

STEM SCHOOL HIGHLANDS RANCH KINDERGARTEN QUICK START PARENT GUIDE

Welcome Students and Parents.
Here is a guide to help you prepare for kindergarten.

Mission

Never Stop Innovating

Vision

We envision a world of exponential possibilities where every child develops the innate knowledge, skills, creativity and character to thrive, lead and succeed in an ever-changing future.

Formula for Character

Honesty, Integrity, Empathy, Respect, Responsibility

Kindergarten Team

Mrs. Thatcher, Ms. Murillo, Ms. Brozka, and Ms. Sanchez

Daily Schedule

The kindergarten classes all start at 7:40am with morning announcements followed by the Classroom Meeting/Community Time. Students arriving after 7:40 are marked tardy.

7:30am-7:40am	Soft Start
7:40am-8:45am	Morning Routines/Classroom Community Time/SS
8:45am - 9:30am	Specials
9:30-9:45	Recess
9:45-10:25	Math Centers
10:25-11:10	Lunch/Recess
11:10-12:30	Literacy Centers
12:30-1:00	Writing
1:00-1:30	Science/Engineering
1:30-1:45	Recess
1:45-2:15	Choice/Clean-up/ Closing

Instructional Assistants

Having your student attend STEM school Highlands Ranch means that not only does your student get an excellent teacher, but your student also receives a dedicated instructional assistant for their classroom. Our instructional assistants will be in the classroom all day helping to enhance your student's learning with additional small group instruction opportunities that would otherwise be impossible. The instructional assistants will remain with the students throughout the day both in the classroom and on the playground, with the exception of specials.

Clothing

Other than the standard dress code for STEM, there are some broader suggestions for school clothing for your kindergarten student. The playground is equipped with monkey bars, rock wall, climbing ladders and slides all on a mulch area surrounded by black top and artificial turf. Although there is no requirement for closed toed shoes in the dress code, it may not be safe for students to wear flip flop sandals or open toed shoes while enjoying the playground and its equipment. It will be to the discretion of the instructional assistants or teachers on recess duty as to whether or not your students clothing or footwear could be a potential threat to their safety on the equipment. Also, please make sure that your student has appropriate outerwear for the day's weather. During winter months, warm coats, gloves, hats and boots will be necessary to enjoy their recesses outdoors. When there is snow on the ground, students will not be allowed to walk in snowy areas without wearing snow boots.

Back-up Clothing

It is imperative that you send back-up clothing to school with your child. This clothing will be kept in the classroom, labeled with your child's name. Even if you and your child are confident in their bathroom abilities, accidents still happen! Whether they have a potty accident, get soaked drinking at the water fountain, spill their lunch on themselves or a friend or fall in the snow, there are so many ways a kindergartener can get themselves wet or dirty at school. It makes your child feel more comfortable, if in one of these circumstances, they have their own clothes to wear. Clothing bags should consist of a shirt, pants, underwear and socks appropriate for the weather. As weather changes, it might be necessary to swap out a short sleeved shirt or shorts/leggings for long sleeved and long pants. Keep this in mind as your student might be cold come December in their back up yoga pants or cargo shorts!

Backpacks

Students should bring a zippered backpack to school each day. Backpacks are needed to carry several items to and from school each day safely. Backpacks should be large enough to carry the student's lunch container, 2 snacks, yellow folder and supplies.

Water Bottles (Students are required to bring a water bottle daily during Covid)

Students should bring a water bottle (preferably reusable) to school with them each week. Students will leave their water bottle in the "Hydration Station" in the classroom and take home for cleaning. Having water bottles accessible to students in the classroom is essential to keeping students hydrated and able to focus, It also allows for minimal disruption to the classroom and your students learning.

Yellow Folders

Each day, your student will bring home their yellow folder. This folder will contain any work your student has completed that day, a monthly calendar to track important days as well as your students behavior and informational flyers or forms to be read and/or returned to school. We encourage your student to be responsible for making sure that their folder is shared with you, emptied and returned to their backpack nightly. This will ensure that you are kept up to date on your child's progress at school as well as all important dates coming up. The calendar should remain in the folder until the end of the month as a point of reference and possible communication.

Lunch

Your student may bring a packed lunch from home or choose to have a hot lunch provided from Nutrition Services. Make sure your child has an appropriate amount of food to be consumed in the allotted time for lunch as well as any and all utensils your student will need to consume their lunch, ie: spoons, forks, napkins. Students may bring food to be warmed up in the microwaves by an instructional assistant. Instructional assistants are also available to assist your student with opening their lunch items. Please keep in mind the lunch period lasts approximately 20 minutes. Water, eating utensils, napkins and condiments are available in the cafeteria for students. If your student needs assistance with heating up food, opening lunch items and getting utensils etc, it greatly cuts into the time they are allotted for consuming their lunch. Keep this in mind when packing your student's lunch. Emphasis should be made in getting your student to be able to independently open lunch/bento boxes, plastic food containers, straws, plastic and foil packaging/shrink wrap etc.

Lunch Numbers

When ordering a hot lunch from Nutrition Services, your student will be required to enter a six digit “lunch number” into a typical 10-key number pad. This “lunch number” is in fact your students DCSD (Douglas County School District) student ID number. This number will follow your student to any school they attend within DCSD. Home practice is encouraged and can be done on most computer keyboards or adding machines. Instructional assistants are also available to assist your student with entering their lunch numbers, however emphasis should be made to have your student be able to complete this task independently in time.

Snacks

Students will have the opportunity to enjoy snacks each day at their snack recess, It is encouraged that you send your student with at least two snacks and that they are nutritional in value. It is very hard to concentrate and learn at school when hungry. If your student will be enjoying a hot lunch from DCSD Nutrition Services, you should still send your student in with (2) snacks per day. Emphasis from both teachers and instructional assistants, will be put on eating snacks first and then playing when done. Snacks may not be shared between students due to possible food allergies.

Recess

Weather permitting, students will have the opportunity to enjoy outdoor recess times. These recesses will be approximately 15-20 minutes long. Students will have an opportunity to get some fresh air and enjoy their snack before getting in some outdoor play time. Lunch recess will be an additional 20 minutes of time to play.

Use of Technology

Technology will be utilized in the classroom on a daily basis. Technology will be used in many ways, such as teaching coding and research activities with the assistance of the classroom teacher and instructional assistants. It will also be used to facilitate independent and small group activities or lessons throughout the day. Students will be instructed on proper use and care of our school technology resources. Basic understanding of using apps and navigating websites will help your student in using technology in the classroom and getting the most of this valuable classroom resource. Examples of technology used in the classroom are iPads, Dash, Dot and Sphero robots and Osmo. These technologies will be used by your student over many subjects including math, literacy, science and engineering. Some apps we use in Kindergarten

include: Raz-Kids; OSMO, Starfall Learn to Read, Starfall, ABC, Tynker, Scratch Jr, iReady, and ABCya.

Literacy Rotations

Every day students will take part in Literacy Rotations (Centers). They will vary from time to time usually consisting of teacher assisted centers and independent or student driven centers.

Meet With Teacher

During the Meet with Teacher center, students will meet in small groups grouped by similar reading level. Students will read the books from their book buddy bags with the assistance of the teacher. Groups may engage in games or phonics lessons with the instruction of the classroom teacher.

Osmo Osmo Words is an app based game where students work on phonics. Students are made to use clues to sound out words in order to identify an object on the screen. Students will work in groups of two or more to solve for the unknown letter sound or word.

Listen to Reading

At the Listen to Reading center students will independently read digital books or do letter sound or phonics activities on tablets in various apps. When reading the digital books within the app, they will not only read but they will answer questions to prove comprehension of the text. They will first listen to the book being read, then they will read the book themselves, and finally they will answer five comprehension questions about the story. Books included in the app are both fiction and non-fiction.

Library

At the Library center, students will read traditional books independently. They will have access to a wide range of books both fiction and non-fiction in the classroom library. Expectation is that students will have their voices off and read the books silently to themselves, just like in your neighborhood Library. Students will be taught and are expected to keep books organized and be gentle with them.

Word Work

In the Word Work center, students will either work independently on skill based phonics activities or collaborate in games or activities as a small group. This will vary day by day depending on the phonics topics to be covered and the overall skill levels of students.

Writing

During this center the focus will be on handwriting and guided writing. New kindergarten students will come with varying degrees of writing knowledge and skill. Instruction will be made to support proper letter writing and letter directionality in both upper and lower case letters. Students will also be instructed on proper pencil grip and proper use of lined paper.

Poetry

During Poetry center, students will read the poem as a group, analyze the poem and its meaning as well as looking for rhyming words, snap (sight) words, alliteration, digraphs and consonant blends.

Math

During Math centers, students will engage in three separate centers. One will be lesson/skill driven and instructed by the classroom teacher. The students will also have a center where they will complete an activity reinforcing the skills taught by the classroom Teacher. This center will be instructed by the instructional assistant in the classroom. Lastly, students will have an independent center where they will work individually or in small groups on a skill based task or game further reinforcing math skills and/or number sense.

Writing

Each day, students will illustrate and write in their writing journal. The method taught is to first draw a picture; then, add labels to the picture; next, write about their picture; and last, they color and add details. Students will develop skills throughout the year starting with basic letter writing and directionality, gradually working towards writing full sentences using lowercase and capital letters appropriately, proper word spacing and necessary punctuation. Students will learn several styles of writing including informative, how-to and persuasive.

Science and Engineering

Students will have Science and Engineering time; learning will be done in many different ways, including whole group instruction as well as small group or individual projects.

Students are taught basic scientific inquiry and will plan out and construct various engineering challenges. Students will learn about the weather, plants, motion and forces, animals and life cycles to name a few.

Social Studies

Social Studies topics vary from understanding communities to understanding emotions. Students are usually given instruction in a whole group setting with opportunities to break out into small groups for role playing and/or collaboration.

Specials Rotations

Students at STEM are given the opportunity to engage in learning Music, Art, Physical Education and Chinese language and culture. These specials classes rotate each week.

Toys

Toys from home are not allowed to be brought to school unless specifically allowed by the classroom Teacher for show and tell or as a reward for good behavior. This is not only to ensure your students are not distracted during learning time, but to also ensure that the toys will not be lost or broken at school. If toys from home are brought to school and become an issue, the Teacher may have to take the toy and hold it until the end of the day.

Volunteering (This will resume after Covid vaccine is available)

Volunteering in the classroom is a great way to help the teacher and to be involved and informed of what your student is learning in the classroom. There are limited opportunities to volunteer in the classroom so please remember to allow other parents to sign up for volunteer opportunities as well. Many times, your student's teacher will plan a special activity for you to do with the class during your scheduled volunteer time. If for some reason you cannot make it for a scheduled volunteer time, please remember to be courteous and give the classroom teacher sufficient notice. This will ensure that they may have time to prepare an alternate lesson for the class.

Bathroom Expectations

It is very important that your student be able to independently use the bathroom when at school. Students are expected to behave appropriately in the bathroom. It is expected that the bathroom is treated like a place to "do business," you go, flush, wash and leave. Talking and playing in the bathroom is not tolerated.

Hygiene

Teaching the basics of proper personal hygiene is important. This keeps students healthy and clean. This is important for students to practice good hygiene, in particular washing hands. Students will spend so much of their time in close contact with each other in the classroom sharing everything from pencils, chairs, tables and germs.

- 1. Hand washing** - It is the most important hygiene habit to teach. It is especially important to do after playing outside, before eating food and after using the bathroom. Hand washing without a doubt is the best way to prevent the spread of germs. Students might need to be reminded to not “splash and dash”, running their hands under water for mere seconds without soap and call it done. Another thing students often do is put soap on their hands and then immediately rinse off without any scrubbing or lathering. Make sure students know to first wet their hands and then apply soap. Next, lather for 20 seconds making sure to rub all parts of the hand including in between fingers (best way to count would be to sing the ABC’s song) and then rinse. Then, dry hands using a paper towel. Lastly, after students have washed their hands, they may use their paper towel to open the bathroom door, ensuring that their clean hands remain clean.
- 2. Covering sneezes and coughs** - Germs can travel far and wide through sneezing or coughing. Teach students to cover their mouth by using a tissue or coughing or sneezing into their elbow while turning away from others.
- 3. Blowing noses** - Many students come to kindergarten not knowing how to blow their noses. Nose picking is an easy way to spread germs. In case a child feels they have dry mucus irritating their nose and they want to get it out, the best way would be to make a finger ghost. What that means is you cover your finger with a tissue. Once they do that they can use that finger to clean their nose. Every time they clean their nose encourage them to clean their hands either with hand sanitizer or with soap and water.