



Early Childhood Program
Parent & Student Handbook
2024-2025

Program Mission Statement:

To provide developmentally appropriate programming designed to support all students in reaching their individual potential in the physical, social, academic, emotional and language domains through a partnership with family, community and school.

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WHAT IS THE SPECTRUM PROGRAM?

Spectrum Early Childhood is an at-risk preschool for all program which is grant funded by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The program was developed for three-to-five year old children who have a wide variety of abilities and needs. As a grant funded program, Spectrum is at no cost to the parent. The first priority in awarding placement must be given to students who have been identified as being at risk of academic failure. At-risk children are those who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to language, cultural, economic, and like disadvantages. Our classrooms serve students using a blended classroom model consisting of students with disabilities and students without disabilities. The program is committed to meeting the individual needs of each child and to providing maximum opportunities for preschool-aged children to grow and learn together.

Our program serves children throughout eight school districts within Champaign County. We currently have classrooms in three locations: St. Joseph Grade School (serves St. Joseph, Heritage and Prairieview Ogden students), Thomasboro Grade School (serves Gifford, Thomasboro, Ludlow and Fisher students), and Unity East Elementary.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SPECTRUM PROGRAM

CHILDREN: Each child enrolled in the Spectrum Program is an individual with unique strengths, talents, and needs. Each child is given respect and support in order to become the most independent, responsible, and capable person he/she can. The educational program promotes the development of the "whole" child, including growth in the areas of physical and emotional development, language, cognitive, social skills, and creativity.

CLASSROOM: Children benefit from a learning environment that is predictable, accepting, stimulating, and developmentally appropriate. The Spectrum Program is both age-appropriate and individually appropriate; specifically, it is designed for the

age group served (preschoolers) and it is implemented with attention given to the needs and abilities of the individual children enrolled.

INTEGRATION: The Spectrum Program integrates disabled and non-disabled preschool students in its classrooms so that all children may benefit from opportunities to work and play with peers who have a wide range of abilities, interests, talents, learning styles, special needs, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. The classrooms are structured to help children get along with others, learn from each other, and make friends.

FAMILIES: The family is recognized as the child's primary teacher and decision-maker. The Spectrum Program becomes a partner in these roles by providing information and assisting parents in developing an effective, consistent environment both at home and school. A child's home is his/her most significant and influential environment during the early years. Therefore, one of the primary goals of Spectrum is to establish rapport with parents and to facilitate good communication of ideas and information between home and school.

When indicated, the Spectrum Program will also provide the child and his/her family with links to resources outside of school in an effort to promote maximum growth of the child and his/her family.

STAFF: The staff in each classroom operates as a team. The child is the reason for the team's existence, and therefore, the focus of the team's efforts. Each team may include an Early Childhood Teacher that has an endorsement in Special Education, Teaching Assistant, Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, School Social Worker and School Psychologist. Each child's individual needs will dictate which members are directly involved in his/her program.

Communication is essential for the effective operation of each classroom team. Members of the team are expected to exchange information and observations. Team members carefully guard the child's/family's right to confidentiality. Information is given only to members of the team.

EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

Creative Curriculum

The Creative Curriculum System 5th edition is used as the framework for the classrooms in the Spectrum Early Childhood Program. The philosophy behind this curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. In their early years, children explore the world around them by using all their senses. The curriculum identifies goals in all areas of development. These include:

Social- to help children feel comfortable in school, make friends, and feel a part of the group.

Emotional- to help children develop independence, self-control, self-confidence; and to develop a positive attitude toward life.

Cognitive- to let children try out their own ideas and experience success; help them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.

Physical- to help children increase their large and small muscle skills; and to feel confident about what their bodies can do.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The staff at Spectrum is excited to see new faces, as well as the faces of students returning for another year in our program. The first day of school can be both scary and exciting for students and parents, so please try to talk about beginning school with your child to help prepare him/her for their big day.

Teachers will supply each child with a notebook that will be solely for the purpose of parent/teacher correspondence. Please note any concerns, problems or messages in the notebook, as the teacher will check notebooks daily. It is important that you check your child's notebook daily for messages from his/her teacher.

You may also call the Spectrum teachers' office to discuss any concerns or issues with your child's teacher. The best time to reach the teacher is between sessions from 11:00am-12:00pm or after 2:30pm at 217-469-2291 ext. 1155 for St. Joseph teacher's office, 217-643-3275 for the Thomasboro classroom, or 217-684-5218 for the Unity classrooms.

WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD WEAR?

Students encounter a dirty/messy situation nearly every day that school is in session. Children are encouraged to finger paint, play in sand, climb, ride tricycles, etc. Smocks are provided when engaging in "messy" activities, but sometimes they manage to evade even our best efforts to protect their clothing. Due to such activities, we ask that you dress your child in play clothes each day, not dressy clothes.

Because children play actively on the playground, they should wear tennis shoes or similar play shoes, not sandals, flip flops, or cowboy boots. Sandals and flip flops are unsafe on the climbers and become quite uncomfortable.

During winter months it is very important that each child has boots, mittens/ gloves, hat, and scarf. We spend thirty minutes outside each day unless the wind chill factor is below 25 degrees. We also go outside during the warmer months unless the temperature is above 90 degrees.

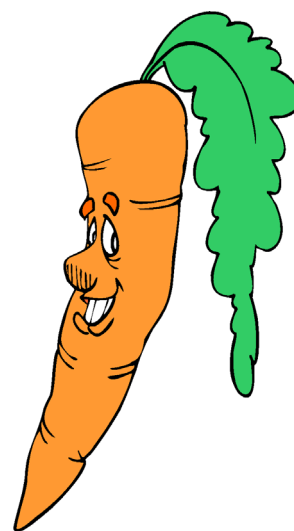
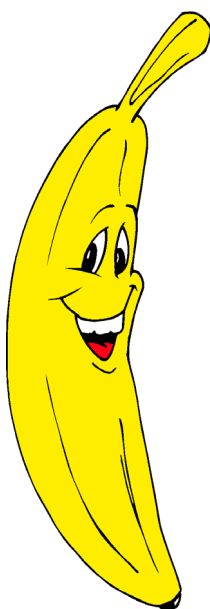
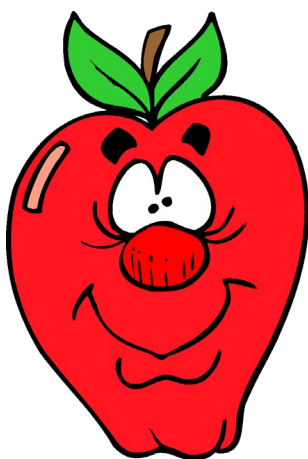
If your child moves or exits the program for any reason, it is your responsibility to pick up his/her clothes from the school. All clothing that is not picked up within a week will be added to the community use box for children who need a change of clothing.



SNACK

Each day the children have a simple snack about midway through their school session. Snack is an important time to socialize, learn self-help skills, table manners, and to give the children an opportunity to see and taste new foods. Nutritious snacks are served daily.

Birthdays can be celebrated at school by sending or bringing a special treat to share in addition to the snack time. Please contact the teacher a few days in advance to make arrangements. **We can only accept commercially prepared snacks.** Please do not send any snacks that have been prepared at home or the teacher will be unable to serve that snack to the class due to some children having various food allergies and to also follow state guidelines.



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to and from school is provided by the local school district or their designee. Therefore, if a question or problem arises concerning your child's transportation to and from the Spectrum classroom, **please contact your local school transportation department supervisor from your district to discuss your situation. Important telephone numbers are listed on the final page of this handbook.**

An adult meets each bus and the children are escorted to the building with constant adult supervision. At dismissal time, adults again escort children to the waiting bus. The children are usually loaded onto the buses by dismissal times so the buses can make connections with regular routes in the local districts. Your child will be picked up and dropped off at one designated location. Unfortunately, the driver's schedule does not allow for alterations in the route. Please arrange for an alternate method of transportation if your child is not going to be picked up or dropped off at the designated location. Please remember that notes from the parent or telephone calls to the driver asking to alter the bus route will not be accepted.

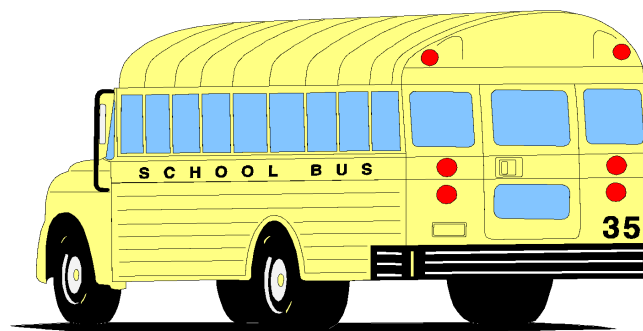
It is our policy that an adult must meet the bus when putting a child on or taking a child off of the bus. The driver has to see a familiar adult before he/she can release the child off the bus. Do not assume that the driver knows you are home because the door is open; make your presence known to the driver. There are no exceptions to this rule; however, if you have a disability that does not permit you to meet the bus, please make alternate plans with the transportation department for your school district. If you are not at home when the bus delivers your child, one more attempt to deliver your child will be made. After the second attempt is made and still no one is available to receive the child, the child will be brought back to the school. Phone calls will be made to all contacts on the Emergency List. The Police will be called if Spectrum staff cannot reach you or anyone on the Emergency List.

Children will be released to their parent(s) or to the regular bus or car pool driver only, unless we have your prior written consent to release him/her to other individuals. If someone other than the people indicated on your child's enrollment

form will be picking him/her up from school, please send a note to the teacher and the bus driver to let them know of this arrangement. Please **DO NOT** send a verbal message via your child or car pool driver because the message may not reach the teacher. The person picking up your child will be asked to produce a photo identification card if he/she is unfamiliar to the staff.

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the child is picked up if he/she is not going to the specified address and must be done before the loading of the buses or the child will be put onto the bus to be taken to the designated location. The teachers have many responsibilities between classes and after school and therefore cannot supervise children after the school day ends. It is not the responsibility for the staff to remain after school to watch your child. As always, we understand that emergencies do occur. You **MUST** call the Spectrum office to say why you will not arrive on time and your estimated time of arrival.

It is extremely important to give updated phone numbers and addresses to the Spectrum office, your child's teacher, and transportation in order for us to keep the lines of communication open.

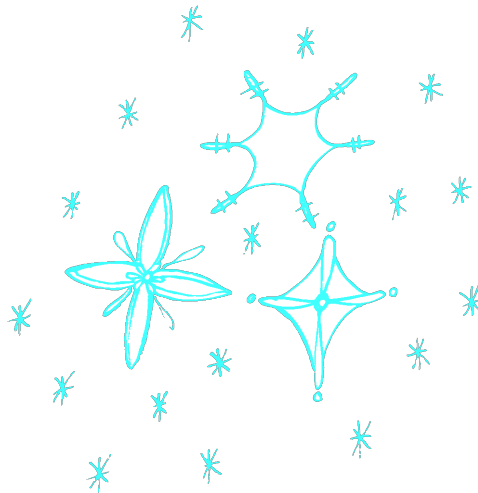


SNOW DAYS

If more snow days are used than allotted in the calendar, either e-learning will be implemented or days will be added to the end of the school year. This decision will be communicated via a Blackboard Connect message. Parents will be notified of any official change in the school year calendar when the individual districts make their decisions.

Spectrum classes will operate under a **similar but not exact** calendar as the school in which the classes are located. For those who are bussed to rural Champaign County School Districts other than your home District, a general "rule of thumb" is that if your local District is closed for the day, they will not be bussing Spectrum students. Please watch the local television stations to see whether or not your local district will be in session. Occasionally, a local School District will be open but they will not provide out-of-town transportation; therefore, your child will not be bussed to Spectrum class that day. It is very important that parents monitor school closing announcements on days with threatening weather. A Blackboard Connect message will also be sent out to the families of the effected districts.

If the weather worsens during the day, please continue to monitor for school closing information. This is particularly important for afternoon children. If you have any doubt, feel free to call the school. If school is dismissed early because of the weather, a Blackboard Connect message will be sent out to the families.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As mentioned before, the parent(s) is recognized as the child's primary educator and mentor. One of the focuses of the Spectrum Program is to join with parents to form a strong, reliable team, in order to provide each child with the strongest education possible. There are many ways for parents to take part in your child's school program. We hope that you will become involved in as many ways as possible. Here are a few of the possibilities:

- Meetings with Spectrum staff members
- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Participating during parties (e.g., holidays, birthdays)
- Accompanying your child's field trips
- Reading stories, playing games, or sharing snacks with the class
- Helping with art projects
- Attending Parent Involvement Night (typically held twice a year)

We hope that every parent will have the opportunity to visit his/her child's classroom on at least one occasion. Remember all visitors must check in at the school office before going to the classroom.

COMMUNICATION

It is imperative that our staff maintain regular contact with parents of Spectrum preschoolers. Therefore, staff will be scheduling parent-teacher conferences throughout the year in order to share observations, lend materials of interest to the child and his/her parent(s), and to discuss issues of mutual concern to the parent(s) and staff, as well as to update you on your child's progress.

The services provided by Spectrum are individualized according to the needs of each child. Information and suggestions provided by parents are valuable to our staff members, as they design instruction for the children. The staff meets on a regular basis to review student progress and to make necessary adaptations/adjustments in programming to maximize each child's potential.

In order to keep the lines of communication open, it is imperative that we have updated contact information. If there is ever an address change or a phone number change, you must inform the teacher and the transportation office.

MANDATED REPORTER GUIDELINES

Illinois law (Public Act 94-0888) made significant changes to reporting requirements under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA), which imposes mandatory reporting obligations on individuals whose work involves the care and welfare of children. First, the definition of "school personnel" in the law was clarified to specifically include "administrators and both certified and non-certified school employees" as mandated reporters. Thus, almost any individual who is employed by a school or school district is required to report suspected child abuse to the DCFS Hotline.

Possible physical indicators of child abuse are:

1) Physical Abuse

Unexplained bruises and welts

- on face, lips, mouth
- torso, back, buttocks, thighs
- in various stages of healing

- clustered, forming rectangular patterns reflecting shape of article used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle)
- on several different surface areas
- regularly appear after an absence, weekend, or vacation
- teeth marks

Unexplained burns

- cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back, or buttocks
- immersion burns (sock like, glove-like, doughnut shaped on buttocks or on genitals)
- patterns like electric burner, iron, etc.
- infected burns, indicating delay in seeking treatment

Unexplained fractures/dislocations

- to skull, nose, facial structure
- in various stages of healing
- multiple or spiral fractures

2) Sexual Abuse

- difficulty in walking or sitting
- torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- pain, swelling or itching in the genital area
- pain in urination
- bruises, bleeding or lacerations in external genitalia, or anal areas
- vaginal/penile discharge

3) Neglect: Denial of Critical Care

Denial of Physical Needs

- underweight, poor growth pattern (e.g., small in stature, failure to thrive)
- consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress
- consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods
- wasting of subcutaneous tissues
- unattended physical problems or medical needs
- abandonment
- abdominal distention

Denial of Emotional Needs

- lags in physical, socio-emotional or intellectual development

- failure to thrive
- shallow, empty facial appearance

ITEMS THAT SHOULD NOT BE BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

- **money** is to be left at home
- **weapons** such as guns—real or “look-alike”, knives, or other objects that could be used as or intended for use as an instrument to inflict injury on another
- **other items** including (but not limited to) matches, medications, pills, lighters, tools, or similar items

BEHAVIOR

It is expected for the children to behave appropriately at school. While we expect some behaviors that are typical of three and four year olds, behaviors that are threatening to that of the other children and/or staff will not be tolerated. The staff will try their hardest to redirect the children or provide a break away from the situation if redirection does not work. It is helpful to have appropriate discussions with your child about the appropriate behaviors while at school.

ACCIDENTS

In case of an accident that does not require medical attention, the teacher or other staff members will apply the appropriate first aid treatment and notify the parent(s) as needed.

If medical attention is required, the staff will immediately notify the parent(s) or other persons indicated by the parent in case of emergency. Together, they will decide what to do. If we are unable to contact the parent or emergency person(s) indicated on the child's enrollment card, 911 will be called and the medical technicians will determine the next course of action.

Staff will continue attempting to contact parent(s) or designated emergency contact during the situation.

SPECTRUM ATTENDANCE POLICY

Spectrum continues to have an increasing number of students waiting for the opportunity to attend our Program. Chronic unexcused absences prevents others from being able to participate and also interferes with student success. It is understood that children will be sick and emergencies will arise, but regular attendance is required as a condition of continued placement.

If your child is sick or will miss class for any reason, you must report this to the bus and the school. The phone numbers needed to do so are listed on the final page of this handbook. Simply call the bus and school, give your child's name, and let them know he/she will not be attending on that day due to illness/emergency.

Any child who does not maintain regular attendance and does not contact the teachers will be dropped from the Spectrum Program at the discretion of the program administrator. Exceptions will be made for pre-planned vacations, with prior notification and dependent on your child's attendance history.

Please understand this policy is in place to ensure proper maintenance of the program, as well as to allow children who will benefit from Spectrum the opportunity to attend. Thank you for helping us give your child the best education possible.

ADMINISTERING MEDICATION TO STUDENTS

The Spectrum Early Childhood Program desires to provide a learning environment for all students, including students who must receive periodic medication. Therefore, school personnel are authorized to administer medication under controlled conditions.

Only prescribed medication will be administered at school. The school will limit the medication it will dispense to situations where failure to take prescribed medication could jeopardize the student's health and/or education, where it is not possible for a parent to administer the medication, or when the medication cannot be prescribed in doses scheduled before and after school hours.

1. Parents' help and consideration is essential for the safety of children who must receive medication while at school.
2. Please talk with your physician about scheduling medication to avoid school hours whenever possible.
3. Please fill out the attached School Medication Authorization Form carefully and fully.
4. The doctor must sign a form giving permission to the staff to administer the medication.
5. A separate form is required for each medication.
6. Bring in the prescription medication in the original container labeled by the pharmacy.
7. Do not ask staff members to give over-the-counter medications "as needed". It will not be allowed under any circumstances.

At the beginning of the school day, all medication to be administered by the school is to be brought in to the school office where it will be kept. When prescription medicine is to be administered by the school, it must be in a labeled bottle from the pharmacy or physician showing the name of the child, the dosage and the schedule of administration, what the prescription contains, the date purchased, and the physician's name.

ILLNESS

In order to protect the health of his/her classmates, keep your child home if he/she has one or more of the following symptoms:

- a fever of 100°F or higher in the past 24 hours
- persistent cough
- spraying sneezes that your child does not cover
- diarrhea or vomiting within the last 24 hours

- complaints of stomachache or headache for more than a few hours
- any contagious childhood diseases (including lice)

If your child is not well enough after an illness to play outside for a short period of time during the school session, please keep him/her home another day until recovery is complete. Since the entire classroom staff is needed to supervise outside play, there is no one available to supervise your child indoors.

If your child has an illness or other medical condition that is contagious (measles, chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, etc.) it is very important that you tell the teacher as soon as the condition is diagnosed. We will alert parents of other children in your child's room or on his/her bus to be watching for symptoms.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Parents should examine their child every morning before sending him/her to school to see if he/she shows any symptoms that may indicate the onset of a contagious disease. Some symptoms that may alert you to an oncoming illness are: red, watering, mattery eyes, otherwise known as pink eye; nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea; sore throat; earache or drainage from the ear; rash; fever of 100.0 degrees or higher; persistent runny nose, coughing or sneezing; nits or live lice. It is advised that you consult with your child's physician prior to sending your child to school should he/she experience any of the above symptoms.

The requirements for re-admission to school after a contagious disease are listed below. These requirements are subject to change by the State Department of Public Health. If you have questions concerning these or other requirements, you may contact the Spectrum Program Coordinator.

Fever	A child should not be sent to school if he/she has an oral temperature of 100.0 degrees or greater. He/she may return to school when the fever has ceased for 24 hours without the use of medication.
Pink Eye	Your child may return to school 24 hours after he/she begins medication.
Impetigo	May attend school under a doctor's care
Ringworm	May attend school under a doctor's care
Mumps	Excluded 9 days and until all swelling is gone

Chicken Pox	Excluded 8 days after eruption
Scabies	May attend after being treated for 24 hours with effective insecticide, all family members are treated with the insecticide, and clothing and bedding are laundered
Viral Rash	Excluded until under a doctor's care
Whooping Cough	Excluded three weeks and all whooping and vomiting have ceased
Rubella (3-day Measles)	Excluded until rash and all symptoms are gone
Head Lice	When a student is identified with live head lice, the student will be sent home and can return when the child is free of live lice or nits. The student needs to be brought in by the parents and will be checked to make sure the student is lice free. If free from lice, the student may resume riding the school bus. All students in the class will be checked as well.
Rubella (Red Measles)	Excluded 7 days and until rash and all symptoms are gone
Scarlet Fever/ Strep Infection	May attend 24 hours after antibiotic treatment is started and rash and symptoms are gone

Any child who becomes ill at school must be picked up by a parent or designated adult unless the school office receives specific instruction from the parent of what to do otherwise with the child.

SPECTRUM PROGRAM MEDICATION POLICY

SCHOOL MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM

Student's Name: _____ Birthdate: _____

Address: _____ Home Phone: _____

School: _____ Teacher: _____

Emergency Phone Number: _____

To be completed by the student's physician or parent:

Name of Medication: _____

Dosage: _____

Duration of Administration: _____

Type and Nature of Illness: _____

Possible Side Effects: _____

Does this medication have to be administered during school hours in order to allow the student to attend school or to address the student's medical condition?

Doctor's Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

I hereby confirm my primary responsibility to administer medication to my child. However, in the event that I am unable to do so, I hereby authorize the Spectrum Program and its employees and agents, in my behalf and stead, to administer or to attempt to administer to my child (or to allow my child to self-administer, while under the supervision of the employees and agents of the Spectrum Program), lawfully prescribed medication in the manner described above. I further acknowledge and agree that, when the lawfully prescribed medication is so

administered or attempted to be administered, I waive any claims I might have against the Spectrum Program, its employees, and agents arising out of the administration of said medication. In addition, I agree to hold harmless and indemnify the Spectrum Program, its employees and agents, either jointly or severally, from and against any and all claims, damages, causes of action, or injuries incurred or resulting from the administration or attempts at administration of said medication. I understand that my child is responsible for going to the office or other designated place at the appropriate time for the medication and that the school may contact the physician if there are problems regarding this medication.

Parent Name: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____

TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

School Telephone Numbers

Thomasboro G.S. 217-643-3275
 St. Joseph G.S. 217-469-2291
 Unity East Elem. 217-684-5218

Bus Numbers

Gifford 217-568-7733
 Fisher 217-897-1809
 Heritage 217-896-2421
 St. Joseph 217-469-2291
 Prairieview-Ogden 217-583-3300

Unit 7 First Student 217-903-4013

If your child will be absent for the day, it is your responsibility to contact the appropriate bus number above and let them know. When calling the bus, please report that your child attends the Spectrum program and will not need transportation that day. You will also need to provide your child's name and the session that your child attends. The contact person will then notify the bus driver. You must also call your child's school to report him/her absent.

If there is going to be a change in pick up or drop off information for your child, you must notify both the school and the district before it will take effect. Please allow at least two days to get the route set up with the new location. You may request a new bus information form from your child's teacher to fill out when any information changes. Also, to add or remove a person authorized to receive your child from the bus you must follow the same procedure as above.