

# KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM GUIDE 2025-2026



ENGAGE • EMPOWER • EXCEL

Larry Hook, Superintendent Kim Tinsley, Assistant Superintendent Bob Buck, Director, Elementary Teaching and Learning

For more information on school operations and programs, please refer to the <u>Parent-Student Handbook for grades PK-6.</u>

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This guidebook is interactive and contains links to more information. For best viewing, view online at foresthills.edu.

#### VISION

Striving to ensure success for all students.

#### **MISSION**

The mission of Forest Hills School District is to provide educational opportunities that enable students to acquire the knowledge, skills and personal qualities necessary for responsible citizenship and lifelong learning.

#### **BELIEFS**

We believe learning . . .

- Occurs in different ways, depending on abilities, readiness, and interests.
- Takes place through research, questioning, exploring, experimenting, and problem solving.
- Requires inclusion of reading, writing, numeracy, and digital literacy in all content areas.
- Occurs by acquiring skills and knowledge, and application of what is learned to other contexts.
- Requires active and social collaboration and interaction.
- Takes place when learners are secure, valued, and able to take risks.
- Is engaging, meaningful, purposeful, and challenging.
- Includes reflection and requires learners to be responsible for their learning.

#### **KINDERGARTEN PHILOSOPHY**

The Forest Hills School District kindergarten program is shaped by the belief that all children are capable, engaged learners who thrive in a child-centered, safe environment. Students develop a curiosity and excitement for learning in a setting that promotes positive academic, social and emotional development. Forest Hills' innovative program is designed to promote discovery and choice to help students build a strong foundation for future success. The kindergarten classroom celebrates diversity and individual student contributions. Through collaboration, interaction and learning through play (purposeful play that supports learning goals), the whole child is developed. Kindergarten balances activities and instruction to develop the strengths and address the needs of each child to ensure future success.

#### **CURRICULUM**

Forest Hills School District operates six elementary schools that serve students in pre-kindergarten through grade six. The instruction emphasizes personalized learning that empowers students to grow academically, socially and emotionally. Students engage in learning experiences focused on English language arts, mathematics, health and wellness, social studies, visual and performing arts, science and technology. For detailed information on Forest Hills' curriculum, visit the <u>PK-6 curriculum web page</u>.

Forest Hills School District uses 6 Cs (six competencies) as the foundation for teaching and learning. Focus is given not only to mastering core academic content, but also to building the skill sets of the 6 Cs (communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, character, citizenship). By mastering both, students develop a keen understanding of academic content and are able to apply their knowledge to situations in education and the workforce.

Through mastery of communication, students will:

- present information in a meaningful way to a range of audiences through a variety of media
- communicate clearly and concisely in an effective and engaging manner

By developing critical thinking skills, students will:

- evaluate, filter and analyze information and arguments
- make connections and identify patterns
- problem-solve
- experiment, reflect and take action
- use information to create solutions

The ability to collaborate effectively allows students to:

- work as and with a team
- manage and be a part of a team
- team build
- benefit a community
- lead and assist

Creativity allows students to:

- express themselves
- have both structure and function
- inquire
- consider and pursue ideas and solutions
- gain purpose

By developing a strong character, students will:

- make learning a part of life
- persevere, persist and have passion
- contribute to the benefit of others
- show self-regulation and responsibility

By mastering skills of citizenship, students will:

- understand and consider global issues, diverse values and world views
- solve problems
- understand and support human and environmental sustainability



## **KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST-GRADE READINESS**

No single or simple factor determines whether a child is ready for kindergarten. Instead, kindergarten readiness considers a child's development of the knowledge, skills and behaviors that are necessary to successfully begin school and set the stage for future learning and success. There are many different skills and behaviors that a child learns during the preschool years that help him/her prepare for success in kindergarten. These skills and behaviors are directly connected to the 6 Cs (competencies, defined above).

While it is beneficial for students to develop as many of these skills as possible before entering kindergarten, teachers will work with students to develop these skills further during their kindergarten year and prepare them for the first grade.

In the same token, there are many different skills and behaviors that a child learns during the kindergarten year that help him/her prepare for success as a first-grade student. These skills and behaviors are categorized into learning domains and connect to the 6 Cs (competencies), all of which are taught and assessed in school and by no means a checklist of required skills:

	KINDERGARTEN SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS	FIRST-GRADE SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS
SKILL: Language and Literacy 6C: Communication	<ul> <li>Talking and listening to adults and other children</li> <li>Speaking audibly to express thoughts, feelings and ideas</li> <li>Retelling or answering questions about stories in sequential order</li> <li>Identifying some letters, letter sounds</li> <li>and rhyming words</li> <li>Recognizing/print their name</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Talking and listening to adults and children</li> <li>Speaking clearly</li> <li>Reading and constructing simple sentences</li> <li>Retelling stories</li> </ul>
SKILL: Mathematics 6C: Critical Thinking	<ul> <li>Counting to 20</li> <li>Comparing amounts of objects</li> <li>Understanding numbers and their value</li> <li>Sorting objects by color, shape or size</li> <li>Solving problems</li> <li>Recognizing shapes</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Developing a concept of numbers ("What is 9?")</li> <li>Counting objects accurately to 20</li> <li>Automatically counting numbers to 100 by ones and tens</li> <li>Persevering in problem-solving</li> <li>Naming and manipulating shapes within space (spacial organization)</li> </ul>
SKILL: Physical Well-Being 6C: Creativity and Character	<ul> <li>Running, jumping, climbing and playing ball</li> <li>Buttoning a shirt or zipping a jacket</li> <li>Using scissors</li> <li>Drawing</li> <li>Writing numbers and letters</li> <li>Practicing safe and healthy behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Running, jumping, climbing and playing ball</li> <li>Buttoning a shirt or zipping a jacket</li> <li>Using scissors</li> <li>Drawing</li> <li>Writing numbers and letters</li> <li>Practicing safe behaviors and self-care/personal hygiene</li> </ul>

SKILL: Scientific Thinking 6C: Critical Thinking	<ul> <li>Using senses to observe things</li> <li>Making predictions</li> <li>Asking questions</li> <li>Recognizing cause and effect</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Using senses to observe things</li> <li>Making predictions</li> <li>Asking questions</li> <li>Recognizing cause and effect</li> </ul>
SKILL: Social Foundations 6C: Collaboration and Character	<ul> <li>Getting along with others</li> <li>Following rules, routines and multi-step directions</li> <li>Recognizing and dealing with emotions appropriately</li> <li>Seeking new experiences and challenges</li> <li>Being persistent/staying on tasks</li> </ul>	Demonstrating consistent     effort/persevering
SKILL: Social Studies 6C: Citizenship	<ul> <li>Learning about self and family</li> <li>Cooperating with others, understanding</li> <li>roles and responsibilities         Decision-making/exploring the             community     </li> </ul>	• Understanding of where the self fits in the community (family, classroom, school, town/city)
SKILL: Arts 6C: Creativity and Critical Thinking	Playing, dancing and moving creatively Experimenting with different tools, props and materials	<ul> <li>Playing, dancing and moving creatively. Experimenting with different tools, props and materials</li> <li>Can break down shapes in order to create or recreate a</li> <li>picture (painting, cut/paste, drawing)</li> <li>Can use musical, artistic, and physical education materials and tools</li> </ul>

# ASSESSMENT

Assessments are a very important aspect of learning. They enhance student, parent and teacher understanding of student learning, show evidence of progress, identify students who may need additional enrichment or intervention supports, and guide instruction toward course material mastery and personal growth.

Information provided by assessments provide descriptive and timely feedback that provides a means to monitor progress, evaluate instruction, and engage students in both their own academic and personal learning.

Forest Hills believes in a balanced assessment approach that blends assessments from local, state and national perspectives and:

- begins with establishing clear goals and monitoring progress toward those goals along the way
- guides student learning and maximizes achievement for all students
- provides data with the intent of improving, measuring, and maximizing student growth
- identifies what students already know and what they need to learn

At the beginning of each school year, each kindergarten student is assessed using Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). The assessment measures each student's knowledge and abilities in six areas: social skills, language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, physical well-being and motor development. By selecting an answer to a question, performing a requested task, or being observed by the teacher, each kindergarten student is able to demonstrate what he or she knows and is able to do. For more information about the KRA, visit <u>Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for Families</u>.

Forest Hills also uses additional assessments, including the Developmental Reading Assessment® for reading and the iReady Benchmark assessment for reading, math and commonly used words. Additionally, teachers create informal assessments in their classrooms. The results of assessments and student progress is shared with parents during parent-teacher conferences and report cards after each trimester. For more information about FHSD assessments, visit the <u>PK-6 curriculum web page</u>.



#### **ACADEMIC CHOICE TIME**

Developmentally, kindergarteners need the freedom to move from task to task on their own. Forest Hills kindergarteners have this experience during Academic Choice time.

During Academic Choice time, teachers determine a goal and then provide students with a list of options to learn the lesson and reach the set goal. Students are then able to choose how they reach the goal and show what they learned. This can be done through multiple options such as learning through play (purposeful play that supports learning goals), making observations, multimedia work and more. This empowers students to be curious and creative, fosters personal learning and develops personal interests.

For example, if students were studying insects the teacher gives children choices in how to get such information, including reading a book about insects, listening to a recording about insects, interviewing someone who studies insects, or observing and recording insects' appearance and behavior. Teachers are then guiding students as needed, listening to students and asking intentional questions to highlight connections to core academic content.

To help support Academic Choice time, Forest Hills teachers intentionally design classrooms and learning environments to facilitate a multitude of experiences. To maximize the potential of all students, deliberate thought has been put into the classroom design to effectively create a personalized environment. To foster new digital-age skills such as literacy, collaboration and problem solving, Forest Hills classrooms

also provide student choice in learning space and furniture to support discovery and meaningful learning.

Areas may be set up for students to make observations, talk about what they see, write and draw what they see, and ask questions to find out more. Classrooms have "cave" areas where students can think, reflect and transform learning. Classrooms also have "campfire" areas where students gather together to learn. Finally, classrooms have "watering holes" where peers can share information and discoveries, acting as both learner and teacher simultaneously.

Academic Choice gives children many opportunities to learn from one another. It also provides ways for children to discover shared interests and become more invested in learning. In the process, students become more collaborative, cooperative, and develop friendly relationships with classmates.

#### SOURCES:

- "Purposeful Play: A Teacher's Guide to Igniting Deep and Joyful Learning Across the Day", Kristine Mraz, 2016.
- "Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14: A Resource for Parents and Teachers", Chip Wood, 1996.
- "Learning Through Academic Choice", Paula Denton, 2005.
- *"From the Campfire to the Holodeck: Creating Changing and Powerful 21st Century Learning Environments", David Thornburg, 2013.*



# **DIGITAL LITERACY**

Digital learning is learning that is facilitated by technology and provides students with an element of control over how and when they learn. In kindergarten, technology is an essential part of preparing students for success as it provides the freedom for students to learn outside of the school day and allows students to personalize the pace and path of their learning.

To that end, all Forest Hills classrooms are equipped with one iPad for every four students to help students develop digital literacy skills. In kindergarten, students use technology to obtain information, show evidence of their learning, share ideas and information, and engage in self expression. For example, in math classes, kindergarten students use technology to help problem-solve and show

understanding of numbers. In language arts classes, students use technology to learn reading strategies and evaluate both fiction and nonfiction texts.

Technology also helps teachers gain a better sense of what students know and are able to do.

#### **KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION**

Forest Hills has had a staggered start for kindergarten students to help them transition to the school environment. Each year, students participate in kindergarten assessments by appointment in August/early September. Then, during the first days of school each year, small groups of each kindergarten class will attend school each day to help students better acclimate to the school environment. After those days, all kindergarten students will then report to school together. Teachers will notify parents of their child's starting date and time.

# **SCHEDULE**

- Morning Kindergarten:
- Afternoon Kindergarten:
- All-Day Kindergarten and Grades 1-6:

Children should not arrive earlier than 9:05 a.m. The school cannot be responsible for students who arrive before 9:05 a.m.

Detailed Schedule		ALL-DAY	HALF-DAY
	Morning Meeting Morning meeting starts the day by engaging students and building a strong sense of community. Students and teachers greet each other, participate in sharing and group activities, and discuss a theme for the day. Morning meeting helps students experience success both socially and academically.	20 min	15 min
	Literacy Workshop Research shows a direct relationship between the amount of reading and reading achievement. Forest Hills believes students who are skilled in reading, critical thinking and communication will thrive in college and careers. Literacy workshop helps begin to build these skills and meet the state standards in English Language Arts by allowing students to progress through various activities in learning stations. Learn more.	130 min	75 min
	<b>Recess</b> <i>Students play inside or outside, depending on weather,</i> <i>under adult supervision.</i>	20 min	10 min
Lunch Students may bring then for more information)	ir lunch to school or buy lunch each day. (See page 13	30 min	n/a
	Specials "Specials" are classes that expand a student's learning through subjects that students may have a special interest or talent in. Specials help students discover their talents and additional areas for learning and development in the future. FHSD offers arts (music, visual art, theatre), physical education and media (technology) to kindergarten students. <u>Learn more.</u>	45 min	n/a

HIRT DOP	Mathematics Workshop Learning mathematics involves a variety of skills, processes and understandings. Forest Hills' math instruction emphasizes both math concepts and procedures through reflection, explanation and justification. Math workshop helps begin to build these skills and meet the state standards in Mathematics by allowing students to progress through various activities in learning stations. <u>Learn more.</u>	60 min	45 min
	Academic Choice Time / Content During Academic Choice time, teachers determine a goal and then provide students with a list of options to learn the lesson and reach the set goal. Students are then able to choose how they reach the goal and show what they learned. This empowers students to be curious and creative, fosters personal learning and develops personal interests. Read more on page 7.	45 min	10 min
<b>Recess 2</b> Students play inside or	outside, depending on weather, under adult supervision.	15 min	n/a
	hment time provides opportunities for students to work groups and/or one-on-one to support learning and	20 min	n/a
Closing		5 min	5 min

# **DIVERSE LEARNERS**

In order to meet the diverse needs, Forest Hills communicates high expectations for the success of all students and a belief that all students can succeed. The educators in Forest Hills are personally committed to achieving equity for all students and believe they are capable of making a difference in their students' learning. Our teachers explicitly teach students the culture of the school and seek to maintain students' sense of identity. We value the implementation of innovative, research-based strategies that recognize the benefits of diversity to build a strong future for our students.

Forest Hills uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as a framework for providing high quality instruction and intervention matched to student needs using student learning data to inform instructional decisions. This framework is referred to as Response to Intervention (RtI) and is depicted as a three-tiered framework that uses increasingly more intensive instruction and interventions matched to meet a student's needs both academically and behaviorally. Learn more.

#### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Kindergarten teachers plan instruction for a wide range of learners. When a student has an identified disability, the student's academic support team will design a specialized plan, called an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), to support the child academically while accommodating the identified disability. Learn more about identification, evaluations, disabilities and processes.

#### **GIFTED EDUCATION**

Forest Hills offers a wide variety of learning options so that each student's individual needs are met through programs and services that are matched with their abilities. One such service is Extended Learning Opportunities (gifted education), which adjusts the pace and rigor of instruction to provide an appropriate level of challenge for a student.

To help meet the needs of gifted students, Forest Hills teachers in all grades receive ongoing professional development regarding gifted student services and consult with Gifted Intervention Specialists (GIS), a teacher with a special license who works to help provide services to gifted students.

Together, GIS and classroom teachers provide services and enrichment opportunities to students who are identified as superior cognitive (generally intellectually gifted), gifted in reading, gifted in math or gifted in social studies. Enrichment opportunities maximize learning and individual student development by stimulating individual interests, developing critical thinking skills, encouraging participation, fostering curiosity and empowering students to own their learning.

In kindergarten through grade three, students who are identified as superior cognitive (generally intellectually gifted), or gifted in math, or gifted in reading receive gifted services from their classroom teacher in the general education classroom.

For additional information, visit the FHSD gifted web page.



#### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Literacy development is a primary focus of instruction in kindergarten. ESL teachers use a variety of instructional models to provide language instruction. ESL teachers may use pull-out, push-in or co-teaching to deliver English language instruction. The ESL teacher consults regularly with the students' other teachers to help with learning in all subject areas.

For additional information, visit the <u>Forest Hills diverse learners web page</u> or refer to the <u>Ohio Department of Education and Workforce resources</u>.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Frequently asked questions about kindergarten programs are below, but are not all encompassing. For more information, visit <u>foresthills.edu</u> or refer to the <u>Grades PK-6 Student-Parent Handbook</u>.

#### How old does my child need to be to enroll in the kindergarten program?

Students must be five-year-old on or before August 1 of the given school year to enroll in kindergarten.

#### What is the law for kindergarten?

Currently, Ohio law states that school districts must provide tuition-free, half-day kindergarten for all who request it. Forest Hills also offers a tuition-based, all-day kindergarten program for families. Families choose which option is best for their child and family at the time of registration.

#### How can I learn more about the curriculum in kindergarten?

Please see page 3 in this program guide or visit the PK-6 curriculum and instruction web page.

#### Should my child attend all-day or half-day kindergarten?

Every child is unique and has a different personality, learning behavior and skill set. Therefore, the decision on which kindergarten program to enroll a child is a parental and personal decision, based on the unique needs and situations for each child. There is no wrong answer and both programs meet the same curricular goals. Parents may want to consider the readiness information in this packet and the age of their child; students must be five years-old on or before August 1 of the given school year to enroll in kindergarten.

#### What is tuition for all-day kindergarten? Can it be paid in installments?

The tuition for all-day kindergarten is \$3,255. Tuition can be paid in a lump sum at the beginning of the school year or in monthly or quarterly installments. <u>Payments will be made online</u>.

#### Why is tuition charged for all-day kindergarten?

The 2014 bond issue allows for additional classroom space to accommodate the gradual implementation of all day kindergarten. However, money from bond issues can only be used for facilities, not operational expenses. Therefore, tuition would offset the additional operating costs and defer operating costs from taxpayers. Providing tuition-free, all-day kindergarten would cost the district approximately \$1 million.

The half-day program will not have a cost associated with it as the state of Ohio provides partial funding for half-day programs. FHSD does not receive additional funding from the state of Ohio for all-day kindergarten (the additional half-day of kindergarten to make it all-day).

Parents will now have a choice of either half-day or all-day kindergarten, with transportation provided for both programs.

#### Do other districts charge for all-day kindergarten?

Yes. Many districts throughout the area and state have a tuition associated with all-day kindergarten to offset the additional cost to taxpayers. (For example, Loveland Schools: \$3,465; Milford Schools: \$3,600; Sycamore Community Schools: \$3,750; Wyoming City Schools: \$3,500)

#### Is financial assistance available for the all-day option?

Yes. Financial assistance will be available to those who qualify.

Children in households receiving benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Ohio Works First (OWF) benefits can <u>receive free school meals regardless of income</u>. Children can also receive free meals if the household's gross income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Guidelines. <u>For more information, visit the Food Service web page</u>.

#### How does lunch work?

Students have a combined lunch and recess time. At the beginning of each day, students inform their teacher if they are buying lunch or if they brought a lunch to school. If a child is buying lunch, parents will add money to the student's account online via the district website. School staff will assist students in buying lunch. There are several adults in the cafeteria to help with opening lunch items, if needed. Children in households receiving benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Ohio Works First (OWF) benefits can receive free school meals regardless of income. Children can also receive free meals if the household's gross income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Guidelines. For more information, visit the Food Service web page.

#### Are there additional fees associated with the kindergarten program?

Both all-day and half-day kindergarten programs have academic fees (currently \$125) for academic materials and technology. The all-day program requires a \$87 deposit (check) at the time of registration, which is applied to tuition.

#### How will the all-day and half-day kindergarten registration process work?

Parents and legal guardians of students begin the <u>student registration process online</u>. Once a parent completes the online registration process, they should upload required registration documents (see below). Families choose which program option (all-day or half day) is best for their child and family at the time of registration. While it is not the preferred option, there may be a need for the district to transport students out of their attendance zones in order to balance all-day kindergarten class sizes.

#### Required Registration Documents:

- parent/guardian driver's license
- official birth certificate
- custody papers (if applicable)
- proof of residence (mortgage, deed, rental/lease agreement)
- ETR/IEP/504 reports/documents (if applicable)
- \$87 deposit (check) for all-day program (if applicable) made to: FHSD Memo: Child's Name/School Building

**How will I know if my child is assigned to morning or afternoon half-day kindergarten class?** Students are assigned to morning or afternoon classes according to their street address for transportation purposes. Parents are urged to share special circumstances with the school principal. For more information, call the <u>FHSD</u> <u>Transportation Department</u> at (513) 231-3335.

#### How many students are in a kindergarten class?

While Forest Hills' goal is to have approximately 19 students per kindergarten class, adjustments may be made based on enrollment.

#### Do kindergarten students attend school on the first day?

To help students transition to the school environment, Forest Hills has a staggered start for kindergarten students. Teachers will notify parents of their child's starting date and time.

#### What supplies do I need to buy?

Supply lists are posted each summer at https://www.foresthills.edu/resources/pk-6/

#### How can I be involved in my child's school?

There are many different ways to get involved in FHSD! Volunteer information will be communicated through school newsletters. Learn more at <a href="https://www.foresthills.edu/get-involved/volunteer/">https://www.foresthills.edu/get-involved/volunteer/</a>

#### Are there before- and after-school care options?

The local YMCA operates a before- and after-school program, paid for by parents who utilize the program. For costs and additional information, parents should call the M.E. Lyons YMCA at 474-1400. In the event that school is closed, before- and after-school care is also closed.

#### Will transportation be provided for my kindergarten student? Yes.

The district provides transportation for all students who live more than one mile from school. While it is not the preferred option, there may be a need for the district to transport students out of their home school attendance zone in order to balance all-day kindergarten class sizes. Current transportation routes are available at

https://www.foresthills.edu/departments/transportation/bus-routes/ Please note: routes are subject to change.

#### If I suspect that my child has a special need, who should I contact?

Parents who suspect their child has a special need should contact Student Services at (513) 231-3600.

# Will everyone who wants to be in all-day kindergarten be able to enroll?

It is believed that all students will be placed in their preferred kindergarten option. FHSD will know more once students begin to enroll. While is not the preferred option, there may be a need for the district to transport students out of their attendance zones in order to balance all-day kindergarten class sizes.

# DIRECTORY

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#### SUMMIT ELEMENTARY \* 8400 Northport Drive, Cincinnati, Ohio 45255

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#### TRANSPORTATION \* 7600 Forest Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45255

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# WILSON ELEMENTARY \* 2465 Little Dry Run, Cincinnati, Ohio 45244

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