

Las Vegas City Schools

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2026-2027 **Parent/Student Handbook**

Little Cardinal Academy
Los Niños Elementary

Welcome to Little Cardinal Academy

- Welcome to Little Cardinal Academy! We are excited to partner with families as we help young children build the social, emotional, language, early academic, and self-help skills they need for a successful transition to kindergarten and beyond.
- This handbook adapts the Las Vegas City Schools Parent/Student Handbook for the unique needs of a preschool classroom. Preschool children learn differently from older students, so our expectations emphasize play, relationships, positive guidance, independence, safety, and developmentally appropriate learning.
- The handbook summarizes district expectations and Little Cardinal Academy program procedures. Board policies, administrative regulations, applicable New Mexico law, and applicable early childhood program requirements take precedence if a conflict exists.

Purpose of This Handbook

- Help families understand the daily preschool experience.
- Explain health, attendance, arrival, dismissal, toileting, meals, and safety procedures.
- Describe how Little Cardinal Academy supports children's social-emotional development and behavior.
- Strengthen communication and partnership between families and school staff.
- Provide a clear reference for preschool-specific procedures.
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Little Cardinal Academy Preschool Philosophy

- Preschool provides children with foundational skills for lifelong learning. Children arrive with their own experiences, strengths, cultures, languages, interests, and developmental needs. Little Cardinal Academy builds on those strengths through intentional teaching, hands-on experiences, rich conversations, open-ended questions, and opportunities to learn through play.
- Our preschool environment supports social-emotional development, self-regulation, relationships, language, problem solving, independence, and positive behavior. Teachers help children practice waiting, sharing, handling frustration, solving conflicts, communicating needs, and making safe choices.

Our Goals for Children

- Feel safe, welcomed, valued, and connected to their classroom community.
- Develop confidence, curiosity, independence, and a love of learning.
- Build communication, early literacy, early mathematics, and problem-solving skills.
- Develop self-regulation and positive social relationships.
- Learn routines and self-help skills that support kindergarten readiness.
- Recognize and respect differences in families, cultures, languages, abilities, and experiences.

Program Eligibility & Inclusion

- LCA Pre-K eligibility includes children who are 4 by September 1, with mixed 3 and 4 year old classrooms requiring children to be 3 by September 1, and that inclusive placement for children with IEPs is determined by the IEP team.
- Little Cardinal Academy is committed to an inclusive preschool environment. Children with disabilities or developmental needs will be supported through appropriate school-based processes, accommodations, services, and collaboration with families and specialists, as applicable.

Family Partnership & Communication

- Families are essential partners in a child's preschool success. We encourage families to communicate regularly with the teacher and school, share information that may affect their child's participation, attend conferences and family events, and work collaboratively when concerns arise.

Home Visit / Meet the Teacher / Open House

- Home visits are required before the start of the school year begins. Teachers will contact parents and set up a time that is convenient for them to meet for a home visit. This allows the child and teacher to meet before the school year begins.
- The LCA Open House will take place at Los Niños Elementary School on 8/20/26.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

- Parent-teacher conferences will be used to discuss children's growth, developmental progress, strengths, goals, and kindergarten readiness. PTC's are scheduled for 10/29/26 and 3/25/27.

Family Engagement

- Little Cardinal Academy values family participation through classroom activities, family events, conferences, home-school activities, and other opportunities throughout the year. Pre-K requires 90 hours of family involvement which includes home visits at the beginning of the year and events throughout the school year.

Attendance & Illness

- Regular attendance is especially important in preschool because young children develop rapidly and benefit from consistent routines, relationships, and learning experiences. Families should make every effort for children to attend school regularly and arrive on time.

Reporting an Absence

- If your child is absent please let the school know via ClassDojo or by calling 505-454-5720.

When to Keep Your Child Home

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. The child may return after being fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication and when the child is improving.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea, particularly repeated episodes. Children may return after at least 24 hours have passed since the last episode and symptoms are improving.
- Respiratory symptoms that prevent the child from participating comfortably in school activities.
- Severe fatigue, persistent cough/sneezing, significant headache/body aches/chills, or severe sore throat, especially when accompanied by other symptoms.
- An unknown or undiagnosed rash or untreated skin condition.

Arrival, Sign-In, Dismissal & Pick-Up

- For safety, an adult must sign the child in and out each day using the procedure established by Little Cardinal Academy. Families should notify the teacher or school if the child will arrive late or leave early.
- An adult age 18 or older is required to sign a child in and out daily for students who are not riding the bus.
- Only individuals authorized by the parent/guardian and permitted by school procedures may pick up a child.
- Families should keep emergency contacts and authorized pick-up information current.
- A photo ID may be required at dismissal.
- If someone different will pick up your child, notify the school according to the school's approved procedure before dismissal.
- Children must be picked up on time.
- Drop off times are between 7:30-7:50
- Pick up time is 3:45
- Parent drop off and pick up is located at the Little Cardinal Academy entrance using the west side parking lot. Do not drive into the drop off loop that Los Niños elementary uses for grades K-3. If your child arrives after 7:50 they will need to be signed in at the front main office of Los Niños Elementary and signed in with the secretary.
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Transportation

- Transportation is available for students who qualify. Please contact the transportation office for further information at 505-454-5724

Daily Program Expectations

- An adult will sign the child in and out each day.
- Families should communicate planned late arrivals and early pickups.
- Children should come dressed for active learning and outdoor play.
- Children should bring only items specifically requested by the teacher.
- A small comfort item is permitted for rest time if approved by the teacher.
- Toys from home should remain at home unless the teacher specifically permits a comfort item.
- Children should have appropriate clothing and shoes for outdoor play and weather conditions.

Rest Time

- LCA will have one hour of daily rest time. During this time naps are strongly encouraged, however students may complete a quiet activity during this time if necessary.

Toileting & Personal Care

- Little Cardinal Academy emphasizes toilet learning and independence. Pre-K students will be assisted with the toilet-learning process.
- Staff will support children in learning toileting routines in a respectful and developmentally appropriate manner.

- Children will be encouraged to develop independence with clothing, hygiene, handwashing, and bathroom routines.
- Accidents will be handled calmly and privately, without shame or punishment.

Health, Immunizations & Health Records

- New Mexico requirements and district procedures concerning immunizations and student health records apply to students enrolled in public school programs. Students must be appropriately immunized before entrance into public school and that immunizations are recorded in the student's cumulative health record.
- **Medication Administration**
- When possible, medications should be administered at home. When medication must be administered during the school day, it must follow applicable New Mexico law, school health procedures, and district authorization requirements.
- Medication administration requires an appropriate medication authorization form completed and signed by the parent/guardian and/or medical provider and can be administered by the school nurse.

Allergies, Nutrition & Meals

- Students will eat breakfast and lunch together in the cafeteria daily. We will be using the family style plan. Students will serve themselves with assistance from teachers and will be encouraged to become independent during meal times. Because of this we ask that students do not bring lunch from home to encourage the family style practices.
- Families must provide current information about food allergies, medical conditions, dietary restrictions, and other nutritional needs. Staff should be informed of significant allergies and emergency plans before the child begins the program.
- Los Niños Elementary is a nut free school. Please do not send in any times containing peanuts or tree nuts of any kind.

Curriculum & Learning

- Little Cardinal Academy will use developmentally appropriate preschool practices that emphasize learning through play, intentional teaching, hands-on experiences, conversation, exploration, and opportunities for children to solve problems.
- The New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines and New Mexico Early Learning Essentials/Indicators are used as the foundation for instructional planning.

Areas of Learning

- Social-emotional development and self-regulation
- Language and communication
- Early literacy and phonological awareness
- Early mathematics and problem solving
- Science and discovery
- Fine and gross motor development
- Creative arts

- Writing and early print awareness
- Dramatic play and social learning
- Independence and kindergarten-readiness skills

Learning Centers & Daily Experiences

- LCA daily schedule consists of outdoor learning/play, small-group activities, rest time, structured free-choice play, and centers such as science, literacy, blocks, art, writing, dramatic play, tabletop activities, and teacher-created centers.

15. Screening, Assessment & Progress Monitoring

- Developmental screening and ongoing observation help teachers understand each child's strengths and identify areas where additional support may be helpful. Families are important partners in this process.
- LCA uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and ASQ:SE as family-friendly screening tools addressing areas such as communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal-social development, and social-emotional development.
- ECOT- LCA will use the Early Childhood Observation Tool. The beginning of year assessment will be completed by 11/9/26.

Positive Guidance & Social-Emotional Development

- Preschool behavior is part of development. Children are learning how to communicate needs, manage emotions, wait, share, solve problems, and interact with others. Staff will use positive, developmentally appropriate guidance rather than punitive discipline.
- Build relationships and trust.
- Teach expectations explicitly.
- Use redirection and choices.
- Help children identify and regulate emotions.
- Teach conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills.
- Encourage independence and decision-making.
- Use culturally and linguistically responsive practices.
- Communicate with families when patterns of concern arise.
- Develop individualized support and collaborate with specialists when needed.

Non-Suspension / Non-Expulsion Approach for Pre-K

- Because preschool children are still developing foundational social-emotional and self-regulation skills, Little Cardinal Academy will use developmentally appropriate interventions and supports rather than applying the elementary disciplinary matrix to Pre-K children.

Bullying, Harassment & Safe Relationships

- Little Cardinal Academy is committed to a safe, inclusive environment. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, threats, and other conduct that creates an unsafe environment are not permitted. Concerns should be reported to the teacher, principal, or another trusted school employee.
- The existing Las Vegas City Schools handbook contains a district anti-bullying/harassment policy. For Pre-K, the policy should be communicated in age-appropriate terms, with adults responsible for recognizing, preventing, documenting, and responding to concerns.

Technology, Photos & Privacy

- Children should not bring personal electronic devices unless specifically authorized by the school.
- Technology used in class will be selected and supervised by staff.
- Families will be given a form for photograph authorization during the beginning of year home visits.
- Volunteers and visitors must protect the privacy of children and families and should not photograph or record other children unless specifically authorized.

Inclement Weather & School Closures

- Little Cardinal Academy follows Las Vegas City Schools procedures for weather-related delays, closures, and emergency schedule changes. Families should monitor the district's official communication system and school communications.

Emergency & Drill Procedures

- The safety and well-being of children and staff are our highest priorities. The school maintains procedures for emergencies such as fire, lockdown/secure situations, shelter-in-place, evacuation, medical emergencies, and other hazards.
- The school will take immediate action to protect children and staff.
- Families will be notified through the district's emergency communication system when it is safe and appropriate.
- Families should not come to campus during an emergency unless directed by school or emergency personnel.
- Children will be released only to authorized individuals according to school procedures.
- Identification may be required at emergency release.
- Families should keep emergency contact information current.
- Students will follow the procedures used by Los Niños Elementary for emergency procedures.

Family Concerns, Complaints & Grievances

- Families are encouraged to address concerns as early as possible. When appropriate, begin by communicating with the classroom teacher. If the concern is not resolved, families may follow the school's administrative complaint/grievance process and applicable district policies.
- The existing Las Vegas City Schools handbook contains a district complaint/grievance process addressing safety, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying concerns. The process should be applied in an age-appropriate manner for Pre-K families.

Cultural & Linguistic Responsiveness

- Little Cardinal Academy recognizes that children and families bring diverse cultures, languages, identities, beliefs, strengths, and experiences to the classroom. Classroom materials and learning experiences should reflect and respect the children and families served.

- The LCA Pre-K handbook emphasizes culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, including valuing home languages, supporting English language development, building relationships, and making translation support available so families can participate fully.

Professional Development & Program Improvement

- LCA requires that students are provided with 1080 hours of instruction. Teachers are required to attend professional-development days in addition to district-wide days and school breaks.

Family Feedback

- Family feedback is an important part of continuous program improvement. Little Cardinal Academy may use surveys, conferences, meetings, and informal communication to gather family input.

What Families Should Send to School

- Backpack or school bag labeled with the child's name.
- Weather-appropriate clothing and shoes.
- At least one complete change of clothing labeled with the child's name.
- Blanket/ small pillow for nap time
- Required health/medical documentation and medication forms, if applicable.

29. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Keep emergency contact and authorized pick-up information current.
- Notify the school of absences and follow attendance procedures.
- Keep a child home when the child is too ill to participate safely.
- Provide required health, immunization, and medical information.
- Communicate changes that may affect the child's well-being or participation.
- Arrive on time for drop-off and pick-up.
- Follow school visitor, volunteer, and safety procedures.
- Partner with staff when concerns about development, behavior, attendance, or health arise.

Quick Reference for Families

Topic	Little Cardinal Academy Information
School / Program	Little Cardinal Academy – Los Niños Elementary
Director	Julianna Ortega- juliannaortega@cybercardinal.com
Main Phone	(505) 454-5720
Teachers	Charlotte Lucero- charlottelucero@cybercardinal.com Le-An Pino- leanpino@cybercardinal.com
Pre-K School Hours	7:50-3:45
Drop-Off & Pick-Up Location	Little Cardinal Academy is located at Los Niños Elementary. Please use the west side entrance of the building.

Parent/Guardian Handbook Acknowledgment

- My signature below indicates that I have received and reviewed the Little Cardinal Academy Pre-K Handbook for the 2026–2027 school year. I understand that this handbook provides general information about the preschool program and that applicable district policies, regulations, laws, and program requirements take precedence.
- I understand that the school may update procedures during the school year and will communicate significant changes through the school's established communication methods.
- Child's Name: _____
- Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____
- Parent/Guardian Signature: _____
- Date: _____