

Great Start Readiness Handbook 2024-2025



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Table of Contents

4	Locations and Contact Information
7	What is the Great Start Readiness Program?
8	How Does My Child Qualify and Become Eligible for the Great Start Readiness Program
8	Mission Statement
8	Beliefs and Philosophy of the Great Start Readiness Program
9	Preschool Goal
9	Communication
9	Curriculum
10	Assessments
10	Development Screening
10	School Schedule
11	Daily Schedule
12	Rest Time
12	School Calendar and Classroom Operations
14	Classroom Exclusions
14	Meal and Nutrition
15	Confidentiality Policy
16	Great Start to Quality Supports
16	Special Education Supports and Referral Process
16	Enrollment and Fee Policy
18	Attendance Policy
18	Withdrawal Policy
18	Child Information Card
18	Transportation
19	Drop-off Procedures
19	Pick-up Procedures
19	Health Care Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handling Bodily Fluids/Universal Precautions• Procedures for Handling Bodily Fluids• Cleaning and Sanitizing of Equipment and/or surfaces• Hand Washing Procedures for Children and Adult• Proper Labeling and Storage of Food Items
20	Dental Hygiene and Tooth Brushing Procedure
21	Child, Teacher, Volunteer Illness Policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medicines• Respiratory Virus Guidelines• Illness• Head Lice
23	Pest Management
23	Accident and Emergency Procedures

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for Minor/Serious Injuries or Illness • Steps of Action
24	Incidents
25	Physical, Immunizations and Birth Certificate
25	Immunizations Requirements
26	Inclement Weather and Other Emergencies
26	Emergency Plan
26	Clothing
27	Extra Clothing
27	Birthdays and Special Occasions
27	Physical Activity
27	Personal Belongings
27	Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences
28	Volunteering and Parent Involvement in Your GSRP Classroom
28	School Readiness Advisory Committee and Data Review Team
29	Great Start Family Coalition
29	Cultural Competency
29	Field Trips
30	Photographs and Publicity
30	Conflict Resolution Policy
31	Suspected Abuse or Neglect
31	Anti-Bullying Policy
31	Prohibited Conduct
31	Parent Concerns/Grievance Procedures
32	Notice of Program Evaluation and Use of Child Data
32	Referral Policy for Community Services Organizations
32	Community Resources and Services
35	Community Food Pantries
35	Community Baby and Pregnancy Needs
35	Congregate Meals
36	Parent Notification of the Licensing Handbook



Montcalm County Great Start Readiness Program

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For more information on the Star Rating System; the most up-to-date star ratings or to look for quality childcare please visit: www.greatstarttoquality.org

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What Is the Great Start Readiness Program?

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is a state-funded preschool program designed for children who are four years of age or will be four years old by September 1st of the current program year and who meet specific eligibility criteria. The program is administrated by the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) and is made available through a partnership between MAISD and sub-recipients in the local school district service areas. We are very excited and honored to work with your child and support you in getting your child off to a great start in school! We value your input and participation in the program, so please do not hesitate to contact any of us, if you have any questions comments, and/or concerns. If you have a question or concern, it is best to start with the teacher, but please feel free to contact the administrator as well. The building principal is a valuable resource to help resolve classroom concerns.

GSRP is a cooperative effort of MAISD and the Carson City-Crystal, Central Montcalm, Greenville, Lakeview, Montabella, Vestaburg, Tri-County school districts and Huntley's Clubhouse. The program receives funds from the Michigan Department of Education and is licensed by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). All preschool teachers have higher education degrees, and all are meeting the requirements of the MDE GSRP Implementation manual. The Michigan Department of

Human Services licenses each program. All classrooms will have one teacher and at least one assistant teacher to ensure a staff ratio of one adult to eight children.

How Does My Child Qualify and Become Eligible for the Great Start Readiness Program?

GSRP is a preschool that prepares children for kindergarten. Age-eligible students are children living in Montcalm County who attain age four by September 1st of the current school year. Interested families may apply by call MAISD's Early Childhood Contact at 616-225-6278 to complete a joint recruitment application form for preschool that can be accessed online at www.GreatStartMontcalm.com at many community locations such as local libraries, public schools, DHHS, and the Health Department. Upon completion, the appropriate preschool program for the needs of the family will contact families.

Mission Statement

GSRP, in partnership with the community, is dedicated to the academic, social, and personal growth of all students, so each student can be successful in education and become a contributing member of society.

Beliefs and Philosophy of the Great Start Readiness Program

GSRP believes that all children are unique with different social and academic needs. Through developmentally appropriate experiences, children are encouraged to reach their full potential. A safe and nurturing environment that builds self-esteem and positive social interactions are provided. Through open communication with parents, we strive to build positive home/school relationships and to enhance the home/school connection.

We believe Preschoolers are individuals with unique characteristics and interests. MAISD GSRP is building tomorrow's leaders one classroom at a time. GSRP focuses on building skills for the successful transition into kindergarten.

GSRP Believes...

All preschoolers should have an equal opportunity to gain experience, based on their needs, interests, and abilities.

All preschoolers learn best when content is relevant to their own lives.

All preschoolers learn best in an environment that is warm and inviting and enables children to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills.

The primary role of the teacher is to facilitate learning as a relevant, exciting process for every child.

All students learn through exploration of the world around them.

The educational philosophy of our preschool is based on meeting the needs of all children in our programs. Children regardless of race, social-economic status, or differing abilities are free to explore and grow. Our teachers take cues from the actions and behaviors of children. A crucial role of our teachers is that of observer.

We believe allowing children's choices and guiding children's choices are how children learn best. We must be open, flexible, and willing to experiment with the environment because as children grow, so must their surroundings. Choices are made as children interact with their environment. The surroundings grow with and for the children in our open, flexible, and ever-expanding environment. Our staff is respectful of children – their creativity and interactions within their environment. We are consistent in our ability to guide choices. In this way, children develop as independent and unique human beings.

Montcalm Area ISD Inclusion Policy: It is the policy of MAISD that no person shall be subjected to discrimination in any educational program, service, or activity that it provides, nor in any employment for which it is responsible. As such, MAISD and its Board of Education do not discriminate on based on race, color, national origin, gender (including orientation or transgender identity), disability, age, religion, military status, ancestry, or genetic information.

Preschool Goal

The goal of GSRP programming is to encourage development of all children and prepare them for successful entry into kindergarten, using developmentally appropriate practices through a play-based curriculum.

Communication

It is important to continue to have open communication between the teaching staff and parents. There are multiple ways for communication between home and school, both formal and informal:

- Notes sent back and forth between school and home
- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Emails
- Quick chats before and after school
- Scheduled meetings before or after school
- Scheduled meetings on Wednesdays are always a good choice
- Weekly/monthly school newsletters Classroom newsletters
- Lesson plans posted for daily review
- Two home visits per year (before school and after March)
- Two parent-teacher conferences per year (fall and spring)
- Two family night events
- Field trips and special occasion activities
- My Teaching Strategies Parent Portal
- GSRP parent representative and Family Coalition participants
- Be a parent/family representative on the School Readiness Advisory Council (SAC) (which meets three times a year) to provide engagement and feedback
- Parent Teacher Organizations at Elementary Buildings
- Ready Rosie support (as applicable)
- Online parent portal through local districts

Curriculum

The philosophy behind our curriculum is play and interaction with the environment. Young children learn best by doing, expressing interests, and discovering. Play provides the foundation for learning. The activities, environment, materials, and schedule are all designed to accomplish curricular goals. Our curriculum, Creative Curriculum, encompasses the entire child.

In Creative Curriculum, there is an appropriate balance of child-initiated activities and adult-guided, active learning. Throughout each classroom session, teaching teams (Lead and Associate Teachers) intentionally interact with children to build on their understanding and enhance learning. Play and peer-to-peer interaction are vital to provide children with opportunities to engage in abstract thinking, to develop self-regulation skills, to develop problem-solving and use oral language skills. The emphasis is on the child's growth.

Throughout the school year, the teaching staff will share information with you concerning how the curriculum supports individual development: where children are on the developmental continuum and the next steps for learning.

Assessment

Ongoing, objective anecdotal observation is the basis for assessment within the GSRP classroom. The assessment tool is My Teaching Strategies (MTS). The teaching staff uploads observations, pictures, videos and more to an online database. Teachers then level the observations on the developmental continuum and share this with parents through the parent portal, at conferences, and at-home visits. Parents can also have access to this information in real-time. **The teaching team will provide you with an invite to the parent portal.** Participation in the MTS parent portal is expected for each child. MTS has a parent portal that parents will be required to log in to, then have parents access to track their child's progress on an ongoing basis. Creative Curriculum and MTS works reciprocally to determine best practice for teaching teams and next steps for children in their learning process.

MTS assesses the following areas of child development:

- Social and Emotional
- Physical
- Language
- Cognitive
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- The Arts

Development Screenings

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screens and assesses the developmental performance of children in the areas of communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem-solving, and personal-social skills. It is used to identify children that would benefit from in-depth evaluation for developmental delays. The questionnaire provides teaching teams with the first indication of “where to begin” with children, thus supporting the individual development of each child.

The ASQ is administered from parent to child before the start of school. It takes between 10-15 minutes and is available in both English and Spanish versions. The teaching staff uses the scores to determine needs and delays in child development. Significant concerns are discussed with parents at the initial home visit and/or before the first parent-teacher conferences. The initial questionnaire guides teaching team choices with instructional support at the beginning of the school year. It alerts staff to any support necessary for individual children. The questionnaire is given again, in areas of delay, after the first good instruction occurs.

Ongoing ASQ resources are available. <https://agesandstages.com/>

School Schedule

The preschool program is in session Monday through Friday with no school on Wednesdays and follows a similar same calendar as your school district's master calendar. When schools are closed for holidays, breaks, and scheduled non-attendance days, the GSRP will be closed as well. A detailed listing of these dates is provided to parents at the beginning of each school year.

Daily Schedule

Below are sample schedules of the daily routine. Each classroom's schedule may vary depending on the start and end times for the building. A specific schedule to each classroom is posted on the parent board and provided to parents for review. Each site will have daily lesson plans and updates as necessary posted for parents to view. At the beginning of the school year, the teaching staff will provide families with a copy of the daily routine and continue providing updated routines throughout the year. The same is true for the district/classroom calendar. Teachers will provide a monthly updated calendar to families, as well as a district calendar. The district calendars can also be found on each school's website. Classroom calendars provide ALL scheduled days and activities for the GSRP classroom, above and beyond district calendars.

Great Start Readiness Program School-Day Sample Routine Schedule School-Day Sample Routine

8:00 – 8:45 Arrival/Breakfast/Greeting Time – Children enter the classroom at their own pace.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to stay until children are ready for them to leave. Children have choices about whether to eat, spend time with books, or interact with adults and one another. If children are not eating at arrival, a mid-morning snack is substituted for breakfast. Once all children have arrived, adults and children spend 3-5 minutes together sharing daily announcements.

8:45 – 9:00 Large-Group Time/Music and Movement – All adults and children participate in activities planned around children's interests, developmental levels, music and movement, cooperative play and projects, and events meaningful to children.

9:00 – 9:10 Planning Time – Children indicate their plans to adults in a place where intimate conversations can occur and where people and materials are visible. Adults use a range of strategies to support children's planning (e.g., props, area signs, tape recorders, singing, planning individually, in pairs, in small groups).

9:10 – 10:10 Work Time (children's hour of uninterrupted Choice Time) – Children always initiate activities and carry out their intentions. Children make many choices about where and how to use materials. During Work Time, adults participate as partners in child-initiated play and encourage children's problem solving both with materials and during times of social conflict.

10:10 – 10:20 Cleanup Time – Children and adults clean up together keeping the spirit of play and problem solving alive. Children make many choices during clean-up. Adults accept children's level of involvement and skill while supporting their learning.

10:20 – 10:30 Recall Time – Gathered in small group settings, children choose Work Time experiences to reflect on, talk about, and exhibit. Adults provide a variety of materials and strategies to maintain interest as they follow children's lead and encourage children to share (e.g., individual props such as puppets, telephones or periscopes, group games using a hula hoop, ball, or spinner, re-enacting, drawing, showing, and describing a structure or painting). Adults are unhurried in their approach and may complete Recall Time with four or five children each day.

10:30 – 10:45 Small Group Time – An adult-initiated learning experience based on children's interests and development where children explore, play, work with materials, and talk about what they are doing. Individual children explore and use the same set of materials in their way.

10:45 – 11:30 Outside Time – Children have many choices about how they play in the outdoor learning environment, much as they do during Work Time indoors. Adults supervise children for safety and join in their active outdoor play, supporting their initiatives and problem-solving. Outside time is minimally 30 minutes each day, excluding time for dressing and transitioning outdoors.

11:30 – 11:40 Bathroom/Wash Hands/Prepare for Lunch – Children assist in the preparation and set up. Children choose where they would like to sit and are encouraged to serve themselves.

11:40 – 12:25 Lunch/Brush Teeth – Family-Style meals support children in doing things for themselves (e.g., serve themselves, pour beverages, distribute napkins, and wipe up spills). Children choose whether to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. Adults eat and have meaningful conversations with

the children. Children are encouraged to clean their own meal space including disposal of leftovers, wipe off tables, and pushing in their chairs.

12:25 – 1:25 Quiet/Resting Time – Resting is a time for sleeping or quiet, solitary, on-your-own-cot play. Rest Time plans should be individualized to meet the needs of each child. The quiet play could include books, soft music, baby dolls, or fine motor manipulatives.

1:25 – 1:55 Wake/Bathroom/Snack – As children wake up, adults and children work together to put away cots and set up for a snack. Children are encouraged to clean their own snack space including disposal of leftovers, wipe off tables, and pushing in their own chairs.

1:55 – 3:00 Work Time – A second work time, while essentially the same as morning work time, may vary slightly from morning expectations while ensuring that children are primarily involved in planning and carrying out their intentions. Teachers may implement activities with various grouping strategies (individual, very small groups, homogenous) to support children’s learning of targeted skills. At least one member of the teaching team will be assigned to support the majority of children working in open centers. A collaborative curriculum-planning approach helps to ensure that the teaching team will meet individual child needs by supporting and extending development, knowledge, and skills within children’s play themes rather than pulling them aside for teacher-directed activities. GSRP expectations for active, play-based learning must be met at all times.

3:00 – 3:30 Outside Time/Dismissal (refer to AM descriptions).

Rest Time

School-day programs classrooms must provide a daily rest time for no longer than 60 minutes of the daily schedule. Bedding should be cleaned weekly on Fridays unless soiled, then cleaned as needed. Teachers can assist children in the transition to rest time by turning off the lights/closing window coverings, turning on quiet music, and providing soothing touch such as back rubs or gentle patting. Children will be given a choice of quiet activities to complete individually if the child no longer requires a nap or if he/she has not fallen asleep within 20 minutes. **Per licensing, children should not be exposed to non-interactive media for more than 2 hours per week; therefore, showing movies during rest time is not recommended, nor does it comply with best practices in early childhood education.** In transitioning out of rest time, music may be played, blinds opened, lights turned on, and staff gently awaken children with touch and quiet conversation. Children can assist in this transition by putting away their blankets and rest time items and helping to clean their cots/mats. If children remain sleeping after the lights are turned on, they will be given the opportunity to continue to sleep until it is necessary for them to wake for teachers to remain in ratio.

School Calendar and Classroom Operation: School Day & Extended Day Options

GSRP programs run Monday through Friday. In School day operations students have programming 4 days a week with Wednesday as an off day for students. Extended Day operations students have programming 5 days a week (Students do not take Wednesdays off) . Classroom times vary depending on individual districts. The preschool program follows the local school district’s bus schedule.

Classrooms are divided into different Learning Centers. Most rooms are equipped or have access to the following:

Large Muscle Center/Playground – Here I learn:

- Self-confidence as I develop new skills
- Physical strength, coordination, and balance
- To use my imagination
- To cooperate with others when involved in dramatic play
- To solve problems
- To use my energy in a constructive way
- To negotiate and take turns

Small Manipulative Center/Small Group/Blocks – Here I learn:

- About the relationships of parts to the whole
- Eye-hand coordination
- Concepts of shape, size, color, and location
- Vocabulary related to the subject of the puzzle
- Problem solving based on clues of the puzzle
- About negative and positive space, seeing something against its background, -math and reading concepts
- Self-confidence as I learn how to do more difficult puzzles
- Independence as I use the materials without help
- Sorting, as I group “sets” of puzzle pieces belonging to different puzzles
- Numerical concepts of more, less, long, and short
- Logical reasoning
- Create and reproduce patterns
- To cooperate with others
- To exercise imagination
- To create and repeat patterns

Sand/Water/Sensory Tables – Here I learn:

- To exercise my imagination
- Concepts of size, shape, and volume, empty and full
- How to use tools
- To solve problems
- Concepts of warm and cool, wet, damp, and dry, heavy and light
- How to play socially with others
- To create systems for classifying, ordering, and arranging skills which are later used in math
- To create my own patterns and symbols, skills, which are later, used in reading and writing?
- To observe changes

Books and Literacy Center – Here I am:

- Building language skills
- Developing creative thinking skills – expanding the imagination
- Developing a lifelong curiosity and love of learning
- Expanding an understanding of the world
- Recognizing print
- Hearing and using new words – expanding vocabulary
- Connecting sounds to letters
- Learning more complex sentence structure
- Talking, conversing, asking questions
- Using memory skills
- Using listening skills
- Learning about emotions
- Developing an understanding of other cultures and ways of life
- Developing an understanding of specific concepts...ABC’s, shapes, colors, numbers, rhyming, rhythm, etc.
- Learning to love reading and becoming a life-time reader

Housekeeping Center – Here I learn:

- To express myself in sentences
- To try on different roles
- To solve problems socially through negotiation with friends

- To sort and organize playthings
- To make decisions
- To improvise and use things in a symbolic way to represent something else...a form of abstract thinking
- To carry out my ideas with the cooperation of others
- To exercise my imagination and creativity
- Science Center – Here I am learning:
 - About nutrition, different tastes, and food groups
 - How hot and cold temperatures change things
 - Concepts of volume and measurement
 - New vocabulary related to the experience
 - Part-whole relationships, which are basic math concepts
 - An awareness of my own and other cultures
 - Concepts of texture, color, weight, size, etc.
 - Observe likenesses and differences
 - Appreciate nature and develop a sense of curiosity about the world

Creative Art Center – Here I learn:

- To exercise my imagination
- Concepts of shape, size, location, and design-relevant to learning to read
- About things that have different textures
- How to create patterns and designs-math skill
- Eye-hand coordination
- To express myself without words
- That my ideas have value
- Concepts of symmetry balance and design
- An acceptable way to make a mess
- How to mix colors and form new ones
- To control the small muscles of my hand

Classroom Exclusions

Children must not be excluded or expelled because of the need for additional medical or behavioral support, assistance with toileting, or staff attitudes and or apprehensions over these issues. See MAISD inclusion policy.

Meals and Nutrition

Our students will be provided with a nutritious meal options at school every day. Students attend school in a full-day program will receive breakfast, snacks and lunch provided by the school district. Breakfast, snacks, and lunch will be provided through the local school district. Meal and snack times are learning opportunities for children with teachers. Please refrain from sending in food substitutions as this can interfere with the learning process. All meals are served as family style meals that include students and GSRP staff. Foods served should reflect the home and community cultures and be high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt. School Day operating less than seven hours per day must minimally provide one snack and lunch. All children should eat the same foods unless there is a documented allergy or special need for individualization. All meals/snacks must occur in licensed space and must occur in the GSRP classroom unless there is documented approval from the MAISD due to extenuating circumstances. Adults in the classroom sit at the table, eat the same foods children do, and participate in child-initiated conversation. All GSRP meals/snacks must be delivered family-style, supporting children to do things for themselves.

Family Style Meals and Snacks in GSRP are part of the learning time in the classroom. Snack and mealtimes provide daily opportunities for child-teacher interaction. Children learn through participation and meal/snack times are great ways to build relationships between children and adults. If you have further questions about Family Style Meals parents are welcome to come in and participate! You can also contact your teacher for further details about the features of family-style meals. You can also find further clarification of family style meal service in the MDE [GSRP Implementation Manual](#).

Your GSRP program may participate in the Michigan Child Care Food Program. Food is served in accordance with the minimum meal requirements of the Child and Adult Food Care Program or participates in the Free and Reduced Lunch program, and meals are prepared and served in accordance with the standards. Menus with noted food substitutions will be posted on the parent board outside each classroom. The cost of all food is covered through the GSRP grant from the state of Michigan.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, MAISD GSRP is prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independent Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Confidentiality Policy

Parents can be assured that all information regarding children and families is kept in strictest confidence. Sometimes it is helpful to share information with other people that may be working with your child or family. Staff members are only able to share information with those entities you have indicated on the “Authorization to Disclose Information” form. Licensing and the MAISD have access to all licensing required child records.

The following information will be sent to the next school program in a CA (cumulative file):

- Registration form
- Health appraisal
- Immunization record
- Legal birth certificate
- Progress reports
- Special Education Documentation

The following information will be kept as documentation of enrollment in the program file:

- Collaborative preschool application
- Legal birth certificate
- Immunization record
- Progress reports
- Income verification
- Parent involvement contract
- Permission forms
- Volunteer statement
- Authorization to Release Confidential Information

Parents/guardians can request to see either file at any time. Parents who volunteer and participate in school activities, committees, family events, etc. will be exposed to information that is confidential. Sharing outside of the classroom and discussing activities or children with others is against policy and not allowed.

Great Start to Quality Supports

Great Start to Quality helps families find the best early learning settings for their children and helps educators improve the care they give children. More information can be found at: www.greatstarttoquality.org.

Special Education Supports and Referral Process

Every GSRP program has access to a team of professionals that could provide services to children if they are eligible for special education. Some of these services include

- Support by the speech therapist to help develop children’s language, speech and understanding of words
- Occupational therapist support of fine motor development and the coordination of the eyes and hands together
- Physical therapist support as to how a child moves his/her body and coordinates his/her large muscle development
- School psychologist support for overall learning and behavior, and
- School social worker in support of the whole child.

Teachers in GSRP use the developmental information from the ASQ (done at the beginning of the school year), and the MTS developmental continuum (ongoing), to continuously assess your child’s development and progress. From this information, the teaching staff will contact you with developmental concerns and then need verbal permission from you, before pursuing conversations with support personnel about your child. Support occurs through child study teams where other professionals offer/provide strategies for in the classroom. This can also move forward into having observation and consultation by other professionals. With either option, your written consent is required prior to any formal assessment and/or interventions taking place. You may also bring your concerns to the teacher and request further involvement by specialized educators. Remember that you and your child’s teachers are working as a team to assure the best education possible for your child. If at any time, you are concerned about growth and development in your child’s education, contact your child’s teaching team and together, you will move forward for your child.

For children who have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), services should be coordinated with the classroom teaching staff. It is in the best interest of the child, if the special education staff and GSRP teaching team work together to provide the optimal intervention for the child. Special education staff can meet with GSRP teaching staff during their planning time to assure that GSRP staff knows how to embed the child’s unique goals and interventions into their daily routine and classroom program. Removing the child from the GSRP classroom is not in the best interest of the child and will be avoided whenever possible.

Enrollment and Fee Policy

The enrollment process begins with the joint recruitment application in Montcalm County. This application is used for families seeking programming for preschool aged children. The application does not ensure enrollment in a GSRP classroom. Age eligible children are enrolled into the program once the allocations are given to the MAISD. In the meantime, postcards and/or phone calls are sent to families, acknowledging the application has been received. Once the local school districts receive applications back from the joint recruitment process. This contact informs families that the application is with the local district and gives a timeline for future contact concerning the application. Enrollment for 2024-2025 school year began March 1, 2024 by prioritization determined by legislation.

This preschool program is a Great Start Readiness program funded through the Michigan Department of Education. This program is FREE to families who qualify based on the MDE designated income

guidelines on the initial preschool application. 4-year-old children with the greatest need will receive priority in being accepted to the program. In the event of over income enrollment for children, that do not qualify based on income guidelines, see the approved sliding fee scale. Children who are 4 years old on or before September 1st, will be given priority after all 4 years old by September 1st children are enrolled then children who are 4 by December 1st. Children who are 5 years old may not be enrolled in GSRP, only 4-year-old eligible children may participate.

Based on revisions made to Public Act 60 in June 2013, any child enrolled in GSRP whose family has an income more than 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL) must pay tuition based on a Montcalm Area ISD district-wide common sliding fee scale. (Maximum cost for families that fall within the category of quintile 8 or above (300% poverty level) will be charged \$300 for half day programming and \$400 for the school year for GSRP tuition to be paid to the sub recipient directly). Money will be applied directly to the classroom program expenses that the child is being served in. All expenses must fall within the allowable expenses category per the GSRP manual in the attending school year. All monies received and spent will be reported to the MAISD by June 30th end of school year deadline. No carryover of tuition funds is allowable.

MAISD has developed a sliding fee scale, in accordance with guidance provided by Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Any program who wishes to enroll a child above 300% of poverty must use this fee scale. The tuition will be collected by the individual program and must be used to support GSRP approved expenditures. Documentation of the tuition collected, and the expenditures made with the tuition fees must be reported in the financial reports provided to MAISD. Parents who pay tuition may not incur expenses for other portions of the program, such as meals or transportation. Late payment fees are permitted only to recoup collection costs. Exclusion for non-payment is not permitted. Parents should contact Cari O'Connor at coconnor@maisd.com with questions regarding the sliding fee scale or their local district GSRP teacher about tuition payments.

To comply with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements for free appropriate public education (FAPE) and to comply with state law requiring special education services to start at birth, GSRP-eligible children from over-income families who are enrolled and who also have an Individual Education Program (IEP) must not be charged tuition.

Participating in GSRP programs must ensure that at least 85% of the children enrolled live in a household that is equal to or less than 300% of the federal poverty level. Children who meet this requirement will not pay a tuition fee for GSRP.

The grant requires that second-year families must reapply. If still eligible, the child will be accepted based on the prioritization process and available space.

All children that are over 300% of the poverty level are ranked within their GSRP program by income and risk factors. GSRP programs will still be required to collect and confirm risk factors for all enrolled GSRP children based upon the approved Child Risk Factors identified in the GSRP Implementation Manual.

For ease in administering and collecting the fees, families will pay directly to the local district they are attending GSRP. Payments will be paid by the 5th day of each month directly to their local district. Families that choose to pay the annual tuition fee by October 1, 2024, will receive a 10% discount. A cap on the annual tuition fees Families will be responsible for will be used based on 30 weeks of GSRP programming. This cap will serve as the maximum amount any one family can pay for GSRP services. All programs to enroll children over 250% of the poverty level must use the following Proposed Sliding

Fee Scale:

Weekly Tuition Rates	At or Below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (income eligible)	301% and above the Federal Poverty Level or above 350% of Federal Poverty Level (over income)
Part Day Programming	GSRP Eligible- No tuition	\$300 annually, one-time payment
Full Day Programming	GSRP Eligible- No tuition	\$400 annually, one-time payment

MCGSC Board approved: 04/2024

Attendance Policy

We believe that preschool is extremely important for a child's later school success. We understand that circumstances arise where your child may be absent from school. Please call us if your child is going to be absent. You may call the classroom and leave a message or contact the school office. These important numbers are found in the front of this handbook. GSRP classrooms will run for a minimum of 30 weeks/120 days/4 days a week during the school year. For school day programming extended day will run for a minimum of 38 weeks/180 days/5 days a week during the school year.

Withdrawal Policy

If you must withdraw your child from school, please let us know as soon as possible so we can fill the spot with a child from our waiting list. If your child is, absent for more than ten consecutive school days, a letter will be sent to you asking if you intend to continue in the program. Besides receiving a letter, your child's teaching team will reach out to you via phone, email, text, etc. to make every effort to get your child back into class. If we do not hear from you within the time stated in the letter, your child will be dropped from the program and another child on the waiting list will be enrolled.

Regular attendance, in an established routine of preschool, is of the highest benefit to your child. Making every effort to get your child to class and to class on time is a priority within the program. Staff will make every effort to support getting your child to school and will contact you immediately with concerns. For working families and families experiencing hardship or families needing support, the teaching staff will make every effort to work with you to ensure your child's attendance.

If attendance continues to be a concern, the teacher and an administrator will ask for parent support in getting your child to school. Children maybe unenrolled to allow for a waitlisted child to attend if all parties agree.

Child Information Card

You will be filling out an emergency card for your child, which contains important information for contacting you if there is an emergency. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to keep the staff informed of changes in address, phone numbers, employment or people picking up your child.

Transportation

Busing transportation is not part of the GSRP program but can be provided per GSRP Sub-recipient if the sub recipient chooses. If your child needs transportation, you will be asked to complete the district form used for transportation. The actual GSRP program starts when your child gets off the bus to enter the school building and ends when your child boards the bus for return home.

If your child is not going to be attending on a given day, you should call your child's teacher and report that your child will be absent on that day. The transportation department would appreciate a call as

well, so the bus drivers are aware of this when they are doing their routes. If you choose to transport your child yourself, please refer to the pickup and drop off policies.

Drop Off Procedures

Children in the preschool programs must not be dropped off prior to their scheduled class time. Children may be dropped off approximately 10 minutes before the start of the school day. Upon arrival, take your child directly to the classroom. All children must be signed in and out on the form provided in your child's classroom. Do not sign your child out until you are taking your child from the center. Be sure to write your first and last name, not "Mom" or "Dad." The teacher or teaching assistant will greet the parent and child upon arrival. Do not leave until you have been greeted. If a child appears ill, he/she will not be allowed to stay.

Pick Up Procedures

An adult must sign out children attending GSRP before leaving. Remember you must sign your child in and out of the classroom.

Parents, relatives, and friends who are on your child's emergency card, but whom the staff does not recognize, will be asked for identification to ensure that each child remains safe while in our care. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with anyone but their parent or legal guardian without written notification given to the child's teacher. Remember, your child will be permitted to leave only with those persons listed on the emergency card and who are at least 16 years old. If a parent appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when picking up a student, the police will be contacted immediately.

Being timely when picking up your child is important for your child and the staff in the program. If children are not picked up at the end of the day, the parents and if necessary, the emergency person on their card will be contacted. If no one can be reached, then Children's Protective Services will be contacted.

Health Care Plan

Handling Bodily Fluids/Universal Precautions

The program shall use precautions when handling potential exposure to blood, including blood-containing body fluids and tissue discharges, and when handling other potentially infectious fluids. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has model exposure plan materials for use by childcare centers available from regional OSHA offices. See R 400.5102a blood-borne pathogen training requirement.

Procedures for handling bodily fluids:

- Staff will ensure that all students are kept out of the area where bodily fluids are located.
- Staff will call maintenance/janitorial personnel who have been trained in clean up to disinfect the contaminated area.
- Staff will wear protective gloves to help assist the child and with cleaning any child who may have been exposed to the bodily fluid.

Cleaning and Sanitizing of Equipment and/or Surfaces

It is important for a healthy environment to maintain sanitized equipment and surfaces. Tables must be sanitized before and after food preparation and eating. Cots and mats must be washed at least weekly, if they are assigned to specific children and do not come into contact with other cots during storage, or between use if they do.

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

- Wash the surface or article vigorously with warm water and detergent.
- Rinse the surface with clean water.

- Submerge, wipe, or spray the surface or the article with a sanitizing solution.
- Let the article or surface air dry.

Examples of sanitizing solutions include but are not limited to:

- Water and non-scented chlorine bleach solution with a concentration of bleach between 50 - 200 parts per million (one tablespoon per gallon of water). Test strips must be used to check the concentration and are available from most food service suppliers.
- Commercial sanitizers specified on the label to be safe for food contact surfaces and used according to the manufacturer's directions.

Hand Washing Procedures – Children

When to Wash Hands:

- After using the restroom
- After sneezing, coughing, blowing their nose, or using tissue
- After handling garbage, animals or pets
- After touching an open sore, cut, boil, or pimple
- Before handling food

How to Wash Hands:

- Wet hands with warm water, then apply soap.
- Have child rub hands together under the water for at least 20 seconds. Tip: Try having them sing Happy Birthday or the ABC's while scrubbing.
- Rinse hands under warm water.
- Dry hands with disposable paper towel.

Hand Washing Procedures – Adults

When to Wash Your Hands:

- Before starting work
- Before putting on food service gloves, and then again when changing them
- After handling cleaning supplies
- After eating, drinking, or taking a break
- After handling poultry, raw meat, fish, or shell eggs
- After using the restroom or helping a child in the restroom
- After sneezing, coughing, blowing their nose, or using tissue
- After handling garbage, animals or animal cages
- After handling money
- After touching an open sore, cut, boil, or pimple
- Before handling food or medication

Proper Labeling and Storage of Food Items

All food items must be stored in original containers showing expiration date and must be disposed of prior to the date of expiration.

Dental Hygiene and Teeth Brushing Procedure:

GSRP classrooms provide a variety of dental education activities including the following:

Children will brush daily with toothpaste. An adult will facilitate small group activity, ensuring safe and sanitary conditions. Further, the adult will show and encourage proper brushing techniques.

Teeth Brushing Procedure:

Teeth brushing will take place at least one time per day in the classroom:

- Teeth brushing activities will be located at a designated table where no other activities are occurring (i.e., no eating or other activities will take place while children are brushing their teeth).

- Adults will pass out brushes with a *tiny* amount of toothpaste on them (paste must first be applied in dots onto a disposable surface and then applied to brushes) and small cups with just enough water to rinse mouth (e.g., ¼" water in bottom).
- Adults will model brushing and involve children in discussions about good dental hygiene. Children will brush for a minimum of one full minute.
- Children will rinse their mouths with the water in the cup and spit and spit any excess water back into the cup; then,
- Adults will take brushes, one at a time, rinsing each brush and place them into holders. Children will dispose of cups and any remaining water in the wastebasket.
- The table will be sanitized between each group of children and again when all children have completed brushing.

Note: To rinse brushes, use a pitcher of fresh water, pour water over brushes one at a time, collecting water in a sanitized basin or bowl. Brushes may not be rinsed in sinks. Rinse water may be discarded in the sink.

- Each classroom will arrange for a dental screening in partnership with our Mid-Michigan Health Department before the February Count Day as applicable. Staff will request that dentists perform a dental screen/exam and complete a dental form on each child.
- Teachers will provide other activities to enhance the concept of good dental hygiene. Activities include games, songs, art projects and discussions about healthy foods.
- Proper dental care and regular visits are discussed with parents at enrollment, home visits, and parent/teacher conferences. Information and oral health articles are shared through newsletters and monthly fliers, including a tooth-brushing chart for at home use.

Child, Teacher, Volunteer Illness Policies

Medicines

Children attending GSRP will be administered medications that are prescribed by a physician (this includes epi-pens and inhalers) during the school day if necessary. If prescription medicine is to be administered to a child at school, the parent must complete the medical form and provide storage instructions (refrigeration required, etc.). The bottle must have the original prescription label and show the prescription number, name of the doctor, and how many times per day the medication is to be given. GSRP staff will treat minor cuts and bruises by washing the injury and applying a cold pack and/or band-aid. Parents are notified of minor injuries by phone, in person, or with a written report. Non-medication topicals such as sunscreen and bug spray will not be administered during the school day. If there is a field trip one of these medications may be necessary and then a separate permission form will be secured. The names of all children who have permission to use these items will be placed on the bottle. Medication may be kept in the classroom if necessary and transported by the teacher to various places the child goes if necessary or it may be kept in the school office.

Respiratory Virus Guidelines

Keep your student home if:

- They have had a fever (100.4°F or higher) within the past 24 hours and are not feeling well or are not acting like they normally do AND/OR
- They have been vomiting (throwing up) or having diarrhea within the past 24 hours AND/OR
- They feel too sick to be able to take part in their classwork.

Send your student back to school when:

- It has been at least 24 hours since both their symptoms are getting better overall, and they have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication) AND
- They feel well enough to take part in their classwork AND

- If they have been vomiting (throwing up) or having diarrhea, they haven't had any within the past 24 hours AND
- If they saw their healthcare provider, their healthcare provider says it is ok to go back to school.

Illness (These policies although child specific also apply to Volunteers and teaching staff)

Attendance is very important to us; however, we are also very concerned about the spread of illness. We serve many children, and when germs are brought into the classroom, they spread quickly. No child or staff will be permitted to attend if acutely ill and/or has a fever, severe cough, diarrhea, or rash. Some diseases will require your child to be excluded from school until a doctor writes a release. If your child is displaying any of the following symptoms, he or she should not attend:

- Fever (temperature of 100° or higher or even less when the child feels ill) – until temperature returns to normal for 24 hours
- Earache – until seen by a doctor
- Rash – until the cause is determined and it is not contagious
- Sore throat – until throat loses redness
- Watery or red eyes – until eyes clear
- Any draining sore – until draining stops
- Upset stomach the night before or prior to arrival time
- Chest cough – until cough stops
- Diarrhea or vomiting within the last 24 hours

Parents should exercise every precaution and keep their child home should other unusual symptoms occur. If a child is sick throughout the night, please keep him or her home to rest. Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children healthy. COVID-19 guidelines and LARA recommendations may change these policies. Plan changes will be communicated to families within 24 hours of implementation.

If your child contracts a communicable disease, please notify us as soon as possible. Parents of other children will be alerted to exposure to the disease. Your privacy is assured.

If a child becomes ill during class, the parents will be contacted with the request to take their child home. If you cannot be reached, we will call the person you have given us to notify in case of an emergency.

Disease/Illness Symptoms	When a Child May Return
Fever 100 degrees or above	Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medicine
Vomiting	24 hours symptom free
Diarrhea (giardia, salmonella, shigella, viral)	When stools are formed and symptom free for 24 hours
Nasal discharge (yellow or green mucous)	Discharge is not thick yellow or green and/or if the child has been on antibiotic for 24 hours
Chicken Pox	After all skin lesions have dried
Mumps	After swelling is gone (About 9 days)
Strep Throat	After 24 hours of antibiotic treatment
Measles or German Measles	Not earlier than 4 days after onset of rash
Pink eye or Conjunctivitis (Bacterial, viral or allergic)	When eyes are mucous free or on medication for 24 hours
Hepatitis A	With physician's clearance

Impetigo	With physician's clearance, after medication for 24 hours and infected parts covered
Ringworm or Pin worms	After 24 hours of physician prescribed treatment and ringworm infected area should be covered
Scabies	After 24 hour of physician prescribed treatment
Unidentified Rash	With physician's clearance (need to provide note from physician)
Meningitis	With physician's clearance
Influenza	With physician's clearance or fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours
Roseola	After rash clears
Hand, foot and Mouth	When lesions heal and drooling ceases
Croup	After free of viral infection and child is no longer having difficulty breathing

Head Lice

GSRP has the following policy in place regarding students attending school with head lice. Students who have head lice or eggs will not attend school until:

- The child has been properly treated.
- The head is completely clear of all eggs.
- The child has been checked by a staff member prior to being readmitted.

This policy may be different from your local school district policy but is the policy of the grant program. When there is a discrepancy between local school district policies, the GSRP policy will be followed. If headlice is an impediment to a child attending class, instruction teacher will support the family through resource sharing and potential references.

Pest Management

It is the policy of all GSRP classrooms to manage pests in and around classrooms in a manner that protects human health, maintains the integrity of buildings and grounds, and preserves the environment. All facilities and grounds will be maintained including situations maintained to be free of trash, debris, and clutter. Ornamental plants, turf, and desirable grasses will be managed in a manner that limits animal, plant, and microbial pest attraction. Parents will be notified upon all pest management techniques used to manage pests in and around classrooms. Where classrooms are in operating school buildings that local district police will be adhered to as well.

Accident and Emergencies Procedures

In the event of a medical emergency or an accident, the parents and physician of the child will be contacted. If we are unable to make contact and emergency treatment is required, the child will be taken to the hospital specified on your emergency card. Your authorization for the center to contact your family physician and to take emergency medical measures deemed necessary is part of this agreement.

Plan for Minor Injuries (bumps, bruises, or minor cuts)

- Staff person should put on disposable gloves.
- Wash infected area with cool clear water if needed.
- Cover area with a bandage if necessary.
- Complete accident report, have center director/teacher sign and copy. Keep the original copy of the report in the center file and send a copy home to parents on the day of the incident.

Physical, Immunizations and Birth Certificate

GSRP may not accept your child unless they have had the minimum immunizations completed by the first day of attendance. A certified copy of your child's birth certificate is required by the first day of attendance. Students must have a current physical form within 30 days of classroom start date and birth certificate on file to attend GSRP. GSRP staff can provide support to you to help obtain this documentation.

Immunization Requirements

Per the State of Michigan, a parent or guardian wishing to exempt his or her child from a vaccination must provide a written statement (Immunization Waiver) indicating the religious or philosophical objections to the vaccination(s). The local health department must certify the waiver. A child who has been exempted from a vaccination is considered susceptible to the disease or disease for which the vaccination offers protection. The child may be subject to exclusion from school or program if the local and state health department advises exclusion as a disease control measure.

Per the State of Michigan Licensing Rule: A child under school age whose immunizations are not up to date at the time of enrollment and has been in attendance for four-month period need to have an updated certificate showing completion of all age-appropriate vaccines mandated by the State of Michigan and must be kept on file unless there is a signed statement by a licensed health care provider stating that immunizations are in progress. If the immunization record is not up to date within that four month the child will be excluded from attendance until it is received. This preschool spot will be held for 15 calendar days.

If there is a communicable disease outbreak and there is, a child in attendance with an Immunization Waiver the local health department will be contacted for further guidance. The child may be excluded until the outbreak is no longer a health threat. Teaching staff will notify the parents of the communicable disease outbreak and the applicable exclusions.

Following is a list of immunizations required by the State of Michigan.

- 4 doses DPT
- 4 doses Pneumococcal Conjugate
- 3 doses Polio
- 1 dose MMR (after 12 months of age)
- 1 dose Hib (after 15 months of age, before 5 years of age)
- 1 dose Varicella (Chicken Pox)
- 3 doses Hep B

A child admitted to a school or preschool program with only the minimum immunization requirements must show progress towards receiving the remaining doses. A waiver form can be obtained for medical and other reasons at the school office. Students with a waiver will be excluded from our program if they become exposed to the waived immunization disease. The following vaccine doses are required for continued attendance:

- 4 or 5 doses of DPT. The first 3 doses should be properly spaced. The 4th dose must be given a minimum of 6 months after the 3rd dose. If the 4th dose is given within 6 months of the 3rd dose, an additional dose is required.
- 4 doses of Pneumococcal Conjugate
- 4 doses of OPV/IPV
- The first 2 doses should be properly spaced. The 3rd dose must be given a minimum of 6 months after the 2nd dose. If the 3rd dose is given before the required 6-month spacing has elapsed, an additional dose is required.

- 1 dose of MMR
- Repeat if given prior to the child’s first birthday. (Any combination of single or multiple antigen vaccines containing measles plus rubella plus mumps are acceptable in lieu of a dose of MMR.)
- 1 dose of Hib or series of 3
- 1 dose of varicella (chicken pox)
- 3 doses of Hep B

Incident Weather and /or Other Emergencies

Emergency Plans are posted in your child’s room. In any emergency, your child’s safety is the first consideration, practice drills will occur throughout the school year. The following is the policy for bad weather and/or emergency conditions:

Fire

- Fire evacuation plans will be posted and practiced two times per year with each classroom.

Tornado Watch

- Arrangements will be made to follow weather patterns to ensure students safety. (Person eligible to pick up your child may do so). Our schools will practice these procedures, twice a year

Tornado Warning

- For the children’s and the staff’s safety the program requests that parents do not come during a tornado warning to pick up their child. If parents come during a tornado warning, they are welcome to stay with their child until the warning has expired.

Snow Days

- If your local school district is closed because of snow, the preschool will be closed. Please listen to local media stations for information on closings.

2-Hour Delay

- If there is a 2-hour delay in your district, there is a chance that your child’s preschool program will be cancelled. Look for something on the television screen such as “no am GSRP program” for your specific district.

Lock Down

- There are lock down procedures and our schools will practice these procedures, twice a year. If programs are not in local school buildings or district, they will implement a schedule according to State of Michigan licensing rules.

Emergency Plan

Each classroom has its own Emergency Plan that follows the building and/or district emergency plan. Emergency Plans are posted in the classroom and available for parent review at any time. The specific building Emergency plan will be communicated with parents and all classroom staff annually. Please contact your teaching team if you would like to review.

Clothing

Because of the wide range of activities, it is recommended that children be dressed in washable, comfortable clothing, since some clothing does become soiled from play or art activities. Paint shirts are provided by the center for art and water activities.

Please, remember that children are taken outdoors daily (weather permitting) and should be dressed accordingly. All clothing should be labeled with your child’s name. Children should be brought to school only if they are permitted to take part in outdoor play. Outdoor play will occur daily at the discretion of the teacher.

Extra Clothing

Water activities, sand play, and occasional bathroom accidents necessitate that an extra change of clothing be always kept at the center. In case of an accident, please bring a change of clothing in a zip lock bag with your child's name on the bag. If wet or dirty clothing is sent home, please return a clean, extra set of clothes the next day your child attends.

Birthdays and Special Occasions

Parents are welcome to send a treat to share with the class on birthdays or special occasions. In lieu of the grant-supplying snack on this day, a birthday treat can be shared – however, it needs to follow the health guidelines. Please consult with your teaching team concerning healthy snack choices and have your teaching team provide a copy of the health guidelines for snacks in preschool. Please plan and prepare ahead of the actual sharing day to ensure all guidelines are followed.

Physical Activity

The teaching teams will make every effort to follow the schedule provided to you to assure at least 30 minutes of outdoor time for one half day programs and two 30-minute blocks of outdoor time in full day classrooms. In case of inclement weather, an alternate location will be used in order to assure children receive physical exercise throughout the day. Adults are working with children as partners in play and supporting large muscle health in all children.

Personal Belongings

Please keep toys, candy, gum, sharp objects, play guns, medication, or money home. If these items enter the classroom, the GSRP teaching staff will gently ask children to remove the items for safekeeping for the day. For medication, please refer to the medication policy.

Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences

One of the **requirements of the program is that we have two one-hour home visits and two 45-minute parent-teacher conferences per year** – one in the fall and one in the spring. Of course, we hope that if you have any questions or concerns at other times during the school year, you will let us know. Our staff will visit you and your child at your home for two (2) one-hour times during the year – before school begins and March (in the spring). The visits will always be scheduled ahead of time, and we send reminder notes or call as well. The children are excited to have their teachers come to their home, and we enjoy it too! The visits give us a chance to do an activity with the children and to update you on your child's development. Please remember, we are not the white glove inspection team! We are not coming to see your house. We are coming to visit and get to know you and your child better.

The first home visit is a time for us to meet you and your child. We will collect the ASQ, complete paperwork necessary for entrance, and spend time on child-centered activities with you and your child. We are at your home to support you in the needs or questions you may have, as your family begins our preschool experience. The end of the year visit is used for kindergarten transition activities, summer activities and a summary of your child's overall progress in our program. We also use this time to wrap up our year together, complete the parent surveys and support your child's continued learning. MTS reports will always be shared.

The parent teacher conferences are used to support your child's development throughout the school year. We provide valuable MTS information to you and give you the "next steps" for your child's development. We provide suggested activities for growth, based on the MTS developmental continuum throughout the home visits and the conferences. We are also available to address any questions or concerns at this time. In order to best meet the needs of your child and family, we will

complete a Family Conference Form which outlines our agreed upon goals for your child's development. After looking over the MTS documentation, we go through the goal setting process together.

As your child's first and best teacher, we use our time with you to develop an understanding of who your child is and what your child brings to our classroom. We use MTS next steps to help us provide suggested learning activities at home and at school. We use our time together in parent teacher conferences and home visits to solidify and grow our partnership in the best interests of your child's individual needs.

Volunteering and Parent/Family Involvement in Your GSRP Classroom

We need you...your hands, your hearts, and your laps! We would love to see you in our classroom. This is the beginning of your involvement in your child's education. Research shows children whose parents are involved in school activities do better in school. Children love to have mom, dad, or grandparents come to school. There are many opportunities for you to engage, participate, and be involved in your child's education. If you have a special interest or talent that you would like to share with the children, we would love to know about it! We are always looking for helpers in classrooms, if you want to volunteer a couple of hours a week, we welcome you! Families willing to help collect items that we may need in the classroom and/or to help us make items for children to use in the classroom, is also very much appreciated. Volunteers will need to complete an appropriate screening process to volunteer in any school adventure or classroom support.

All classroom volunteers will be supervised. The center will have evidence on file that each volunteer who has contact with children at least four hours per week, for more than two consecutive weeks, is free from communicable tuberculosis, verified within one year before volunteering; physically capable of performing the duties by having a physical examination verified within one year before or 30 days after volunteering. All classroom volunteers must have a completed ICHAT form and a DHHS Central Registry Clearance form on file before they enter the classroom as a supervised volunteer. Volunteer supervision is defined as: Volunteers at the center having a paid, LARA classroom staff person in the presence of the volunteer and children at all times.

All supervised volunteers attending field trips will be required to have a completed ICHAT form on file finger printing through the State of Michigan, and a DHHS Central Registry Clearance form on file prior to volunteering for a field trip, if the volunteer is not going to be directly supervised at all times by the center staff LARA fingerprinting is required. This applies to grandparents and other important people that may wish to participate in a child's educational experiences who will not be directly supervised at all times by GSRP teaching staff.

School Readiness Advisory Council (SAC) and Data Review Team *Did you get your invite?*

As part of GSRP, we have a School Readiness Advisory Council (SAC), which includes you, as parents. The SAC meets three times per year and is complete only when we have you, as parents, included with us. During the advisory meetings, we set goals for our local programs; we desegregate local data; and we grow in our learning and understanding of "what makes our program great for kids" together with you. We are in partnership with local businesses, health care providers and other programs to best support early learning in Montcalm County. The meetings are open to **every parent** – we encourage this involvement. Lunch is served during the meetings and childcare support is available. We want to provide this opportunity for families to engage with us in planning and implementing the best program for your child.

Your teacher needs representation on our School Readiness Advisory Council (SAC) at the MAISD level. The meetings occur three times per year with three data review team meetings. Parent voice is essential in operating GSRP in a family friendly way. As a collaborative and as a local program, MCGSC looks at MTS progress, PELI data, CLASS scores and many other factors influencing and representing the quality of our programs. We use this data to pinpoint trends, growth, and needs. Parent input and support within the collaborative is instrumental in decision-making progress. We strive to continually improve our quality of care within our preschool classrooms. Parent/family support, guidance, leadership, and involvement at this level, supports the growth we are striving toward, supports grant requirements and builds a stronger network within our preschools. Any parent/family participating receives a stipend for the time of the meeting, lunch, and a fuel card. If daycare reimbursement is needed, this cost is also covered. Upon completion of the meeting, follow up occurs through the written minutes and conferencing with the local teacher. Dropbox is available to all classroom lead teachers and has the agendas, minutes, and information on file at all times. Teachers will provide their (one assigned) parent with materials for each meeting. Teachers will have conversation around the sensitive and confidential information at the Data Team and SAC meetings. The parent expectation is that we hope to partner with you to lift up every child's learning experience in our GSRP classrooms. We need parents to participate and voice their perspective. It is available by request to any/all classroom parents! For further information contact Cari O'Connor at coconnor@maisd.com.

Great Start Family Coalition

Great Start is a continuum of services and supports ranging from parent education for the critical role they play in the healthy development of their infants and young children, to parents as leaders who advocate for their children as well as the needs of other young children. We provide encouragement to parents who are interested in becoming members of our Collaborative Board and providing their perspective on raising children in Montcalm County. Childcare, dinner, and other support are provided. Parent participation is extremely valuable to agencies, business and organizations that provide services for children in Montcalm County. Parent engagement is key to GSRP programming, and we strongly encourage family coalition participation. Contact (616) 225-6146 for further information. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/greatstartmontcalmcounty>
Website: <http://www.greatstartmontcalm.org>

Cultural Competency

The GSRP values and respects the traditions, beliefs, customs and history that each family brings to the classroom. We try to reflect the culture of the family and the community in the classroom setting and welcome you to share interests and/or artifacts that you have at home with us. Staff is trained on an annual basis on various aspects of cultural diversity and competence, to ensure that the quality of services that we provide continue to produce better outcomes for you and your family.

Field Trips

Field trips and nature walks are considered an important part of the educational program and may be taken periodically to nearby places. The center will provide the same adequate, responsible adult supervision for these excursions as is provided for children while in attendance at the center. Permission for your child to participate in such excursions is required via the permission form secured at the time of enrollment. Field trips may be "walking" trips or trips requiring transportation by the public school. You will be notified of any field trips planned prior to the trip through the classroom newsletter and the parent board located outside of the classroom. Field trips will have an educational component connecting our activities to our curriculum.

Photographs and Publicity

Photographs of the children participating in the GSRP program may be taken from time to time and may appear in newspapers, magazines, brochures, or other publicity materials. Your permission on the photo release form allows us to use your child's and/or family member's photo or video only for the purposes you indicate on the form. You will not be compensated for any images used. If you do not want your child's picture taken, please indicate in writing on the photo release form that "you do not want your child's picture used for any of these purposes".

Conflict Resolution Policy

It is the policy of the Great Start Readiness Program to try to resolve all matters in a calm and professional manner. For the most part, conflicts and areas of concern that arise in the program will be dealt with in a one-on-one basis. Verbal strategies as well as picture cues might be used to help children through the process. The following procedures will be followed in most incidents:

- Staff will respond to your child in a calm, verbal, non-threatening manner. The child's feelings will be acknowledged, and the child will be asked to state what the problem is, or the teacher will assist in the child communicating the problem.
- Your child will be asked what he or she can do to resolve the problem.
- The child will generate choices or work with the teacher to generate choices for problem resolution, if they are unable to come up with any ways to solve the problem.
- In a conflict involving more than one child, all parties will discuss the problem and work together to come up with a reasonable solution, by first stating feelings and acknowledging feelings.
- If it is an isolated incident, only the child involved in the incident and the classroom teacher will work to resolve the problem together.
- When this approach does not work, your child may be asked or reminded what it is he/she needs to do. If the child does not respond in an appropriate manner, then he/she will be given a choice. For example, "You may choose to sit at this table or go to the block area". Children will be asked to work with breathing techniques for example or using the classroom "safe place" to support calming techniques to resolve the conflict.
- Children are expected to respect each other's bodies, feelings, and possessions. If at any time, we feel a child is being harmful or destructive to him/herself or others, then he/she will be *immediately* removed from the situation until the situation can be dealt with in a positive and calm manner. At no time will a child be allowed to hurt self or others. Please understand that each situation is different, as is each child, and although we have a discipline policy the policy often needs to be adjusted to fit the situation and the child.
- If the problem cannot be resolved or continues on a regular basis, the classroom teacher will notify parents.

The following means of punishment shall be prohibited:

- Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, or inflicting other forms of corporal punishment.
- Restricting a child's movement by binding or tying him or her.
- Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming or threatening a child.
- Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest or necessary toilet use.
- Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box or similar cubicle.
- Placing any substances in a child's mouth, including but not limited to, soap, hot sauce, or vinegar.
- Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities.
- Excluding a child from daily learning experiences.
- Time out must not be used for children under 3 years of age.

- Non-severe and developmentally appropriate discipline or restraint may be

Suspected Abuse or Neglect

The State of Michigan requires that all members of licensed institutions be on the lookout for, and report to the State, all cases of suspected abuse or neglect of a child. The staff and other professionals who provide services to GSRP are therefore obligated by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect. All GSRP staff are mandated reporters.

Anti-Bullying Policy

It is the policy of the Montcalm County Intermediate School District and all the local school districts to provide a safe educational environment for all students. Bullying of a student at school is strictly prohibited. This policy shall be interpreted and enforced to protect all students and to equally prohibit bullying without regard to its subject matter or motivating animus.

Prohibited Conduct

Bullying of a student at school is strictly prohibited. For the purposes of this policy, “bullying” shall be defined as: Any written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication, that is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm one or more students either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following:

- Substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more students.
- Adversely affecting a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the district’s educational programs or activities by placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing substantial emotional distress.
- Having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on a student’s physical or mental health; or
- Causing substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

Each local school district as well as MAISD have policies and procedures in place to handle these situations. If you think your child is the target of bullying, please notify the classroom teacher or program administrator immediately. A complete copy of the district’s anti-bully policies and procedures are available upon request.

Parent Concerns/Grievance Procedures

If at any time you feel your child’s needs are not being met, program expectations are not being fulfilled, or you have other concerns we want to know.

1. Contact your child’s teacher and request a conference. Discuss with the teacher your concerns and expectations. Work with your teacher to help your child have a successful preschool experience.
2. Contact the building administration (principal) to find a resolution to the circumstance.
3. If you do not feel your child’s teacher has been able to find a resolution to your concern, please feel free to contact the MAISD Early Childhood Contact, Cari O’Connor, at (616) 225-6278 or at coconnor@maisd.com. Prior to this meeting, you will be asked to submit your concern in writing so Cari O’Connor may be able to understand and explore solutions to the issue. Cari O’Connor may request that the meeting include the teacher, other professionals or local school personnel who can assist in resolving the issues.
4. If steps 1, 2 and 3 have not led to a satisfactory resolution, your next contact is the Montcalm County ISD General Education Director, Cari O’Connor, at (616) 225-6278. MAISD Early Childhood Contact, Cari O’Connor may choose to set up an individual meeting with you,

review previous meetings and concern information, and/or provide additional insight into the situation via phone call, letter, or email.

5. Issues not resolved in steps 1-4, may require assistance from the MAISD Superintendent or MAISD Board of Education. They may be reached at (616) 225-6278.

Notice of Program Evaluation and Use of Child Data

All MAISD GSRP programming is required to work with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to measure the effectiveness of the statewide GSRP. Information is sometimes collected, reported, and analyzed about GSRP staff, enrolled children, and their families. Program staff or a representative from MDE might:

- Ask parents questions about their child and family.
- Observe children in the classroom.
- Measure what children know about letters, words, and numbers.
- Ask teachers how children are learning and growing.

Information from you and about your child will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child could be identified. Law protects it. If there are any questions regarding this statement, please contact a representative of GSRP at Michigan Department of Education at mdegsrp@michigan.gov or 517-373-8483.

Referral Policy for Community Service Organizations

Your child's teacher is a valuable resource to you, specifically when you need help or support medically, with mental health, getting food, finding housing, in need of clothing, etc. As you work in partnership with your child's teaching team, please communicate any of the needs listed above immediately. Your team can contact support services and refer you or help you find the supports you need. Different needs require different steps – each referral is unique. Your teaching team and the educational support available to your family will know whom to contact and how to contact the support you need. Maintaining open communication through the educational process is key to getting your family and child the care needed.

If families need assistance finding community resources in the areas of health, parent support, social/emotional health, basic needs, domestic violence, or childcare, contact the GSRP teacher for a list of local resources and a copy of the Montcalm County Resource Guide. This information can also be found on www.greatstartmontcalm.org and www.8cap.org

Community Resources and Services

- **2-1-1** Call 2-1-1 or text your zip code to 898211* <https://mi211.org/>
 - Food, shelter, utility assistance, disaster recovery, childcare, transportation, and more. Whoever you are, whatever your needs, 2-1-1 makes it easy to find help
- **Montcalm County Intermediate School District-** 621 New Street, Stanton, MI 48888 or 989-831-5261
 - A range of services and programs that include parenting support, developmental assessments, hearing, vision, and speech screenings, playgroups and Special Education programs.
- **Great Start Playgroup-** call (616) 225-6146, www.GreatStartMontcalm.org
 - Did you know that you are your child's most important teacher? Great Start Playgroup provides information on child development and parent-child interaction in a variety of ways such as written information, web-based resources, and literacy-based playgroups at the Montcalm Area Career Center in Sidney, Mt. Calvary Church in Greenville, MacNaughton Elementary in Howard City and Montabella Elementary in

Montabella. This program is open to all Montcalm County parents who have a child-aged birth through four.

- **Early On-** 618 Main Street, Stanton, MI 48888
 - Program for any birth to three aged children who demonstrates a developmental delay or established health condition that it places them at a higher risk for developmental delays. Families who have concerns regarding their child's speech, language, or development can call for a free evaluation. Serving children 0-3 years old.
 - **Birth to three Special Education-** An early childhood special education program for eligible children birth to three years and their families providing developmental assessments, home visiting, playgroups, and a parent group.
- **Great Start Readiness Program-** A preschool program for children 4 years' old who meet specific eligibility criteria.
- **Preschool Programs-** <https://greatstarttoquality.org/>
 - Most local school districts provide preschool programs for 4-year-old children and special education programs for children aged 3-5. Contact your local school district to learn more.
- **Montcalm Center Network-** 611 North State Street, Stanton, MI 48888 or (800) 377-0974 www.montcalmcare.net.
 - A range of services and programs designed to enhance and promote the mental health and well-being of individuals and families through person and family centered approaches.
 - Infant Mental Health- Services for pregnant women in their 3rd trimester and families with children birth to three that are having trouble with attachment to their mother, foster parent or exhibiting other significant behaviors.
- **Department of Health and Human Services** 609 North State Street (M-66), PO Box 278, Stanton, MI 48888
 - Food stamps, medical assistance, FIP (formerly AFDC), child day care funding, State
 - Emergency Relief for shelter and utilities, crisis prevention services, delinquency services, child foster home licensing, foster care placement, employment services, and volunteer services. Protective Services deals with child/adult abuse and neglect.
 - Please fill out the application on the DHHS website: www.michigan.gov/mdhhs
 - A range of services and programs designed to meet the basic financial, medical, and social needs of people who are unable to provide for themselves; provide skill building, opportunity enhancement, and family-focused services; and protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and endangerment.
- **Family Independence Program (FIP)-** Provides cash assistance to families in need and temporarily helps for living expenses such as shelter, heat, utilities, clothing, food and personal care items.
- **Prevention Services-** Provide assistance to families regarding housing, transportation, counseling, budgeting, and parenting skills, individual support, mentors, and education on childcare and information on any service that could help the family in their community.
- **Mid-Michigan District Health Department** 615 North State Street, Stanton, MI 48888 or 989-831-5237 <http://www.mmdhd.org>
 - WIC - Nutritional program for eligible pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and children aged five. Families receive milk, eggs, juice, cereal, and cheese. Infants receive formula, cereal, and juice. Mid-Michigan District Health Department 989-831-5237
 - Lead Screening- **Lead Screening-** Children living in dwellings with a high environmental risk for lead poisoning and who are six months to six years of age can be screened

through a blood test and environmental questionnaire. Mid-Michigan District Health Department 989-831-5237

- **Maternal Infant Health Program United Lifestyles** 616-754-6185
 - Home visiting program for pregnant women and families with infant's birth to 12 months on Medicaid. Services include public health nursing, nutrition education, and social work services regarding pregnancy related issues and infant development
- **EightCAP, Inc.** 5827 Orleans Rd; Orleans, MI 48865, 616-754-9315
 - A range of services including home visiting, playgroups, and child development programs such as Early Head Start and Head Start.
 - Emergency needs: housing, food insecurities, shut-off assistance support.
 - **Early Head Start**- Home visiting program serving pregnant women and families with children birth to three years offering playgroups, family gatherings, and support.
 - **Head Start**- A federally funded preschool program for children ages 3-5. Free to families who qualify.
- **Great Start to Quality** www.greatstartquality.org or (877) 614-7328
 - Assists parents in locating licensed childcare and provides them with information regarding what to look for in a quality childcare. For licensed childcare providers this site helps in a variety of ways including referrals to parents looking for care, training and workshops on child development, business management, quality care, etc.
- **MSU Extension**- 211 West Main Street, PO Box 308, Stanton, MI 48888 or (989) 831-7500 www.msue.msu.edu/montcalm
 - **Family Nutrition Program**- Available for low-income families offering information regarding basic nutrition, menu planning, shopping skills, recommended food safety practices, and food selection.
 - **On the Path**- Available for low-income families, a money management program that focuses on goal setting, organization, and tracking expenses.
- **RAVE (Relief after Violent Encounter)**- Montcalm/Ionia 1-800-720-SAFE (7233)
 - Offers support and individual counseling for children ages 0-18 years. Other services include legal advocacy, court accompaniment, support group, safety planning, crisis intervention, information and referral, parenting information and education, prevention services for adolescents, on-the-scene response project, temporary emergency shelter, education on the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- **Have Mercy**- www.havemercymi.org or (616) 225-8055 or info@havemercymi.org
 - Provides emergency shelter for short-term emergencies and interim housing (up to 90 days) for longer-term needs. Food is provided for those without funds. Assists with housing and employment searches and referrals to assistance programs. All assistance is based on availability of beds, units and funding.
- **Licensing and Regulatory Affairs – LARA**
 - Child Care Licensing Bureau, 611 W. Ottawa St. P.O. Box 30664, Lansing, MI 48909
 - 517-284-9730 <http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare>

Community Food Pantries

- **2-1-1** Call 2-1-1 or text your zip code to 898211* <https://mi211.org/>
 - Food, shelter, utility assistance, disaster recovery, childcare, transportation, and more. Whoever you are, whatever your needs, 2-1-1 makes it easy to find help

Community Baby and Pregnancy Baby Needs

- **Alpha Family Services of Greenville** (616) 225-2265, 705 North Hillcrest, Greenville
alphafamilyservices.org
 - All services are free and confidential:
 - Practical Parenting: Earn While You Learn; Pregnancy Test; Practical Fatherhood (for Men only); Court-ordered Parenting Classes; Ultrasounds by appointment.
- **WIC (Women, Infant, Children)**- (989) 831-5237, 615 North State Street, Stanton
- **East Montcalm Baby Pantry Ferris Church of Christ**- (989) 268-5551, 3443 North Crystal Road
- **Trinity Evangelical Free Church Baby Pantry**- (989) 831-5728, 415 North Mill Street, Stanton
 - Serves residents of Stanton

Congregate Meals

- **Heartland Community Services**– (989) 427-3100, 5365 Howard City Edmore Rd
 - Wednesday and Thursday: 10am - 4pm
- **St. Charles Catholic Church**– Greenville (616) 754-4194, 505 S Lafayette St
 - Saturday: 10:30am - 1pm
- **St. Paul’s Episcopal Church**– Greenville (616) 754-3163, 305 S Clay St
 - Tuesday: 3:30pm – 5pmEmergency

**Parent Notification of the Licensing Handbook
Child Care Organizations Act, 1973 Public Act 116
Michigan Department of Human Services**

All childcare centers must maintain a licensing notebook, which includes all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans (CAP). The notebook must include all reports issued and CAPs developed on and after May 27, 2010, until the license is closed.

This center maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans.

The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours.

Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from at least the past two years are available on the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at <https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/early-childhood-education/cclb>

I have read the above statement issued by _____.

Child (ren)'s Name(s) _____

Parent Name _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to a DHHS office in your area.

Receipt of Parent Handbook

I have received and read the contents of the _____ 2024-2025 Handbook. By signing this agreement, I understand that I am agreeing to the conditions of this handbook.

Child's Name

Parent's Signature Date

PARENTS: PLEASE DETACH THIS PAGE AND RETURN WITH YOUR CHILD HAS COMPLETED REGISTRATION