



Aztec Municipal School District Preschool

Family/Student Handbook

“Learn to Love Learning”

Aztec Municipal School District Preschool

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Aztec Municipal Schools Preschool Programs!

We're excited to begin a wonderful year with you and your child. This family information packet is designed to support clear communication and shared understanding between school and home. Inside, you'll find important details about our program and daily routines. Please also watch for regular newsletters and notes that will come home throughout the school year.

We feel honored to partner with you in your child's learning. If there's anything we can do to support your child or family, please let us know.

With appreciation,

Mr. Adams • Ms. Dan • Mrs. Milam • Mr. Harcrow
Aztec Municipal Schools Preschool Programs

Location and Contacts

Preschools are located at both Lydia Rippey Elementary School and McCoy Elementary School

Lydia Rippey Preschool: Students residing west of the Animas River
401 Rio Pecos Rd.
Aztec, NM 87410
Phone: 505-334-2621 Fax: 505-599-4391

McCoy Preschool: Students residing east of the Animas River
901 N. McCoy Av.
Aztec, NM 87410
Phone: 505-334-6831 Fax: 505-599-4384

Transportation: 505-599-4303

Aztec Municipal School District Mission

Our mission is to prepare students to succeed in an ever-changing world by providing a learning environment that is purposeful, safe, and fulfilled. We support all AMSD partners in accomplishing this mission. We recognize that this is a shared responsibility of the school district, families, and community.

Aztec Municipal School District Vision

Inspired by purpose, safe in community, and fulfilled through learning.



PreK SCHOOL HOURS

3-Year-Old PreK Program (students must qualify for this program)

AM 3Y Preschool: 7:45-11:05 Monday - Thursday (breakfast provided)

PM 3Y Preschool: 11:40 -3:00 Monday- Thursday (lunch provided)

There is NO 3-Year-Old Preschool on Fridays.

4-Year-Old PreK Program

4Y Preschool: 8:00-3:00 Monday-Friday (breakfast and lunch provided)

Aztec Preschools follow the same school calendar as other schools in the Aztec Municipal School District, except no AM nor PM sessions for 3-year-olds on Fridays. A school calendar is available on the District, McCoy Elementary School, and Lydia Rippey Elementary School websites. District website: www.aztecschools.com

Aztec Municipal School District Preschools

Aztec Municipal School District offers preschool at both primary elementary school locations for students who are age 4 as of September 1 and reside in the Aztec Municipal School District. All preschool programs follow the NM PreK FOCUS criteria and Early Learning Guidelines with Essential Indicators. For more information on these please follow this link: <https://prek.ped.state.nm.us/> Both sites also provide special education services for students starting at the age of 3 who have Individualized Education Programs with goals that are written in areas of need in which the student qualifies. Typically developing peers also attend in limited numbers starting at age 3. For more information, see the special education section below.

NM PreK Preschool Slots and Recruitment

Flyers and brochures are sent to all elementary schools in the AMSD. The district also advertises through the district website and social media. Many families find out about the PreK program through word of mouth. NM PreK slots are generally filled on a first-come, first-served basis, but a student may have enrollment prioritized if screening indicates that they are "at risk." Parents must complete the registration process for students. As a part of this verification of immunization and residency, the child's birth certificate must be presented. Teachers will contact parents and discuss a time to arrange for a home visit so that students are able to meet the teachers in a comfortable environment. If all NM PreK slots are full, your child's name will be placed on a waiting list. Our office will call you as soon as an opening is available. Please update us if your contact information changes.

Parents will be asked to help complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) 3 and ASQ Social Emotional Questionnaire." These tools will help teachers understand where your child is currently. These tools are not used to screen students in or out of our program; they are intended to provide teachers with baseline information and help show growth.

AZTEC PRESCHOOL Special Education Services

There are three ways students receive special education services. All students must be three years old to receive services.

Transfer students already have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and relocate to AMSD. **Child Find** screenings are mandated to be held throughout the year “to find” students. Families in the AMSD with concerns about any of their child’s development may bring the child in for vision, hearing, and speech screening. If further evaluations appear warranted, they are completed at a later appointment. If the child meets eligibility and the Eligibility Determination Team determines that there is an educational need for special education services, an IEP is completed, and the student is placed in the program. In addition, teachers, as part of our NM PreK program, may work with parents to have a child screened if there are concerns regarding their development or educational needs.

Part C to Part B Transition takes place when a child has been receiving early intervention (25% delay) with a group such as Roundtree (Part C). Following evaluations and qualification with at least a 30% delay in a specified area, ASPS (Part B) takes over the serving of those students on the child’s third birthday. IEP goals are written for each student in the area(s) in which s/he qualifies.

Note: Typically Developing Peer Program. The Typically Developing Peer Program is for children aged 3 as of September 1, who do not qualify for special education services, to join us in our preschool. Many of our students already act as role models in play and readiness skills, and we want to be sure that we have good role models also for language and articulation, and behavior. Parents who wish to have a child considered for the typically developing peer program must first complete the required screening process. Role models must be three years old and potty-trained. We have three seats for typically developing peers per session.

Transition to Kindergarten During the year an APS student turns five, a kindergarten progression meeting will be held. At this meeting, present levels of performance and progress reports from preschool will be reviewed. The elementary school your child will be attending will give information and write goals and accommodations that s/he will need to be successful in kindergarten.

WAIVERS

Aztec Municipal Schools is committed to providing quality education services for students residing in our school attendance zone. Parents who do not live in the Aztec Schools attendance areas may request a waiver for their child following district procedures. Approval is dependent on current preschool class enrollment. No transportation is provided for students on a waiver. Waivers must be resubmitted and reviewed each year and are subject to revocation should factors necessitate.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information pertaining to children enrolled in Preschool programs is regarded as confidential and is

kept securely stored at all times. No information regarding an individual child is released to anyone unless written authorization is obtained from the parent or legal guardian, with the exception of information between schools in the district. Visitors are told that all information is confidential and not to be discussed outside the preschool. Confidentiality is governed at the preschools by the legal guidelines of FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act), PPRA (Protecting the Pupil's Rights Amendment), HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability Privacy Act), and NCLB (No Child Left Behind).

REGISTRATION

Yearly registration is required. To register your child, contact the Office at your student's school. Numbers for our school sites can be found at the beginning of this handbook.

SNOW POLICY

During winter, the snow can get bad enough to delay or cancel school. Listen to the radio and television to stay well-informed. Their announcements begin early in the morning and update often. If school is delayed, there will be no AM preschool session for 3Y; only the PM session will be held. Full-day sessions will begin at 10:00 am. If school is canceled for the AMSD, that includes the preschool. If you have a current phone number on file, notification will also be made through the automated School Messenger System.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

One of the most important components of the preschool is family participation. Parent-Teacher conferences are offered twice a year, and progress notes are sent home in accordance with the district calendar. We also offer several events during the school year for families to participate in. Children thrive and learn best when there is a strong link between home and school. At Parent Teacher Conferences, you and your child's teacher will discuss the progress your student is making. Items that will be reviewed will include progress on the Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT), review of literacy activities, projects, etc.

PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS

There are many support groups already in existence throughout our community for parents whose child has a specific disability or diagnosis. We will attempt to provide information regarding meeting dates and times. Feel free to reach out for further information, and we will be happy to do what we can to assist you.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Parents and families have the opportunity to volunteer at the AMSD schools to assist in duties of an educational nature regularly throughout the school year. Volunteers can contact the AMSD central office to get details on how they can help at 505-334-9474. Please note that as a part of the process to become a volunteer, you must complete a background check.

SPECIAL NOTES

Frequently, special notes requiring your attention are sent home with your child. These are typically on colored paper. PLEASE check your student's backpack for these notes. We want to ensure you receive all vital information.

ATTENDANCE

If your child is ill, please call the school and notify the office of the absence. Numbers can be found at the beginning of this handbook. Regular school attendance is essential for success in school; therefore, absences shall be excused only for necessary and important reasons. Such reasons include illness, bereavement, other family emergencies, and observance of major religious holidays of the family's faith. In the event of a necessary absence known in advance, the parent is expected to inform the school; if the absence is caused by an emergency, such as illness, the parent is expected to telephone the school office. When a student returns to school following any absence, a note of explanation from the parent is required. Please note that consistent attendance is essential for your child to make needed growth and to be ready for kindergarten and higher grade levels. We, of course, understand that there may be emergencies, but ask that your child attend school as much as possible. For absences greater than 1 day in length, the school should be notified each day of the absence. If a student is absent for 3 or more successive school days, the school shall contact the parent/guardian. If the student is absent for 7 or more successive school days, the school will contact the parent/guardian via mail. If your student has not attended for 10 days, s/he will be dropped from the program unless you call and let the staff know that s/he will be returning. Please make sure your student is on time for class, as s/he may miss needed service time if s/he is consistently late. It is important to us to have your child at school; therefore, we are happy to meet with you at school or make a home visit before disenrollment.

Please note that the above attendance policy aligns with our standard district K-5 attendance policy.

PHONE CALLS

The preschool staff encourages phone calls to keep communication open. Teachers are available from 7:30 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. and after school from 3:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. When these times are honored, the students receive all of our attention when they are here. Our office staff will take messages for our teachers and their aides during the day. Phone conferences regarding students need to be scheduled between 7:30 a.m. -7:45 a.m. and after school from 3:00 p.m. to -3:30 p.m. Thank you for being respectful of these times.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to and from the preschool is offered by the school district. When a change in your child's pick-up or take-home point is necessary, please **call the transportation department. Normally THREE (3) DAYS ARE NEEDED TO MAKE CHANGES.** The Director of Transportation, who coordinates a district-wide schedule, arranges all bus schedules. Therefore, frequent changes or disruptions in schedules are discouraged, as they affect other children and drivers. Please get to know your child's bus driver(s), as they may be your best source for busing information. If your child is sick, not coming to school, or if you are bringing your child, please call the bus yard and give them as much advance notice as possible. Preschool children MAY NOT BE LEFT HOME UNATTENDED or left with strangers or siblings under 18

years of age. Be sure to communicate any changes with the bus drivers. When no one is home to receive a child, the drivers may radio the transportation department to phone you and drive by your home twice (time permitting). If no one is home on the second attempt, children are normally returned to school, but only as a last resort. Riding a school bus is a privilege and carries some responsibilities on the part of the student. Students are required to cooperate and follow bus safety rules. If the student fails to follow the rules, the parent and teacher will receive a notice. If the problem is not resolved, suspension from bus privileges may be imposed. Parents who transport need to bring their student to the classroom door and check in with an adult in the classroom. Please check in at the office to sign your child out prior to picking them up.

IMMUNIZATION RECORDS, BIRTH CERTIFICATES, PROOF OF RESIDENCY

School policy requires that all students have current immunizations to attend the preschool. We must have a copy of your student's records on file at all times. If your child receives shots during the year, be sure to send us an updated copy of the immunization record, which the nurse will review. State immunization requirements are: Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine, Diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough (DPT or DTaP) immunization, four doses; polio vaccine, three doses; Hepatitis B, three doses; Hib, and Varicella vaccine or history of having had chicken pox. Upon enrollment, you are required to bring the original birth certificate, which we will use to record information. This will help transition to kindergarten and provide documentation of birth date, school attendance zone, and legal name.

Note: It is unlawful for any student to be enrolled in school unless he or she has been immunized as required under the rules of the Health and Social Services Department and can provide satisfactory evidence of such immunization. School health offices have immunization requirement information. Alternatively, you can contact the New Mexico Immunization Program website at: www.immunizenm.org

Health Screenings

All children will receive a health screening within three months of the first day of school. This includes height, weight, dental, vision, and hearing checks. You will be informed if there are any concerns noted. Feel free to contact the teacher's office if you have questions or concerns.

Health records will be kept on all students in the nurse's office. These records will be part of the educational record and will be shared with school staff on a need-to-know basis only.

MEDICAID IN THE SCHOOLS

The Aztec Municipal School District bills Medicaid for reimbursement of services with the school program, such as speech, occupational, and physical therapy that a student receives while in the school setting. The money gained helps pay for nursing and other services. You are not required to provide consent for the billing of these services. For students who have an Individual Education Program (IEP) ask if you want to provide consent for billing, and we will provide additional information on the process.

Medications

If a student needs to receive a prescribed medication at school, parents need to contact the school nurse to obtain the authorization form. This form must be completed and signed by the physician and parent/guardian. Non-prescription medications will not be administered at the school. Please contact the school nurse to discuss the process.

ILLNESS, FIRST-AID, MEDICATION

A student with a fever should not be sent to school and should not return after an illness until he/she has been **free of fever without medication for 24 hours**. Contagious diseases should be reported to the school nurse or classroom teacher. Immediate first aid will be given by the school in cases of accident or sudden illness. Parents will be notified. 911 will be called in case of emergencies beyond the training of preschool staff. Parents will also be notified. The administration of any drugs will not be done at school. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school and keep a student at home if he/she exhibits any of the following: severe cough/cold, fever, respiratory symptoms accompanied by fever, sore throat, diarrhea/vomiting in 24 hours, red matted or draining eyes, skin eruptions/rash. Emergency phone numbers are mandatory. We need **at least** two phone numbers for each student. We will always attempt to contact parents first.

SAFETY PLAN

The preschool has a Safety Plan to help protect your children. First Aid and CPR training are done every two years for staff. A district-wide response plan has been developed to deal with emergencies. It is very important that you keep preschool staff aware of emergency phone numbers in case you need to be notified. Fire Drills are practiced weekly during the first month of school and thereafter on a monthly basis. At least three of these drills include Lock Down, Shelter-In-Place, and Fire Drills. All outside doors are locked at all times. **All visitors must check in and out via the school office, where they sign in and out and are issued a visitor's badge.**

Emergency Drills

Students will be taught the appropriate action to take in an emergency. Drills for fire and other emergencies will be conducted each school year in accordance with the requirements of New Mexico Statute.

PICKING UP FROM SCHOOL

In the event you need to pick your student up from preschool, rather than have him/her ride the bus, please update the information in PikMyKid. If anyone other than a parent/guardian is to pick up your student, we require that you inform the teacher/office of the name of this person. We will also require this individual to provide photo identification (driver's license) before releasing the student to them, and must be included on the enrollment card, which the parent completes at the first meeting and annually thereafter. Please check in at the office to sign your child out prior to picking them up.

LEGAL ISSUES

Family arrangements vary greatly; it is our policy to work cooperatively with both parents. We request that you supply us with adequate information regarding who may or may not, pick up your student from preschool. Such information, at a minimum, shall include any restraining orders and legal

documents specifying the custodial arrangement and scheduled periods of guardian responsibility and visitation.

NOTICE -NM CHILDREN'S CODE 32-4-3

New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department (CYFD) requires reporting all cases regarding suspected abuse/neglect to children. Preschool staff will report any situation of suspected abuse/neglect which is observed by them, or which is reported to them by you, your child, or a member of your family.

INDIAN EDUCATION

In order for Native American children to receive services from the Office of Indian Education, they must provide a Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB). All new and returning students will be required to present a CIB before services are provided. The CIB must be issued for the student, not the parent. Enrollment forms will be sent to each student. Please fill them out and return them as soon as possible so your student can receive Indian Education Services.

CLOTHING NEEDS

Each student needs to have an extra set of clothing at the preschool in case of an emergency (art activities, meals, or toileting accident). Please be sure to clearly label all clothing with the student's name. The weather can change dramatically during the school day, so be sure to send a coat or sweatshirt just in case. In the winter, we will go outside only if the weather cooperates with us and the temperature is above 25°F. We encourage the students to wear hats and mittens with their coats. Again, be sure to **label all clothing**, coats, gloves or mittens, and backpacks.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

The staff at the Preschools believes that students can learn appropriate behavior, which enhances their overall growth and development, and at the same time promotes a strong sense of self-worth. Classrooms have a daily routine, which provides the kind of structure and boundaries that enhance the growth of positive behavior patterns. Boundaries are set and enforced so the students know what they may and may not do. Rules are few but important for young children. All students attending the preschool will follow the AMSD school-wide discipline plan. Students are given lots of positive reinforcement: praise, hugs, pats on the back, and a big smile, when they are behaving appropriately. This kind of positive interaction between staff and students effectively promotes acceptable behavior from the students.

On occasions when students test boundaries set by the classroom teachers, some of the following methods might be used.

1. Redirection - the teacher will show or tell the student the appropriate way to behave.
2. Praise - the staff praise students for acting appropriately.
3. Removal from activity - staff would explain why the student was not allowed to continue the activity. The teacher would remove student to an area where they can calm down.

The teacher or other adult will stay with the student until they are ready to return to the activity.

4. Thinking Time - the student might be removed from an activity and asked to sit in a 'thinking chair' for one minute for each year of age to think about their behavior with an adult present. Teacher may have a conference with parents if it is necessary. If appropriate, an intervention for a functional behavior review and behavior plan may be completed with the parent.

ART ACTIVITIES

At the preschools, our art projects are often linked to themes. We use these activities to practice many of the skills we will be learning in preschool. Examples of these skills are cutting, coloring, gluing, painting, and sorting. We will try throughout the year to label which work was done with help (HOH - hand over hand), or if it has been done on their own. Some of the projects require lots of help, and when this is necessary, we will be using verbal as well as non-verbal language to help your student gain information and knowledge.

SHOW AND TELL

Teachers may ask students to bring things from home for show and tell. We would appreciate it if your student would bring only **one item** at a time. Our special time for show and tell varies with teachers. Check with your student's teacher for the show-and-tell day. District policy says **no play weapons or pets** are allowed, so please keep this in mind when choosing what your student is bringing. Show and tell items are put in cubbies and left there so that they are sure to go home with the right student. Please label the show and tell item to guarantee it is returned home with your student.

INDEPENDENT DRESSING SKILLS

As children develop and begin to prepare for school, it is very important that we allow them all the opportunities they need to learn and become independent. Children need to become independent of their dressing needs when they attend kindergarten. This includes: zipping, snapping and putting on gloves, hats, shoes, etc. When your child is dressing, plan plenty of time and allow them to do it as much as possible independently (Some frustration is appropriate, but not too much). If you have any questions or if this is a problem area for your child, please let us know.

MEALS: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

If your student requires supplements beyond meals, please talk to your student's teacher. Depending on the dietary concern, a doctor's statement and/or related school documentation may be requested. We practice family-style dining. The program ensures that family-style dining complies with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements. All personnel will be knowledgeable about each child's special nutritional needs, which are shared with the school, including allergies, medical conditions, and physician requests for dietary restrictions. If your child has any food allergies or restrictions, an individualized Healthcare Plan will be completed to allow for a specialized diet. Substitutions will be made that still meet USDA requirements. It is the nurse's responsibility to share the individualized health plan with food service personnel, teachers, educational assistants, and any other employees who work with the child.

Breakfast and lunch will be served free of charge for every student.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The AMSD respects and celebrates the diversity of our families. For families who have children who speak languages other than English, we will make every effort to place their child with staff who are bilingual or have a Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) endorsement. Translators and interpreters will be provided for IEP and other meetings, as well as for paperwork.

FOCUS

New Mexico has chosen, as its overarching vision, the goal established by its Early Learning Advisory Council: "Every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school based upon equitable access to an aligned and high-quality learning system." The NM Public Education Department is committed to participate in the implementation of FOCUS: New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), which is a system that includes program criteria by which preschool programs will be measured and a process for program improvement. FOCUS will provide the criteria, tools, and resources necessary to support and improve the quality of preschools across the state.

EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES / ESSENTIAL INDICATORS / PORTFOLIOS

New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) provide a framework of criteria regarding children's growth, development, and learning. The Essential Indicators are observable behaviors or skills of children in relation to a specific outcome. The ELGs and the Essential Indicators direct the information needed in each student's portfolio. AMSD Pre-K staff collect and gather data to place in the portfolios. They use the information to inform families of their student's progress and to guide and improve instruction.



PRESCHOOL LITERACY PROGRAM

Research has shown that the preschool years are crucial for learning to read. Children who are exposed to books, stories, poems, and rhymes are more likely to become better readers in the future. The preschool is a print-rich environment, and the furniture and items in our buildings are labeled in English, Spanish, and/or American Sign Language. To assist your child, we continually add new activities to our curriculum. We also speak with parents and send home information on how you can help prepare your children for reading.

PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM

The preschool follows established and approved curricula for preschool children. We include specific curriculum to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. The curriculum is based on the pre-k standards for New Mexico, New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines. Teachers use a variety of resources in order to meet the guidelines and provide maximum multi-sensory learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate, child-centered, and hands-on. Examples of activities include, but are not limited to: daily read-alouds, small group activities, concepts of print activities, alphabet knowledge activities, phonological awareness activities, and oral language activities. The PreK program standards can be accessed here [NM PreK Standards English](#) [NM PreK Standards Spanish](#)

DAILY ROUTINES

Breakfast & Lunch:

Breakfast is served upon arrival for students, and lunch is served family style in the classroom. Food is prepared by the district nutrition staff. This is a great time for students to socially interact with peers and teachers. It is also a great time to work on requesting, taking turns, sharing, and manners. The preschool participates in family-style dining in the classroom, when possible, and is encouraged to serve their own food and clear their dishes. The program ensures that family-style dining complies with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements. Afterwards, they clear and wash their place at the table. All personnel will be knowledgeable about each child's special nutritional needs, including allergies, medical conditions, and physician requests for dietary restrictions that are shared with the school.

Bathroom Time:

This is also an opportunity to work on increasing the student's independence. Adults always accompany the students into the bathroom area. We explain to the students that we are washing away germs and teach them the proper way to wash. This is also a great time to work on rote counting.

Circle Time:

This is a very important time of the student's day. This is the time when they learn new language concepts and preschool routines. Teachers modify the length of time to match the developmental levels of the students. We use sign language, hand-over-hand, and/or modeling to show proper behavior.

Centers:

Centers are an important part of our day, with the students spending one hour of each day in free choice. Eight centers are provided in each big room. Centers include developmentally appropriate materials and activities in Math, Science/Sensory, Writing, Library, Art, Blocks, Puzzles/Table Toys, and Dramatic Play.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

As a parent, you have the right to request information about the licensure and other qualifications, teaching assignment, and training of your child's teacher, instructional support providers, including paraprofessionals, and school principal(s) who may work with your child. Parents will be notified when a student's teacher is out for more than 4 weeks, and licensed teachers are required to be used as substitutes for classroom teachers who are out for more than 4 weeks. If you are interested in requesting this information, please contact the AMSD Central Office to make any requests 505-334-9474.

Family Engagement

As a part of our program, we will complete 90 hours of parental contact. This will be done through home visits as well as through the events described in the family engagement calendar below. In addition, teachers will send home newsletters and will assist with school bulletin boards.

TENATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR

August: Open House 2 hours
Home Visits 28 hours (estimated)
October: Family Conferences 8.5 hours
Fall Festival 6 hours
November: Thanksgiving Feast 6 hours
December: Winter Party 6 hours
January: Literacy Festival 6 hours
February: Valentine's Day Party 6 hours
Family Conferences 8.5 hours
March: Dr. Seuss Festival 6 hours
April: Spring Party 6 hours
May: Family Conferences
13 hours Graduation/Last
Day 6 hours TBD:
Scholastic Book Fair(s) 8
hours