



NM Pre-K

Family Handbook

Alamogordo Public Schools 2024-2025

Stepping Stones Preschool

Holloman Elementary School

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- P. 3 Letter to Families
- P. 4 School Contact Information
- P. 5 Philosophy/Goals/Curricular Objectives
- P. 5 Guidance Policy
- P. 5 New Mexico PreK Program Standards
- P. 7 Curriculum
- P. 7 Home Language & Culture
- P. 8 Family Engagement
- P. 8 Home Visits
- P. 8 Parent/ Teacher Conferences
- P. 9 Non-Discrimination Policy
- P. 10 APS Early Childhood Program & Eligibility
- P. 11 Recruitment
- P. 11 Enrollment & Registration
- P. 12 Attendance
- P. 12 Expulsion
- P. 13 Developmental Screenings
- P. 13 Social-Emotional Skills
- P. 13 Health Screenings
- P. 14 Safety
- P. 14 Transition Services and Education
- P. 15 Clothing Information
- P. 16 Nutrition & Food Service
- P. 16 Transportation
- P. 16 Photo Release
- P. 16 FERPA
- P. 17 Board of Education Contact Information
- P. 17 District Administration Contact Information
- P. 18 Addenda

LETTER TO FAMILIES

Dear Families,

On behalf of the preschool staff at Stepping Stones Preschool and Holloman Elementary School, I would like to welcome you to learn about the preschool programs we offer through the Alamogordo Public Schools. We are excited to embark on a journey of learning and discovery together as your children begin their educational adventures. This handbook is a valuable resource designed to provide you with all the information you need to navigate our program smoothly and feel confident entrusting your children to our care. It outlines our philosophy, curriculum, policies, procedures, and important contact information.

We are committed to partnering with you to ensure your child's success and happiness. We encourage open communication and welcome your questions, concerns, and suggestions throughout the year. Our program has been developed to allow us to collaborate with our families and communities. Family engagement is paramount for supporting student learning and family well-being. We want to partner with you in the learning and growth of your child.

One of the first things you will notice about our program is our wonderful team. I feel so privileged to work with such a group of individuals who care so passionately about the children of our community.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any member of our staff if you have any questions. We look forward to getting to know you and your child better.

Warmly,

Dawna Dupre, MEd, MA

Preschool Administrator

Dawna.dupre@alamogordoschools.org

Alamogordo Public Schools

SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

Stepping Stones Preschool:

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PHILOSOPHY/GOALS/CURRICULAR OBJECTIVES

We believe the foundation for learning includes the total development of the child. Our goal is to provide developmentally appropriate activities, which meet the social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language needs of the individual student. Believing that children learn through play, we plan our curriculum within a caring and creative environment. The design of the curriculum enhances the child's repertoire of knowledge and skill, to increase self-confidence and to promote social skills. We also use curriculum that is approved by the New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD). One of the reasons this curriculum was selected is because it also supports dual language learners. Weekly objectives cover the following areas: social and emotional development, self-help skills, fine and gross motor skills, language development, STEM, numeracy and literacy skills, as well as other kindergarten readiness objectives. Children are encouraged to express themselves through creative art, dramatic play, storytelling, singing, and other hands-on activities. Educational staff are engaged with the collection of authentic observation documentation and curriculum planning to meet the needs of every child.

GUIDANCE POLICY

Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs that support the full participation of every child build on these strengths. They do so by promoting a sense of belonging, by supporting positive social relationships, and by enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child.

NEW MEXICO PREK PROGRAM STANDARDS

Alamogordo NM Preschool follows the New Mexico PreK Program Standards for our preschool programs as outlined by the Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD). We accomplish this by:

- Support of linguistically and culturally appropriate curriculum within a framework of developmentally appropriate practices.

- Assessing each child utilizing the NM PreK Observational Assessment, Early Childhood Observational Tool (ECOT). The ECOT will be administered three times a year to monitor student progress. Teachers will adjust instruction based on the individual needs of students according to Early Learning Guidelines (ELG).
- Implementing NM Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) individualized for children's needs in the areas of
 - Physical Development, Health and Well Being
 - Literacy
 - Mathematics
 - Aesthetic Creativity
 - Scientific Conceptual Understandings
 - Self, Family and Community
 - Approaches to Learning
- Providing early literacy practices and language-rich instruction through daily and intentional activities that align with Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood (LETRS) research based best practices.
 - Quality literature read aloud with explicit comprehension strategy instruction; both as a whole class and with individual or small groups of children
 - Developing phonological awareness, spoken language, oral language and vocabulary, knowledge of the alphabet
 - Understanding concepts about print
 - Implementation of daily small group literacy activities
 - Opportunity for developmentally appropriate writing activities
- Targeting social emotional development through implementation of the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children.
- Partnering with families through engagement, education and effective communication.
- Ongoing professional development, training, collaboration, and participation in NM Practice Based Coaching (PBC) to improve evidence-based teaching.

As a final note, the ECECD also requires that we state that funds received from the NM PreK Program grant will not to be used for any type of religious purposes.

CURRICULUM

Three Cheers for Pre-K: Three Cheers for Pre-K is a purposeful, play-based curriculum where learning is initiated through skills-based experiences and structured around quality children's literature. Three Cheers for Pre-K has the following components:

- Equal and equitable Spanish with Uno, dos, tres Prekinder!
- Nine Ready-to-go Theme Kits contain everything needed to deliver developmentally appropriate learning experiences across all skill domains around a big idea.
- High focus on early literacy, family engagement, and establishing a habit of reading in the home.
- Creative options for theme-specific centers that are routine-oriented plus simple ideas to refresh center activities throughout each theme.
- Hundreds of interactive gaming opportunities develop letter recognition, letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, and math number recognition.

Heggerty - The Heggerty Early Pre-K Phonological Awareness curriculum is meant for learners in 3- and 4-year-old classrooms, and the Early Learning and Development standards were used to plan the lessons for instruction. The Early Pre-K curriculum will teach five phonological awareness skills. The skills of rhyme, initial phoneme isolation, and blending are introduced at the beginning of instruction. Segmenting words and Final Phoneme Isolation are introduced in later weeks of instruction.

HOME LANGUAGE & CULTURE

In the APS NM PreK program, we strive to honor the home languages and cultures of our students. We follow multi-lingual practices in our program. Professional development is also provided to educators in this area. Our staff, including administration, teachers, and educational assistants, complete professional development in order to better support multi-lingual learners.

One of the ways we support home languages is by collaborating with families. We intentionally support home language and English language development throughout the school day. For example, staff may ask families to teach them basic words and phrases in

the home language that can be used at school. We invite children and families to help us choose materials, books, music, and other artifacts for the environment that represent children's home languages and cultures. We can send pictures of key vocabulary home as well. Family members can teach the children how to say words in their home languages. Children can then return to the program and teach others. Words from multilingual children's home languages can be used during rhymes or songs in the classroom setting.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Our Family Engagement plan for families includes offering 90 hours of activities each school year that include a home visit, parent-teacher conferences, and school and community-based activities to enrich their child's academic program. Families will provide input and recommendations for topics presented at family events. Program staff will provide resources to assist families to document their child's growth and development in the natural routines and activities in the home.

HOME VISITS

Each preschool teacher schedules visits to each individual child's home prior to the first day of school. Some of these visits may be conducted virtually. Not only do the children and families get to meet their teachers, but our teachers and parents are given the opportunity to learn any pertinent information for the design and development of instruction, so children are set up for a successful school year. Home visits for homeless or migratory families will be offered at an alternate location if needed. NM preschool requires one home visit for each student.

PARENT/ TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/Teacher Conferences are outlined on the Alamogordo Public School district calendar. Classes are not held on these days, but you may bring your child with you to the conference if needed. Teachers will ensure to select a time that fits your schedule. NM PreK requires two parent/teacher conferences per year.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The purpose of the APS Non-Discrimination Equity and Cultural Proficiency Policy is to ensure all students, regardless of the student's or family member's immigration status, can safely access the public education, including all secondary benefits of public education, provided by the district to which they may be otherwise eligible

The Alamogordo Public School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, marital status, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The Alamogordo Public School District does not discriminate in its hiring or other employment practices. The lack of English language skills shall not be a barrier to admission or participation in the district's activities and programs. The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

Title IX Coordinator
1211 Hawaii Avenue
P.O. Box 650
(575) 812-6000

This notice is provided as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Questions, complaints, or requests for additional information regarding these laws may be forwarded to the designated compliance coordinator(s).

Title IX Coordinator
1211 Hawaii Avenue
P.O. Box 650
(575) 812-6000

APS EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM & ELIGIBILITY

There are two facets to the Early Childhood program that is provided by the Alamogordo Public Schools.

1. NM PreK is a program for 4-year-old children:

This program provides preschool comprehensive services for any 4-year-old child, as long as there are openings available.

Children who qualify for the program must be four years of age by September 1st of the current calendar year. All four-year-olds can register for PreK and will be selected based on need.

Priority will be given to families

- Residing within the boundaries of a Title I school district
- Experiencing homelessness/displacement
- Children who are in foster care

2. Developmentally Delayed Preschool is a program for 3-year-old and 4-year-old students:

This program provides services for 3-year-old and 4-year-old students who have special needs. To participate in this part of the program, students must be eligible to receive IEP services, which may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc. Students may also qualify due to behavioral, cognitive, or other types of concerns.

Children who qualify for the program must have a valid IEP, which recommends services in an educational setting.

RECRUITMENT

NM PreK:

PK Roundup - Every spring the Alamogordo Public Schools holds a PK Roundup to fill preschool slots for the next school year. This usually takes place towards the end of April. PK Roundup is advertised on the district website and other social media platforms. Flyers about the event are also distributed. Once slots are filled, the district maintains a wait list. If slots become available, families are contacted in order of district and state priorities and the child's position on the wait list. As described in the preceding Eligibility guidelines, priority is given to some students according to Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD) requirements.

Developmentally Delayed Preschool Program:

Child Find - All APS early childhood programs work in collaboration year-round with the district's Child Find Program. Two publicized Child Find events are held each year. The Alamogordo Public Schools also maintains an ongoing Child Find process. Parents are welcome to contact the district at any time if they feel their child may need individualized support provided through the evaluation and IEP process.

C-to-B transition - The Alamogordo Public Schools also works together with our Part C provider, Zia Therapy, in the transition of children from Part C (provided by Zia Therapy) to Part B (provided by the Alamogordo Public Schools) when children turn 3 years of age and may require IEP services.

ENROLLMENT & REGISTRATION

School Registration - Registration is completed online through PowerSchool. Visit our website for information www.alamogordoschools.org

The following documents must be completed before the child's first day of school:

- Student Enrollment Information Form
- Nurse Emergency Authorization Form
- Evidence of physical home address (current utility, water, gas or electric bill)

- Proof of guardianship (if applicable)

If parents dis-enroll their child from their early childhood program, they must officially withdraw from the school site and inform their early childhood program and school personnel. The school site's secretary will dis-enroll the child from the program.

ATTENDANCE

Families are encouraged to have their children attend school on a regular basis. All children need to arrive on time according to the child's daily schedule. Following a structured daily schedule allows your child to transition with fewer difficulties. Children who attend on a regular basis and up to 90% of the time receive the full benefits of participating in program. When children are not feeling well and/or are sick, they are not able to learn. Please keep your child home to minimize the chance of getting other children ill. If your child needs to be out due to an emergency or illness, please contact the school secretary.

If no family member or emergency contacts have been reached after 30 minutes from dismissal time, the teacher will notify school administration. At this point, the Department of Public Safety may be notified as well. Teachers must document the incident and the information is provided to the proper administrator.

APS NM PreK follows the Alamogordo Public School District's attendance policies. We will work diligently to assist all families in maintaining regular attendance.

EXPULSION

Research suggests that school expulsion and suspension practices are associated with negative educational and life outcomes. If an alternative placement is being considered due to behavior, programs must ensure that required ECECD support interventions have been implemented.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

Developmental screenings will be completed within the first three months of attendance. The developmental screeners utilized by the Alamogordo Public Schools are the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ). The results from the ASQ will be shared with families individually at parent-teacher conferences and/or home visits. Teachers will collaborate with families in providing children with strategies and/or activities to support their academic learning. At a later date, the teachers will meet with parents to discuss progress and follow-up concerns. If concerns continue, a referral may be made, with parental permission, for a special education evaluation.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Our early childhood program supports the participation of our students in a safe and nurturing environment. The NM Pyramid Model Framework is used to reinforce social-emotional development. The curriculum embeds strategies for children to support their well-being. Staff are available to help teachers and parents encourage positive behaviors, which move children in the direction of cooperation, making friends, making appropriate choices, and coping with life's challenges.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

The following health screenings are offered by the program:

- Vision Screening
- Hearing Screening

The school nurse will also document that children have received the following care: Annual Well Child Check and Dental Screening. The school nurse will also monitor that the Current Immunization Record is up-to-date.

Medication will be dispensed only according to Policy and Regulation and a medication administration plan. All prescribed medications for children must have a label on it with the exception of a child's EpiPen. All early childhood programs adhere to the APS Health Services policies and procedures.

<https://www.alamogordoschools.org/search.stml?q=Telehealth>

SAFETY

All elementary schools have administrators on site to oversee safety of staff and children. Classroom environments, both indoor and out, are kept clean and receive regular maintenance to ensure the safety of all children. Administrators conduct periodic drills at school to teach children what to do in the event of a fire or crisis situation. Teachers and students practice proper procedures regularly to ensure preparation in the case of emergency. Parents are encouraged to cooperate with law enforcement and school officials during school emergencies to ensure the safety of all students and staff. Routine school procedures may change during an emergency. Emergencies could include fire, lockdowns, shelters-in-place, bus accidents, severe weather, disturbances in the adjacent neighborhoods, and more. Please make sure emergency information is correct complete and current on your child's school records. **When you move, change phone numbers, or change emergency contact names, contact the school immediately.**

Schools will provide emergency information via APS website (www.alamogordoschools.org) and social media with instructions of procedures to keep parents informed. APS Central Office staff provide media outlets with closures or late starts due to severe weather conditions; this information is also located on the APS website.

TRANSITION SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Beginning of Year Transitions

Making a smooth transition into the preschool program is an important task for the preschool student and his/her family. Prior to the beginning of the school year, teachers will conduct a home visit with each family to discuss curriculum and procedures. The parents and students have the opportunity to become familiar with the teacher and ask any questions to ensure the children receive quality services from all program staff.

End of Year Transitions (Transition to Kinder)

Going to kindergarten is an important life event. Preschoolers can feel excited—and a bit worried, too. Families may have similar feelings. Preschool teachers want the children in their classrooms to be ready for kindergarten. Teachers will discuss the transition to kindergarten with parents at the second Parent/ Teacher Conference of the year. In addition, a Family Engagement event may be scheduled to discuss transition activities as well.

Parents of children who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and are transitioning into a district elementary program will be invited to participate in an IEP meeting in which this transition is planned for and discussed. Discussions will be held based on the child's current developmental status. Goals will be determined by the IEP Team collectively to assist children in being successful in kindergarten.

CLOTHING INFORMATION

Please bring a change of clothes for your child for warm and cool weather and send warm jackets when it is cold, particularly in the mornings. Children should be appropriately dressed to ensure they enjoy their classroom activities. Messy activities are part of the activities at school; therefore, do not send children in clothing that cannot get dirty. For children who are not completely toilet trained, they need two sets of complete changes of clothes. All clothing should be marked with the child's name in a Ziploc bag, and they are kept in the child's cubby. A toileting plan is completed for any child needing toileting assistance.

NUTRITION & FOOD SERVICE

Early childhood programs provide meals from APS Department of Nutrition Services that meet USDA guidelines and are prepared on site. All children on a prescribed diet by a physician must bring written documentation to the nurse assigned to the school. Any student allergies, medical conditions, and physician requests for dietary instructions are also needed to ensure protocols are in place. If your child is tardy, please provide breakfast before arriving at school. A morning or afternoon snack is not provided by the district, but parents are welcome to send them with their children.

TRANSPORTATION

Consideration of transportation, as a related service, is offered to qualifying students enrolled in a Developmentally Delayed Preschool Program as part of the child's IEP.

PHOTO RELEASE

Parents provide written consent by completing the district forms for school personnel to photograph or videotape children for educational and teacher professional purposes.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students." To report a concern, contact the Superintendent's Office at (575)812-6001.

All student records are confidential. Parents need to provide written notice if they grant permission for anyone to view their child's record. If there is an academic need that needs a referral to Child Find, teachers and/or program staff will notify parents and

obtain their permission before a referral takes place. APS does not discriminate against anyone based on the APS Policy. Please refer to the APS District website for additional information.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

<p>Angela M. Cadwallader, President 1211 Hawaii Avenue, Alamogordo, NM 88310 angela.cadwallader@alamogordoschools.org Phone #: 575.915.6211</p>	<p>Brandy Murphy, Vice-President 1211 Hawaii Avenue, Alamogordo, NM 88310 brandy.murphy@alamogordoschools.org Phone #: 575-915-6760</p>
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<p>Ryal McMurry, Member 1211 Hawaii Avenue, Alamogordo, NM 88310 ryal.mcmurry@alamogordoschools.org Phone #: 575.915.8134</p>	<p>Col. Alfred Rosales, Holloman AFB Ex-Officio 1211 Hawaii Avenue, Alamogordo, NM 88310</p>
<p>Olivia Goodier School Board Student Ex Officio</p>	

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION CONTACT INFORMATION

<p>Michael Crabtree - Acting Superintendent P.O. Box 650, Alamogordo, NM 88311 (575) 812-6001 michael.crabtree@alamogordoschools.org</p>	<p>Melissa Cole - Director of Special Programs P.O. Box 650, Alamogordo, NM 88311 (575) 812-5805 melissa.cole@alamogordoschools.org</p>
<p>Doyle Syling - Chief of Safety and Security P.O. Box 650, Alamogordo, NM 88311 (575) 812-6075 doyle.syling@alamogordoschools.org</p>	<p>Lisa Patch - Director Health Services P.O. Box 650, Alamogordo, NM 88311 (575) 812-6095 lisa.patch@alamogordoschools.org</p>

ADDENDA

Handbook Updates - The Student Handbook is updated annually; however, policy adoption and revisions may occur throughout the year. The district encourages parents to stay informed of proposed policy changes by reviewing newsletter and other communications explaining changes in policy or other rules that affect Student Handbook provisions. The district reserves the right to modify the Student Handbook at any time. Notice of revisions will be provided as is reasonably practical.