

Rush-Henrietta Central School District



Universal Prekindergarten Family Handbook

2024-2025



Welcome to UPK!

Thank you for enrolling your child in the Rush-Henrietta Central School District's Universal Prekindergarten Program! We are happy to welcome you and your child as a part of our school community! We are looking forward to working with you, as we provide a wonderful year for your preschooler.

UPK is a free program funded by New York State grants. We offer full-day (6 hours) classes at seven locations and a half-day class (2.5 hours) at one site within the Rush-Henrietta Central School District. Classes take place Monday through Friday, five days a week, following the Rush-Henrietta school district calendar. Some locations offer before and after wrap care for a fee. Please contact your UPK site for more information.

This family handbook should be helpful in answering some of your questions about the UPK program. We encourage you to become familiar with it. When you have a question that is not covered in this handbook, please contact your child's teacher, UPK site director or the UPK office. We will do our best to answer your questions and help you to learn more about our program.

Universal Prekindergarten is a very important first step in your child's educational journey. Children are eager to learn, discover ideas, tackle challenges and develop relationships with peers. Our district offers a high quality, developmentally appropriate play-based program. Exploring the world through spontaneous activity, play, planned lessons and guided experiences allows for the development of language, literacy, communication, numeracy, cooperation, and problem solving.

Our classrooms are 'center based' with theme related activities in learning centers designed to encourage children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. Children are active learners with a focus on purposeful play. We have designed our program to give every child the opportunity to participate in shared and independent learning experiences. These experiences include reading, math, science, art, construction, transportation, sensory, imaginative play, and much, much more!

Eligibility

To be eligible for UPK, a child must be turning 4 years old on or before December 1, 2024, and must be a resident of the Rush-Henrietta Central School District. A child who is eligible to attend kindergarten is not eligible to attend UPK.

Please note: Your child will not be able to continue in the Rush-Henrietta UPK Program if you move out of the Rush-Henrietta Central School District during the school year.

Students living in the following situations have certain protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act:

- Housing that is not fixed, regular AND adequate;
- A shelter, emergency, or transitional housing;
- In a motel, hotel, trailer park, or campgrounds due to lack of other housing;
- In a car, park, public space, abandoned building, or bus/train station: or

Please contact the UPK office for more information.



Curriculum

The Universal Prekindergarten program is a developmentally appropriate, child-centered educational program placing an emphasis on early literacy and early numeracy skills. The program is designed to offer four-year-olds daily instruction that increases awareness and competence in five domains derived from the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core:

- Approaches to Learning
- Physical Development and Health
- Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Cognition and Knowledge of the World (Math, Science, Social Studies, Arts, Technology)

Our UPK classrooms offer a caring, active, play-based learning environment that is rich with adult-child interactions. Our daily instruction provides natural opportunities for children to learn readiness skills, exercise their curiosity and imaginations, and strengthen their ability to work well with others. A balanced schedule of teacher-initiated and student-initiated activities ensure that your child has an opportunity to grow academically, socially and emotionally. Teachers will guide your child in whole group, small group and individual settings.

Play is a very important part of the UPK day. Through play, children explore and construct understandings about the world, build comprehension skills, expand vocabulary and language development and grow socially through interactions with peers and adults.

Foundations: The Foundations literacy program focuses on phonemic awareness activities, letter recognition, phonics, and studying syllable types and affixes as a part of the decoding process. At the preschool level, skills practiced include letter-sound knowledge, forming key linkages between letter names, formations and sounds, alphabetic order, and letter formation/handwriting.

Eureka Math: The Eureka Math program is a comprehensive, standards-based PK-12 mathematics resource that offers a balanced approach to teaching and learning mathematics. The goal of the program is to develop students who are not merely fluent in math but math literate, in that they not only know what process to use to solve a problem but that they have a deep understanding of why the process works. *Eureka Math* uses manipulatives, visual models, conceptual language, and real-world situations to help students build deep mathematical understanding.

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support Program (PBIS): In UPK, children learn and practice what it means to be respectful, responsible, and ready to learn.

Screenings/Assessment

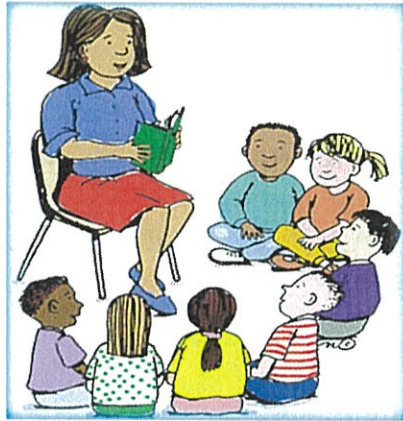
New York State regulations require all new students to be screened with a developmental learning tool. The Rush-Henrietta UPK program utilizes the Brigance Early Childhood Screen III. This early screening inventory looks at cognitive development, motor development, and language and literacy skills. Students can be screened prior to the beginning of the school year or within 30 days of their start date in UPK. The screening is completed by UPK staff and is conducted through play-based, hands-on activities. Data from this screening helps the district identify any students who may require additional services or supports.

All Rush-Henrietta UPK classrooms use a formative assessment called the Work Sampling System to measure a child's progress in seven domains of learning. Teachers assess children throughout the year evaluating growth and skills learned. The data is used to plan class lessons and activities as well as develop individualized instruction. Progress reports generated from this assessment are shared with families twice a year (fall and spring).

Parents are asked to complete the Brigance Self-help and Social-Emotional Scale for their child in the early fall. This information helps us monitor children's social and emotional development. It includes questions about how your child regulates their behavior, how they express feelings and how they communicate with others as well as self-help skill areas.

Parent-teacher conferences occur in November (please refer to the district calendar for dates). Parents are encouraged to request a conference with teachers at any time throughout the school year if needed.

We are committed to creating and maintaining positive relationships with families. If you have questions about what goes on in your child's classroom, please contact the teacher or the director at your child's UPK location.



Program Requirements

Parental Involvement

Family involvement is an essential component of Rush-Henrietta's UPK program. Parents are their child's most important teacher, and we look forward to working with you! Forming a cooperative relationship with your child's teacher offers important opportunities for communication. Regularly participating in the opportunities provided for family engagement is required to maintain your child's enrollment in the program.

Family engagement opportunities include:

- attending Rush-Henrietta parenting programs (available monthly at each site)
- volunteering in your child's classroom
- exploring take-home literacy kits with your child
- participating in family fun nights provided by the Rush-Henrietta Family Center
- attending parent-teacher conferences
- completing parent surveys
- field trips

Transportation

Parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from UPK daily. It is important to arrive **on time** so children benefit from the total learning experience. **Please do not drop your child off early or pick them up late.** Late arrivals and early departures disrupt a child's learning. Consistent tardiness could result in dismissal from the program. Some UPK locations offer before and after care for a fee. Please contact your child's UPK site for more information. There is no bus transportation for the UPK program.

Meals

All sites/classes provide a daily healthy snack. Full day programs offer a 30 minute lunch period daily. UPK classes at the daycare sites provide meals. Other sites ask that children bring a packed lunch daily. Please check with your UPK site directly with questions relating to meals.

Rest time

Full-day UPK includes a daily rest time for students. During this time, students will have the option to rest, nap or read quietly on their designated rest mat. A typical rest time lasts about 45 minutes; however, the length of rest time may vary depending on the ages and changing needs of the students over the course of the year.

Attendance

UPK classes are in session five days per week, Monday through Friday, and follow the Rush-Henrietta Central School District calendar. Attendance is taken daily, including when a student is late or is picked up early. **Daily attendance is expected, with the exception of illness.** Please ensure that your child comes to school every day and on time every day. This helps to establish routine. Children thrive on structure, want to be a part of the group and need to know what to expect each day.

WHEN SHOULD I KEEP MY CHILD HOME?

When your child is sick, please keep your child home. It is imperative that you contact your UPK site or message your child's teacher prior to the start of the school day to explain the absence.

When a student arrives at school ill, it is necessary for us to call parents or emergency contacts for the child to be picked up. Please do not send your child to school with signs of illness.

You should keep your child home when he/she:

- has a fever of 100 degrees or higher (must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours).
- has vomited in the last 24 hours.
- has had diarrhea in the last 24 hours.
- has a runny nose that requires a great deal of management time.
- is too tired to engage in usual activities.
- has a rash that is in various stages.
- has one or both eyes that are red, watery, or draining.

Please consult the calendar provided by your UPK site for information on school holidays, breaks, etc.

Extended Absences

Removing your child from school for an extended period (20 days or more) is strongly discouraged. Parents/guardians must notify the R-H UPK coordinator in writing at least two weeks in advance if their child will have an extended absence. We reserve the right to fill their spot with a student from our waiting list; returning to the program is not guaranteed.

Chronic Lateness

We want to ensure that your child has the opportunity to succeed in UPK and be ready for kindergarten. Late arrivals result in lost learning time for your child and are disruptive to the class. Frequent late arrivals and early departures are counted as unexcused absences. Fifteen unexcused absences or episodes of tardiness can jeopardize your child's placement in the UPK program.

Preschool Special Education

Children who have an IEP and receive preschool special education services including: speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy or a special education itinerant teacher (SEIT), are able to receive these services within their UPK classroom/environment. Teachers will have access to the IEP goals.

If you have questions regarding how to get your child evaluated for preschool special education services, please contact the office for the district's Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) who can assist you with completing the referral process. Debbie Wood can be reached at 585-359-7920.

Code of Conduct/ Classroom Management





The preschool period is a critical time for children to learn to control their thoughts, feelings, attention, impulses, and behavior. They are learning how to get along with others and how to be a friend. Children are not born with these skills. Parents, teachers and caregivers must teach social and emotional skills just as they teach washing hands or learning colors and shapes. We know that when children are given the opportunities and support to develop (learn, practice, discuss, etc.) self-control and other social and emotional skills, it gives them the foundation needed for academic and life success.

UPK classrooms provide a safe and nurturing environment to support your child's development as they grow. We focus on promoting positive behavior in all of our classrooms. To create safer, more caring learning environments, Rush-Henrietta has implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, more commonly known as PBIS. PBIS works by identifying, monitoring, teaching, and reinforcing these districtwide expectations:

- Be responsible
- Be respectful
- Be trustworthy
- Be caring
- Be ready to learn

In UPK, we focus on three expectations: be respectful, responsible and ready to learn. On the next page, you will find a copy of our matrix, which outlines the expectations.

Show Your UPK Pride

Be Respectful	Be Kind	
Responsibility	Make Good Choices	 
Ready to Learn	Give Me 5 (full body listener)	

All staff will demonstrate positive redirection and reteach expectations of classroom behavior. When a child is demonstrating excessive disruptive behavior or potentially harmful behavior, we will work with families to address the behaviors and support the child within the best of our abilities. Disruptive or harmful behavior includes:

- Throwing objects such as blocks, toys, chairs
- Use of foul language
- Any behavior that could result in physical harm of another child, teacher or staff member
- Escape behavior: running from classroom or attempting to exit classroom or building unattended

A parent/guardian conference to discuss behavior concerns and plan of support may be required for a child to continue to participate in the program. Rush-Henrietta UPK program reserves the right to withdraw a participant from the program if all methods of support have been exhausted and/or demonstration of extreme behavior that may put participants or staff in danger exists.

Health and Wellness

Requirements

As required by New York State Education Department, an up-to-date immunization record and documentation of a physical exam is required for your child. The district nurse practitioner will review the immunization records of all students enrolled in the UPK program to ensure compliance with NYS regulations. Your child will not be able to attend the UPK program until this requirement is satisfied. We cannot grant an exception to this requirement.

Allergies

If a child has specific allergies, please let your child's teacher know and submit any necessary documentation (action plans) and medication (clearly labeled with your child's name) to the UPK office at your UPK site.

Safety Drills

To ensure the safety of students and staff, emergency fire drills will be practiced throughout the year. During a fire drill, students/staff are evacuated from the building and gathered on school grounds until they are directed to return into the building. Lockout, Lockdown and Hold-in-place procedures are also practiced during the year. For more information regarding safety procedures, please contact your site director.

What to bring to school

Please bring the following items with your child on the first day and replenish as needed.

- Regular sized back pack (no wheels, please)
- One full set of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, socks)
- Water bottle



***Please discourage children from bringing toys or special items to school unless specified by the teacher.**

School Dress

Please dress your child in play clothes (that can get dirty) and sneakers. They will be playing inside, using the gym and playing outside on the playground daily. Your child will be painting, creating and exploring sensory materials that may sometimes get messy! Comfortable shoes are essential. Please provide a complete change of clothes (including underwear and socks) at your child's school. All clothing should be clearly marked with your child's name. If your child's clothing is sent home, please send a new change of clothing promptly.

Photographs/Video for Publication

During the school year, photographs or videos may be taken of students for district or site use. If you do not want your child to be photographed or filmed, please submit a request in writing to the classroom teacher.

Emergency School Closings

In the case of inclement weather, when the K-12 buildings are closed, the UPK classes at all sites are also closed. Families will receive an automated phone call from the superintendent of schools informing them of the decision. Closing information will also be available on the district website at www.rhnet.org, and shared with local television and radio stations. If school is delayed for the morning, the AM class will be cancelled for the day.

Reporting child abuse and maltreatment

State law requires early childhood education professionals to report any suspicion of child abuse/or maltreatment to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. If concerns are brought to our attention, we will carefully assess her situation before making a report to the register.

Location of Rush-Henrietta UPK classrooms

Rush-Henrietta Central School District UPK classrooms are located at eight locations throughout the district:

Augustin Children's Center

3399 Winton Road South, Rochester, NY 14623

Phone: (585) 334-6000

Care-A-Lot Child Care Inc.

395 John Street, Rochester, NY 14623

Phone: (585) 292-4880

Expressive Beginnings Child Care

875 Commons Way, Rochester, NY 14623

Phone: (585) 340-2077

Good Shepherd Building

3288 East Henrietta Road, Henrietta, NY 14467

Phone: (585) 359-7913

Pride & Joy

55 Finn Road, Henrietta, NY 14467

Phone: (585) 321-1151

Richard M. Guon Child Care Center at MCC

1000 East Henrietta Road, Rochester, NY 14623

Phone: (585) 292-2640

Rush Nursery School

50 Ward Hill Road, Henrietta, NY 14467

Phone: (585) 334-0664

Town of Henrietta Recreation Center

605 Calkins Road, Henrietta, NY 14467

Phone: (585) 359-7051

Important Contact Information

The Rush-Henrietta Universal Prekindergarten office is located at the Good Shepherd building: 3288 East Henrietta Road, Henrietta, NY 14467.

R-H UPK Coordinator

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R-H Family Liaison

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R-H Parent Liaisons

Betsy Marshall

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Caroline Nevil

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R-H Office of Special Education

Deborah Wood

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Additional information regarding the UPK program can be found on the district website at

<https://www.rhnet.org/Page/501>



