to be completed and signed by parents and your child's physician.
- If your child needs to take prescription medication during the school day, please bring the medication in the prescription bottle and complete the necessary forms in the nurse's office.
- Non prescription medication will be administered to students during the school day in rare occasion it cannot be given by parents before or after preschool and only if:
 - Parents bring a note from the physician regarding the need for the medication.
 - Parents have signed the authorization form.
 - Medication is in the original container.

Physicals / Immunizations

Effective as of 2007, the State of Nebraska mandates the following immunizations be administered to preschool and school age children: measles, mumps, rubella, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and hepatitis B, chicken pox. Exceptions to this law are:

- If the child did not receive the required immunizations because of a medical reason, the parent will need to have the physician sign the Refusal of Immunization for Medical Reasons form and turn it in to the school office before school begins.
- If the child did not receive the required immunizations because of a religious reason, the parent will need to sign and have notarized the Refusal of Immunization of Student Religious Reasons form and turn it in the school office before school begins.

Upon enrollment, an **immunization record and a copy of the child's birth certificate** are needed for our records. These copies will be maintained in your child's preschool file.

School Cancellation

In the event school is not in session because of an emergency or bad weather, radio and TV stations will broadcast the information. Hastings Public Schools Facebook page will also post this information. Please do not call the school.

School injury and illness

If a child becomes seriously ill or injured during school hours, every effort will be made to notify the parent/guardian or the person designated by the parent for emergency contact. If the illness or accident is of a serious nature and parents/guardians cannot be reached, the family physician will be contacted and their directions will be followed. In the event that none of these persons can be reached, reasonable judgment of school personnel regarding the interest of the child will be used.

PARENT RIGHTS/ RESPONSIBILITIES & FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

Expectations for Families

When children are enrolled in the HPS preschool program, parents are expected to:

- **Arrive and depart at scheduled times:** Class times for morning and afternoon sessions vary based on transportation routes. Class times are given out at the beginning of the school year. We cannot be responsible for your children before or after these times because of teacher preparation and staff availability for supervision.
- **Insure attendance:** Students are expected to be in attendance each school day. Parents are to call the school if their child will be absent or tardy. If your student rides the bus, you must also notify the transportation department (402-461-7513) to inform them not to pick up your child.
- **Follow the school calendar:** your child's teacher will provide a copy of the yearly school calendar. Preschool has a separate calendar from the district calendar so please be aware of in-service days, vacations, etc. You will be notified, in writing, of any changes to the calendar.
- **Complete required forms:** These will be completed yearly with the teacher at initial enrollment.
- **Participate in home visits, open house and parent-teacher conferences:**

- **Home visits** are conducted at the beginning and end of your child’s school year so that parents, children, and the classroom teacher can get to know each other on an individual basis
- **Open house** is held at the beginning of each school year. This offers the opportunity to meet all children, families, and staff, and to become familiar/reacquainted with the school/site
- **Parent-teacher conferences** are held at least twice during the school year to mutually share information about the semester, and to discuss the child’s progress. Children with IEP’s and IFSP’s may meet at other scheduled times during the year

Preschool staff will communicate with parents through a variety of formal and informal means (i.e. conferences, personal contact, phone calls, calendars, notes, etc.)

Concerns/Complaints

Concerns or complaints should be directed to the person closest to the problem. If in the classroom, the teacher. If after discussing the matter it is felt that your questions have not been answered, please discuss with the principal.

Custody and Parental Rights

Disagreements between family members are not the responsibility of the school district. The school district will not take the “side” of one family member over another in a disagreement about custody or parental rights. Court orders that have been issued shall be followed by the school district. It shall be the responsibility of the person requesting an action by the school to inform and provide the school with a copy of the court order allowing such action. This policy does not prohibit an employee from listening to a student’s problems and concerns.

Insurance

Policy 508.06 of Hastings Board of Education states: “The board does not assume financial responsibility for accidents or injuries to pupils engaged in school related activities.” Each year we have a number of students who have various kinds of accidents. It is encouraged that each and everyone is protected by some form of health and accident insurance. Those who plan to actively participate in sports must have coverage. A health and accident policy will be available to those not already covered by some plan. It is important to remember that insurance is a family responsibility.

Title I Parent and Family Engagement

Parents/guardians are welcomed and encouraged to become involved with their child’s school and education. To promote parent and family engagement:

- Information related to school and parent programs, meetings, schools reports, and other activities will be sent to parents/guardians of participating children in a format, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand;
- Parents/guardians are to be involved in the planning, review, evaluation, and improvement of the Title I Program, the Parent and Family Engagement Policy, and the School-Parent Compact at the annual Title I parent meeting;
- Parents/guardians may participate in the annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the Parent and Family Engagement Policy;
- Opportunities will be provided for parents/guardians to participate in decisions related to the education of their child;

- Parents will be provided with timely information and assistance to support their children’s academic achievement; and
- District staff members are educated in the value of parental contribution and coordinate involvement activities with other federal, state, and local programs.

ACADEMICS

Curriculum

Hastings Public Schools use Creative Curriculum, Second Step and other supplemental curriculum. Our curriculums encourage the development of communication, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills, as well as, promoting creative expression and self-esteem. Concepts and skills are introduced through concrete experiences, which are developmentally appropriate. We strive to promote a child's natural curiosity and excitement about learning. We recognize that each child is uniquely different. Our approach is to provide children with a rich learning environment to learn at their own pace. In their early years, children explore the world around them by using all of their senses (touching, tasting, listening, smelling, and looking). In using real materials such as blocks and trying out their ideas, children learn about sizes, shapes, and colors, and they notice relationships between things. Young children work through play.

Assessment

Hastings Public Preschool uses GOLD Teaching Strategies for on-going observation of children and to monitor progress in the above named areas.

Student Services

In accordance with Section 504 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 there is a continuum of services provided to qualifying students throughout the district:

- Speech pathologists work with children individually or in small groups;
- Homebound instruction may be provided to children, who, according to medical recommendation, are physically unable to attend school over a period of time;
- Special Education programs are available to students who have verified handicapping conditions.

Questions regarding any of these services may be directed to the building principal. School resource teachers and the Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team are also available to support and help students and their families.