



Renaissance Public School Academy Little Rams Preschool

Student/Family Handbook 2026-27



I. Welcome and Program Philosophy

Mission, Vision, and Philosophy

At the Renaissance Public School Academy Little Rams Preschool, we believe that children are capable, curious, and creative. All children deserve a learning environment that honors their individuality and innate drive to explore. Our philosophy is rooted in respect for children, for families, and for the natural world. Our goal is to cultivate confident, compassionate, and curious learners who are deeply connected to themselves, each other, and the world around them. This comes to life through a play-based, project-driven, and child-led approach inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, nature pedagogy, and progressive early childhood thinkers and schools.

We see the classroom as a living ecosystem; it is shaped by the ideas, questions, and stories of the children who inhabit it. Our curriculum emerges from the inquiries of the children. This allows space for wonder, experimentation, and deep engagement through self expression and evolving projects. We value process over product, knowing that authentic learning unfolds when children are given time, materials, and encouragement to follow their ideas wherever they lead.

The environment is our third teacher. Our classroom and outdoor space is intentionally designed with natural materials, open-ended provocations, and flexible spaces that invite movement, collaboration, and independence. Children learn both indoors and outdoors, in all seasons, with daily access to natural settings that inspire sensory exploration, storytelling, risk-taking, and care for the Earth.

Relationships are at the heart of everything we do. We aim to build a strong, respectful community where children feel seen, safe, and celebrated. Educators act as researchers and collaborators, listening closely to children's thinking, documenting their learning, and co-constructing meaningful projects that make learning visible and joyful.

What does this philosophy look like in practice?

- Children creating and revising projects based on their interests, not pre-planned outcomes.
- A rhythm to the day rather than a rigid schedule, with long stretches of uninterrupted play.
- Natural and open-ended materials used to spark creativity and inquiry, both indoors and out.
- Educators observing, documenting, and adapting daily, using children's voices to shape curriculum.
- A community of learners, including children, teachers, and families, all valued as contributors to the learning process.

Child Recruitment, Enrollment, and Placement

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) at Renaissance Public School Academy is committed to providing equitable access to high-quality preschool for all eligible children. Recruitment efforts are conducted throughout the year and are designed to reach all families within our community, with particular attention to those who may benefit most from GSRP services. Information about the program is shared through community partnerships, local organizations, school events, social media, and other outreach efforts to ensure families are aware of enrollment opportunities.

Enrollment is completed in accordance with Michigan GSRP eligibility requirements and includes the collection of required documentation, completion of enrollment forms, and participation in the program's intake process. When the number of eligible applicants exceeds available openings, children are prioritized and placed according to the Michigan GSRP eligibility and prioritization criteria. Families are notified of enrollment decisions as promptly as possible, and children who cannot be immediately placed may be added to a waiting list.

Renaissance Public School Academy is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment where every child has the opportunity to succeed. Children will not be denied enrollment or excluded from participation in GSRP based on challenging behavior, developmental delays, suspected or identified disabilities, or individual support needs, including but not limited to toileting needs, speech or language delays, motor challenges, aggressive behaviors, cognitive delays, or social-emotional needs. Program staff work collaboratively with families and, when appropriate, early intervention and special education partners to provide appropriate supports, accommodations, and services that enable each child to fully participate in the preschool program.

Placement decisions are made with careful consideration of each child's individual strengths, needs, and interests to create balanced classroom communities that support learning and positive peer relationships. Our goal is to ensure every child and family feels welcomed, valued, and supported as members of our GSRP community.

Curriculum Overview:

The Little Rams preschool program is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, rooted in the belief that children are capable, curious learners who thrive in environments that foster exploration and connection. We build strong relationships with each child to personalize learning experiences that reflect their unique interests and developmental readiness. Through self-directed, student-selected projects and inquiry-based exploration, children engage in deep, meaningful learning that encourages creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. Our educators continuously grow their practice to ensure learning remains innovative, responsive, and grounded in the values of student voice and choice.

Our Core Principles:

- *Respectful Relationships:* We build warm, trusting relationships with each child. When children feel seen and loved, they're more open to guidance.
- *Supportive Environment:* Our classroom is designed to prevent conflicts and encourage independence, exploration, and collaboration. A well-designed space helps minimize challenging behaviors.

- *Observation*: Instead of quick fixes, we observe to understand why a child is behaving a certain way. What are they trying to communicate? What need isn't being met?
- *Positive Reinforcement*: We "catch children being good" and use specific praise to acknowledge effort and positive actions. For example, "You worked hard to put those blocks away!"
- *Clear Expectations*: We create simple, positive classroom agreements with the children. Our classroom goals are be kind, play safe, listen well
- *Guidance, Not Punishment*: Our strategies teach children new skills and understanding.

Program Learning Goals:

- *Develop a Strong Sense of Identity and Belonging*: Preschoolers will see themselves as capable, valued members of the classroom community and feel confident expressing who they are.
- *Form Meaningful Relationships*: Preschoolers will build trusting, respectful relationships with peers and adults, learning to cooperate, share ideas, and resolve conflicts with guidance and empathy.
- *Express Themselves Through Multiple Languages of Learning*: Preschoolers will use a variety of expressive tools—art, music, movement, construction, storytelling, and more—to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas.
- *Engage in Deep, Sustained Inquiry*: Preschoolers will explore their questions and interests through investigation, observation, experimentation, and long-term project work.
- *Think Critically and Creatively*: Preschoolers will learn to make predictions, test ideas, reflect on outcomes, and adapt their thinking through hands-on, real-world experiences.
- *Strengthen Communication Skills*: Preschoolers will develop the ability to listen, ask questions, contribute to discussions, and share their ideas with increasing clarity and confidence.
- *Build Independence and Responsibility*: Preschoolers will take ownership of daily routines, care for their environment, and make choices that reflect growing self-regulation and awareness of others.
- *Appreciate the Beauty and Possibility in the World Around Them*: Preschoolers will observe and engage with natural and social environments with wonder, care, and a sense of interconnectedness.

Developmental Screening

As part of the Little Rams GSRP program, all children participate in a developmental screening using the Ages & Stages Questionnaires®-3 (ASQ-3). The ASQ-3 is a family-friendly screening tool that helps us better understand each child's development in areas such as communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving, and personal-social skills. The screening is not a test and is not used to determine enrollment. Instead, it provides valuable information that helps teachers get to know your child and plan learning experiences that support their individual strengths and needs.

Families are important partners in this process and will be asked to complete portions of the ASQ-3, as parents and caregivers know their children best. Screening results will be shared with families and used to celebrate developmental progress, identify areas where additional support may be beneficial, and guide conversations about your child's growth throughout the school year. When appropriate, families may be provided with resources or recommendations for additional evaluation or support services.

Ongoing Assessment

Our program uses COR Advantage, an observation-based assessment tool, to monitor each child's growth and development throughout the school year. Rather than asking children to complete formal tests, teachers observe children as they learn through play, daily routines, and interactions with their peers and adults. These observations, along with photographs, work samples, and anecdotal notes, help teachers understand each child's progress across all areas of development and guide individualized instruction.

Families are important partners in the assessment process. Information collected through COR Advantage is shared during family conferences and ongoing communication throughout the year. The assessment helps us celebrate each child's strengths, identify areas where additional support may be beneficial, and ensure that learning experiences are tailored to meet each child's unique needs as they prepare for kindergarten. COR Advantage is aligned with the Michigan Early Learning Standards and supports our commitment to providing high-quality, developmentally appropriate instruction for every child.

Family Engagement

At Renaissance Public School Academy Little Rams Preschool, we believe families are a child's first and most important teachers. Building strong partnerships between home and school is a key component of the Little Rams GSRP program. We value open communication and work collaboratively with families to support each child's learning, development, and well-being throughout the school year.

Each family will be offered a home visit at the beginning of the school year to help establish positive relationships before children begin preschool. Home visits provide an opportunity for teachers to learn about your child, answer questions, discuss classroom routines, and help make the transition to preschool a positive experience. If a home visit is not preferred, an alternate meeting location may be arranged.

Families are also invited to participate in two family-teacher conferences each year to review their child's progress, discuss information gathered through ongoing assessment, celebrate growth, and establish goals together. In addition, our program hosts two family engagement events during the school year, providing opportunities for children and families to learn together, build connections with other families, and strengthen our school community.

We encourage ongoing communication throughout the year through Seesaw, newsletters, phone calls, emails, and personal conversations. Families are always welcome to share questions, concerns, ideas, and information about their child. We also invite families to volunteer in the classroom and on field trips, participate in special activities, and share their unique talents, traditions, and experiences as part of our learning community.

II. General Preschool Information

School Contact Information

Renaissance Public School Academy
2797 S. Isabella
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

School Leader: Mrs. Megan Nix, mnix@renaissancepsa.com
Dean of Instruction: Mr. Henry Mayer, hmayer@renaissancepsa.com
Business Manager: Mrs. Brandy Reihl, breihl@renaissancepsa.com
Preschool Lead Teacher: Mrs. Kayla Badgero, kbadgero@renaissancepsa.com

Drop off/Pick Up Procedures

Because safety is our number one priority we have developed pick-up and drop-off procedures specifically for the Little Rams preschool program that allows for parent entry to the school building around the busy times in our parking lot when the K-8 program is released. This alternate schedule allows for families to enter the building with their preschooler, connect with the teaching staff, and visit the classroom daily.

- Drop Off at 8:00am
 - Families will park and walk their child to the school lobby
 - Families are asked to say a quick goodbye to their child and let them enter the school with the preschool staff to get their day started. Preschool staff will be at the door to greet students and touch base with families if needed.
- Pick Up between 3:10-3:30
 - Families will park and pick up their child at the designated preschool pick-up location in front of the school
 - It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that children are picked up no later than 3:30 daily to ensure safe supervision and honor the time of the academy staff
- Wednesday Alternate Schedule
 - Renaissance Public School Academy has an early dismissal on Wednesday of each week at 2:00pm. The Little Rams Preschool program will follow this same early dismissal schedule.

- Wednesday pick-up will take place between 2:00-2:15pm.

Preschool Calendar

School Calendar

The Renaissance Public School Academy Little Rams Preschool follows the general school calendar as closely as possible, while allowing time for individual home visits, family visits, and conferences 4 times per year. A separate school calendar for the preschool program will be shared with families at the start of each school year.

School Cancellations/Closings.

The process used to determine school closings is up to the administration. For the most part Renaissance follows Mt. Pleasant Schools for closings or delays due to weather emergencies. The Little Rams Preschool Program will follow all school closings that are determined for the K-8 program. A group text messaging service is available through the school to inform families of closings/delays. Closings and delays are also posted on the school website at renaissancepsa.com and on the school Facebook page. Please listen to the following stations: WCFX-95.3, WCEN-94.5, CZY-104.3, and Channel 9&10.

III. Preschool Policies

This handbook serves to supplement the comprehensive Renaissance Public School Academy Student Handbook, found on our website. Policies not covered within these pages remain in effect as outlined in the student handbook.

Attendance Policy

Renaissance Public School Academy's Little Rams Preschool operates for a minimum of 30 weeks and includes at least 120 instructional days, offering a rich daily schedule of whole-group learning, small-group instruction, choice time, outdoor play, and meals. Consistent attendance is essential to ensure children receive the full benefit of this early education experience. Families are expected to report all absences, and excessive absenteeism may lead to the development of an attendance intervention plan to support regular participation.

Health and Safety

Health and safety are top priorities in our early childhood program. Classrooms are designed to be clean, safe, and developmentally appropriate, with all staff trained in CPR, first aid, and emergency procedures. Daily health checks are conducted to ensure children are well enough to participate, and families are asked to keep children home when they are ill. Medications can only be administered with proper documentation. For more detailed information on school-wide health, safety, and emergency procedures, please refer to the Renaissance Public School Academy Handbook.

Contagious Illness or Conditions

If an illness or condition is contagious or communicable, students will not be permitted to return to school until he/she completely recovers from the illness or condition, and a doctor's release is returned (to the school) prior to the child re-entering the classroom.

A child is potentially contagious and should be kept home from school and program when any of these symptoms are present:

- Fever over 100.4° orally (over 100° under arm)
- Nasal congestion and/or runny nose with thick yellow and/or green discharge
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Eyes that are red, runny or with pus
- A rash
- A persistent cough

A child exhibiting any of these symptoms the night before or in the morning should not be brought to school, even if medication has been given. A doctor's note may void this rule by stating that the symptoms are not contagious. If any of these symptoms occur while the child is at school parents/guardians will be notified and ask to pick the child up. Students must be fever/vomiting free for 24 hours before returning to school without the aid of medication. Students on antibiotics must be on the medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school.

Dress Code

- comfortable indoor shoes
- closed toed outdoor shoes
- clothing appropriate for messy and outdoor play
- weather appropriate clothing in all seasons

Outdoor Play and Physical Activity

Daily outdoor play and physical activity are an important part of our commitment to supporting the health, development, and well-being of every child. Children are provided opportunities each day to engage in active play, explore the natural environment, develop large motor skills, and build healthy lifelong habits. Outdoor play is included whenever weather conditions permit, and indoor movement activities are provided when outdoor play is not possible. Families are encouraged to dress children appropriately for the weather so they can fully participate in these valuable learning experiences.

Weather Related Outdoor Play Decisions

Our goal is for students to go outside daily. Fresh air and outdoor play are important components of healthy childhood development. However, the following guidelines will be used to determine if outdoor play is appropriate for weather conditions:

- If it is 0°F or above students will go outside.
- Regardless of the actual temperature, if the FEEL LIKE temperature is below 0°F students will not go outside.
- Students will go outside if it is snowing and winds are reasonable. Students will stay indoors if there is wet precipitation including rain, drizzle, and slush.

- The office staff and school administration will use the temperature and weather conditions at the time of recess on the web based Weather Channel site.

Rest Time/Nap Time Policy

In alignment with GSRP and licensing guidelines, all full-day preschool classrooms provide a daily rest time. This period is a developmentally appropriate opportunity for children to relax and recharge. Rest time occurs after lunch and lasts no more than 1 hour. Children are not required to sleep but are encouraged to rest quietly on individual cots or mats with their own labeled bedding from home.

After 30 minutes, children who are awake are offered quiet activities such as books, puzzles, or drawing, while resting children continue uninterrupted. Teachers maintain a calm and supportive environment during this time. Bedding is laundered at the school weekly or sooner as needed, and mats are sanitized daily. Parents may discuss individual rest needs or concerns with the classroom teacher at any time.

Potty Training Policy

Toilet use is an important part of preschool development, and we understand that children may be at different stages of potty training. While children are encouraged to be toilet trained prior to enrollment, being fully trained is not a requirement for participation in GSRP. Staff will support children with compassion and discretion, including providing reminders, supervision, and assistance when needed. Students should no longer require diapers or pull-ups to attend the Little Rams 4 year old preschool program unless for a medical reason. Assistance from staff with wiping and occasionally accidents will occur as considered developmentally appropriate. Families are asked to provide extra sets of clothing and communicate openly about their child's toileting needs or routines. Teachers work closely with families to support successful toileting habits, and accidents are treated as learning opportunities without shame or punishment.

Toys from Home Policy:

To maintain focus, minimize distractions, and prevent loss or damage, toys from home should not be brought to school. Exceptions may be made for special activities or show-and-tell days as arranged and communicated by the classroom teacher. If a toy is brought on a non-approved day, it will be safely stored by staff and returned to the family at dismissal.

Field Trips/Special Events:

Field trips are planned to extend and enrich classroom learning experiences in developmentally appropriate ways. Trips are aligned with topics of study and designed to support hands-on, meaningful exploration of the world around us.

Key Guidelines:

- **Advance Notice:** Families will be informed of upcoming field trips through Seesaw messages, classroom newsletters, and printed flyers.
- **Permission Slips:** A signed permission slip is required for each trip. Children without a

signed slip returned by **8:30 AM** on the day of the trip will remain at school with a staff member and continue with an alternate learning activity.

- **Family Volunteers:** Teachers may invite parents/guardians to attend as chaperones. Volunteers must complete a **background check form** and submit a copy of their **driver's license** at least **one week in advance**.
- **Volunteer Screening:** All volunteers will be screened through the **Sex Offenders Registry (SOR)**, **ICHAT**, or similar databases before being approved to attend.
- **Siblings:** To ensure the safety and focus of our youngest learners, siblings may not attend field trips.
- **Supervision & Safety:** GSRP staff will maintain proper staff-to-child ratios throughout the trip, and children will be closely supervised at all times. Volunteers will be supervised by GSRP staff at all times.
- **Behavior Expectations:** All school-wide behavior expectations and safety procedures apply during field trips. Staff will use positive guidance and redirection consistent with classroom practices.

Field trips are a special part of the preschool experience, and we appreciate your support in making them safe and enriching for all children.

Meals and Snacks

All children enrolled in the Little Rams GSRP Preschool program will receive lunch and two snacks each day at no cost to families. Meals follow state nutrition guidelines and include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein, and dairy. Children eat in the classroom with their peers and teachers. They practice serving themselves and using good manners. If a child has allergies or follows a specific diet, a signed medical documentation and doctor's note must be provided. Weekly menus are posted in the classroom and shared with families via the weekly newsletter.

Licensing and Compliance

The Renaissance Public School Academy Little Rams Preschool is licensed through the State of Michigan and undergoes regular reviews to ensure compliance with Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) guidelines. Any incidents that could affect our licensing status are reported promptly, and we are committed to maintaining high standards of quality and safety in all aspects of our program.

Screening and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

To ensure the safety of all children, our program adheres strictly to screening and supervision requirements:

- All staff and volunteers must complete:
 - Fingerprint-based background checks through the Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) system
 - DHS Central Registry clearance
 - Michigan and national criminal history checks
- Volunteers with unsupervised access to children must meet the same screening standards as staff.
- Children are **never left alone** with a staff member or volunteer who has not completed all screenings.
- Volunteers are always under direct supervision of qualified staff.

- Annual evaluations are conducted to ensure ongoing compliance.

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

In accordance with Michigan Child Protection Law, all staff are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect.

Policy Guidelines:

- Staff must immediately report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to **Child Protective Services (CPS)**.
- The report must be followed by a written report (Form 3200) within 72 hours.
- Staff must notify the program administrator after reporting to CPS (administrator does not need to approve or be consulted beforehand).
- All staff receive annual training on recognizing signs of abuse and neglect and their reporting responsibilities.
- Documentation of training and reporting is maintained on file.

Confidentiality

Renaissance Public School Academy is committed to protecting the privacy of every child and family. All student records, developmental screening and assessment information, and family information are kept confidential and maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Information will only be shared with individuals who have a legitimate educational interest or as otherwise required by law.

Children and Staff Hand Washing

Hand washing procedure:

- Turn on water to a comfortable temperature.
- Moisten hands with water and apply soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously until soap lather appears and continue for at least 10 seconds.
- Rinse hands under water until clear.
- Dry hands with a paper towel.
- Dispose of the paper towel in the trash container.

Hand washing shall be completed after each use of the restroom. Children shall be reminded to wash and dry their hands as needed.

Handling Children's Bodily Fluids

- To reduce the risk of contracting or transmitting an infectious disease, follow these guidelines for the use of protective equipment (taken from the American Red Cross Training booklet and Blood borne Pathogen Training booklet).
- Wear disposable gloves whenever providing care to ill or injured people, particularly if you may come in contact with blood or body fluids. This may happen directly through contact with a victim or indirectly through contact with soiled clothing or other personal articles.
- Use gloves that are appropriate to the task and provide an adequate barrier for the task.
- Remove jewelry, including rings and watches, before wearing gloves.
- Keep any cuts, scrapes or sores covered prior to putting on gloves.
- Do not use any disposable gloves that are discolored, torn or punctured.
- Avoid handling items such as pens, combs, etc., while wearing soiled gloves.
- Change gloves before you give care to another person.

- Remove disposable gloves without contacting the soiled part of the gloves and dispose of them in a proper container.

All cleaning supplies, medicine and/or any other toxic materials will be stored out of the reach of children at all times.

- Controlling infection, including universal precautions:
 - Maintaining a clean, sanitary environment is a primary goal of a healthy program. Our health policy is put into practice to keep all children and staff as healthy as possible. Our plan includes Universal Precautions to control infection. At minimum, these practices include maintaining personal hygiene, using personal protective equipment and cleaning and disinfecting.

Cleaning and Sanitizing of all Equipment

The following steps are to be followed by our staff for cleaning and sanitizing:

- Wash the surface with warm water and soap.
- Rinse the surface with clean water.
- Wipe or spray the surface with a sanitizing solution.
- Let the surface air dry.

Trash is to be placed in provided containers, which will be emptied daily by the custodial staff.

Pest Protocol

RPSA is required by Act 451 Part 83 to maintain an effective pest control program for our buildings. As part of an effective pest management program, school buildings and grounds may be treated as needed to control or eliminate pests. The least hazardous methods will always be incorporated to remove pests as per the Michigan Pesticide Control Act. Under most circumstances chemical treatments will be a last resort.

Only a licensed person or company shall be allowed to apply commercial grade pesticides or herbicides. Advance notice of the pesticide application will be given at least 48 hours before the application. Notices of the application will be posted at school entrances and on the school's website. Additional applications may be necessary.

In addition, families may request in writing to receive written notification at least three (3) days prior to the pesticide application. In case of an emergency, pesticides may be applied without prior notice. The school will provide notice of the emergency application as soon as possible.

Families/guardians may review the Academy's integrated pest management program and records of pesticide applications.

Grievance Policy

Renaissance Public School Academy values open communication and encourages families to share questions or concerns as they arise. Families are encouraged to first discuss concerns with their child's classroom teacher. If the concern is not resolved, families may contact the Preschool Director/School Leader.

Program Evaluation

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is committed to continuous improvement to ensure the highest quality learning experiences for children and families. Throughout the school year, information from developmental screenings, ongoing child assessments, classroom

observations, family feedback, and program quality evaluations may be collected, reported, and analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and guide improvement efforts. All information is kept confidential and reported in accordance with applicable state and federal privacy laws. By enrolling your child in GSRP, you acknowledge that your child's information may be included in these program evaluation activities as required by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP).