

Mitcho
Early Childhood Center



Parent Handbook
2026-2027



Table of Contents

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page Numbers</u>
<u>School Information</u>	3
<u>Welcome</u>	3 - 4
<u>Philosophy</u>	4 - 5
<u>School Day & Hours</u>	5 - 6
<u>Emergency School Closing Information</u>	6
<u>Absenteeism and Tardiness</u>	6 - 8
<u>Curriculum and Instruction</u>	8 - 9
<u>Report Cards and Student Grades</u>	10
<u>Drop-Off Procedures</u>	10 - 11
<u>Dismissal Procedures</u>	11 - 12
<u>Visitor Protocol, Parent Meeting Requests, and Student Item Drop-Off</u>	12 - 13
<u>School Security and Drills</u>	13 - 14
<u>Breakfast Program and Lunch</u>	14
<u>Bulldog PRIDE Character Education Program</u>	14 - 17
<u>Rodgers Bulldog Character Education Award</u>	17
<u>Guidance & Anti-Bullying</u>	17 - 18
<u>Back to School Night</u>	18
<u>Parent/Teacher Conferences</u>	18 - 19
<u>School Supplies</u>	19 - 20
<u>School Dress Code</u>	20
<u>Valuables</u>	20
<u>Playground</u>	20
<u>Celebrations</u>	21
<u>Water Bottles</u>	21
<u>Toileting, Changing Diapers, and Soiled Clothing</u>	21
<u>Medications</u>	22
<u>Illness Policy</u>	22
<u>Vaccinations</u>	22
<u>Glassboro PTO</u>	23
<u>Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)</u>	23
<u>Pre-K Parent Workshops</u>	23
<u>Multicultural Meeting</u>	24
<u>J. Harvey Rodgers School Accomplishments</u>	24 - 25
<u>Questions/Concerns & School Contacts</u>	26



School Information

Address: James Hall is 445 North Campus Drive, Glassboro, NJ 08028

Phone Number: 856-649-6780

District Website: www.gpsd.us

School Website: <https://www.gpsd.us/o/res>

Welcome

I hope you are enjoying a relaxing and memorable summer with your loved ones. As we prepare to embark on another exciting year of learning and growth, the Rodgers family is proud to welcome you. Whether you are returning to J. Harvey Rodgers School or joining us for the first time, we are thrilled to have you as part of our school community.

Our Early Childhood Center serves approximately 300 preschool and kindergarten students and reflects the rich diversity of the Glassboro community. Our staff works collaboratively to support the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of our youngest learners through engaging, developmentally appropriate instruction. We are proud of the nurturing, inclusive environment we have created, one that helps children thrive both in and out of the classroom.

Rodgers is not only a place of learning but also a place of pride. Over the past several years, our school has been recognized at the state and national levels for its dedication to character development and inclusive education. Some of our recent accolades include:

- 2025 National School of Character (one of 71 schools nationwide, designation held for five years)
- 2025 State School of Character (one of 22 schools in New Jersey, designation held for five years)
- 2023-2026 Character.org Promising Practice Winner
- 2024-2025 National Publication Feature in Character.org's *Growing Goodness* (one of 12 schools nationwide, featured on pages 26 and 27)
- 2024-2025 State Demonstration Site for Highly Inclusive Practices (one of three schools in New Jersey)
- 2024-2025 Grow NJ Kids 4-Star Rating (one of six schools in Gloucester County)
- 2024 Honorable Mention School of Character

Last fall, our community approved a Bond Referendum for many improvements across the Glassboro School District, including several upgrades specific to J. Harvey Rodgers School. These include enhanced security features, roofing upgrades, a new drop-off loop with additional parking, and the construction of nine new preschool classrooms. Currently, our school serves less than 50 percent of eligible three- and four-year-old children in Glassboro. With these additional classrooms, we will be able to meet the state's recommendation of providing free, high-quality preschool to more than 90 percent of eligible children in our community.

Family involvement is an important part of our school culture. We encourage you to connect with us through our active PTO, the Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Multicultural Committee, and our Preschool Parent Workshops. These opportunities provide meaningful ways to engage, share feedback, and support your child's learning journey.



To help ensure your child has a fantastic start to the school year, we have prepared this Parent Handbook with essential information about our programs, expectations, and school procedures. Throughout the year, we will share important updates using the Apptegy communication system. Please make sure your contact information in PowerSchool is current so you receive all district phone calls, emails, and text messages.

Dr. Toni Giordano is serving as the Site Supervisor at the Mitcho Early Childhood Center. If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions at any time, please do not hesitate to call or email us. We believe in strong partnerships between home and school and are here to support your child every step of the way. I look forward to a successful school year and to seeing you at our Back to School Night on Wednesday, September 30th.

Warm regards,

Karen Carino

Principal, J. Harvey Rodgers School

For more details about our school and district, please visit the [J. Harvey Rodgers School website](#) or follow us on Facebook at [@JHRodgersglassboronj](#). Thank you for being an essential part of our school community!

Philosophy

At the Mitcho Early Childhood Center, we believe in the transformative power of education, grounded in the values of inclusion, diversity, and equity. Our mission is to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment where children of all abilities and backgrounds can learn, grow, and thrive together.

Our dedicated educators are committed to delivering high-quality early childhood education that meets each child's individual needs while fostering a culture of empathy, understanding, and acceptance. We value, respect, and celebrate the unique strengths and abilities of every student.

Inclusion is not simply a goal at Mitcho Early Childhood Center; it is the guiding principle that shapes everything we do. We work in partnership with families, educators, and community members to ensure every child feels safe, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Our program is developmentally appropriate and designed to meet the needs of the age group we serve, with a focus on honoring individual differences. The curriculum reflects students' developmental levels, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and prior experiences, and provides meaningful hands-on learning opportunities.

Student progress is assessed three times each year. These assessments guide instruction, help us evaluate growth, and allow us to adjust our teaching strategies to best support student learning.



We believe school should be a positive and joyful experience for every child. Feeling safe, encouraged, and cared for is essential to their success. To promote this, we have established clear behavioral expectations that create a supportive school environment. At this stage of development, it is vital to teach appropriate school behaviors with the support of parents. Our approach is positive and proactive, incorporating the Teaching Pyramid Model through our P.A.W.S. (Positive Adults Working with Students) program and the Bulldog PRIDE initiative, which highlights Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Dependability, and Empathy.

We are confident that you and your child will have a meaningful and rewarding experience at Mitcho Early Childhood Center. We encourage you to take part in the many opportunities for family involvement and to enjoy your child's early school years. Please feel free to ask questions or share suggestions for school improvement at any time.

School Day & Hours

- PreK
 - Students attend school from Monday through Friday, from 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM. Drop-off is available between 8:15 AM and 8:30 AM.
- Early Dismissal
 - There are several early dismissal dates scheduled throughout the school year. On these days, students will attend school from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM. We will serve breakfast and lunch on early dismissal days. It is crucial for parents to arrange for someone to be available at the bus stop or to pick up their children from school during these times.
 - 2026-2027 Early Dismissal Dates
 - November 25th
 - Winter Conferences: December 1st to December 4th
 - December 23rd
 - February 12th
 - Spring Conferences: March 9th to March 12th
 - May 28th
 - June 14th to June 18th
- Delayed Opening
 - Delayed opening days are scheduled throughout the year to provide our staff with professional development opportunities. Additionally, inclement weather may result in a late arrival, and any changes will be communicated by the Superintendent. On these days, students will attend school from 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM. We do serve breakfast and lunch on these days. Drop-off is available between 10:15 AM and 10:30 AM.
 - 2026-2027 Delayed Opening Dates
 - November 16th
 - January 15th
 - April 16th
- District In-Service
 - There are several district in-service days that allow our staff time for professional development. School will be closed to all students on these days.



- 2026-2027 District In-Service Dates
 - September 1st
 - September 2nd
 - October 9th
 - May 17th

Emergency School Closing Information

The district aims to ensure parents are informed promptly in the event of changes to the school schedule due to weather or emergencies.

- **School Closures:** Decisions regarding school closures or delayed openings are made as early as possible based on weather and safety conditions. Because the Mitcho Early Childhood Center is located on the Rowan University campus, the center will not operate if Rowan University is closed, even if Glassboro Public Schools remains open. Families will be notified directly of any closure or schedule change impacting the Mitcho Early Childhood Center.
- **Early Dismissals:** Rare but if they occur, decisions are typically made by 10:00 AM.
- **Notification Methods:**
 - District Website: Updates will be posted here.
 - Phone Recording & Email: A message will be sent to all families via Apptegy.

Absenteeism and Tardiness

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential for your child's academic success and the development of positive lifelong habits. Children should attend school every day unless they are ill. If your child has a fever, chills, sore throat, severe cough, earache, or other symptoms of illness, they should remain at home. Students must be fever-free without the use of medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

We encourage families to plan vacations during scheduled school breaks. Frequent absences can negatively affect academic progress and may result in retention or legal action for truancy.

Reporting Absences:

- Call the Mitcho Early Childhood Center at 856-649-6780 to report an absence.
- If we do not receive a call, the school nurse or secretary may contact you.
- Upon your child's return, provide a written note to the teacher explaining the reason for the absence.
- Documentation must be submitted within five days of returning to school, or the absence will be marked "unexcused."
- For absences of three or more consecutive days, a doctor's note may be required. Please note that a doctor's note does not automatically excuse the absence.

Excused Absences Include:

- Illnesses verified by a doctor's note



- Certified hospital stays
- Bedside instruction
- Approved religious holidays (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14)
- School-approved reasons (e.g., legal appointments, field trips, suspensions, death in the family) with proper documentation

Attendance Policy

The Mitcho Early Childhood Center follows all New Jersey Department of Education attendance requirements. State law (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25) mandates that all children between the ages of 6 and 16 attend school. While education before age six is not compulsory, once a child is enrolled, they are expected to meet the same attendance standards. Attendance also impacts state funding.

After ten absences, a mandatory conference with the Principal will be scheduled. For students age six and older, truancy paperwork may be filed with the Municipal Court if attendance concerns persist.

Punctuality

Students should arrive at school by 8:30 AM. Any student arriving after this time will be marked tardy, unless the delay is due to a GPSD bus. Students present for less than four hours will be marked absent. Chronic tardiness disrupts learning and classroom routines, so we ask that parents make every effort to ensure their child arrives on time each day.

Absence Threshold	Attendance Letter	Action
5	Y	Parent notification - letter mailed by principal
8	Y	Parent notification - letter mailed by principal
10	Y	Phone call to parent from the principal. A meeting may also be requested in person. • Development of attendance plan with guidance (Kindergarten) or our Community Parent Involvement Specialist (Preschool). • Truancy charges will be filed if a student's attendance does not improve. The truancy officer will be provided with all documentation that demonstrates the district's efforts to resolve the attendance issue. • DCP&P may be notified if the parent does not comply with the attendance plan that is developed. • Retention is possible if the student's attendance does not improve (per board policy N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6(a)4 and Regulation 5200).

In addition to the aforementioned protocols, the following procedures will apply to preschool students when a parent or guardian cannot be reached for up to 10 consecutive days:

- After 2 days of no contact: A phone call will be made to the home.



- After 4 days of no contact: A home visit will be conducted by building staff or the district truancy officer.
- After 10 days of no contact: There may be a possibility of removal from the preschool program. In such cases, involvement from DCP&P or law enforcement may be required to ensure the child's well-being.

Curriculum and Instruction

At Mitcho Early Childhood Center, we are proud to offer a dynamic, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate early childhood program for Pre-Kindergarten students. Our goal is to lay a strong academic and social foundation that prepares every student for long-term success. All programming is aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and supported by funding through the ESEA Entitlement Grant and Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA).

Our dedicated faculty implements research-based, data-driven best practices designed to meet the needs of the whole child. Instruction is rooted in current educational research and developed in partnership with district curriculum supervisors and support staff.

Pre-Kindergarten Program

Our mixed-age preschool classrooms serve both three-year-old and four-year-old children, creating a unique learning environment where younger students build confidence and older students strengthen empathy and leadership skills. This model fosters:

- Early leadership development
- A sense of individuality and belonging
- Cooperative learning over competition
- Growth in confidence and social-emotional awareness
- Diverse opportunities for cognitive and language development

We use the Creative Curriculum, a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate program that balances teacher-guided instruction with child-initiated learning. It promotes growth in key developmental domains: social-emotional, cognitive, language, and physical. Literacy instruction emphasizes vocabulary development, phonological awareness, comprehension, and the joy of reading and writing. Math is integrated through meaningful, play-based experiences that build foundational understanding.

Student Support Services

To meet the diverse needs of all learners, Rodgers offers a range of support programs, including:

- Basic Skills Instruction in Language Arts (Kindergarten)
- English as a Second Language (Kindergarten)
- Special Education services, including an Extended Year Program
- Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) and Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) to identify strategies for students needing academic or behavioral support
- Child Study Team referrals, when additional evaluation is needed



Character Education

At Mitcho Early Childhood Center, character development is woven into the fabric of our school culture through our districtwide Bulldog PRIDE initiative. In alignment with our academic focus, we intentionally cultivate the social and emotional growth of our students, helping them develop into responsible, compassionate, and ethical individuals.

PRIDE stands for the five core values at the heart of our character education program:

- Perseverance: Encouraging students to stay determined and keep trying, even when tasks are difficult
- Respect: Teaching children to value others, listen actively, and celebrate differences
- Integrity: Promoting honesty and doing the right thing, even when no one is watching
- Dependability: Fostering responsibility, accountability, and follow-through
- Empathy: Helping students understand and care about how others feel, and respond with kindness and compassion

Each month, a specific virtue is highlighted through classroom discussions, morning meetings, character lessons, schoolwide assemblies, and daily teacher-student interactions. Our use of shared language and common expectations helps create a safe, respectful, and supportive environment where students are regularly recognized for making positive choices.

Bulldog PRIDE not only enhances the climate of our school but also builds the foundation for lifelong success. Through this work, we aim to prepare students to succeed academically and to live lives of purpose, character, and meaningful contribution.

Family and Community Engagement

At Mitcho Early Childhood Center, we recognize that families are vital partners in student success. We are committed to fostering strong home-school connections and are proud to offer a variety of meaningful opportunities for families to stay engaged throughout the year.

Our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meets monthly to plan schoolwide events, coordinate fundraisers, and provide valuable support for classrooms, field trips, and special activities. In addition to PTO involvement, families are invited to participate in events such as Family Nights, Preschool Parent Workshops, and Multicultural Celebrations that promote learning and strengthen our school community.

We are also supported by our Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), which includes families, staff, and community members working collaboratively to enhance and inform our early childhood programming.

Through these partnerships, we strive to create a warm, inclusive environment where every child and every family feels welcomed, supported, and empowered to take an active role in the educational journey.

Instructional District Leaders

Our instructional programming is supported by district-level curriculum leaders:

- Melanie Sweeney, Director of Elementary Education
- Catherine Torbik, Director of Special Education
- Brandi Sheridan, Supervisor of Math and Science
- Andrew Pancoast, Supervisor of Language Arts and Social Studies
- Amy Masso, Supervisor of Basic Skills

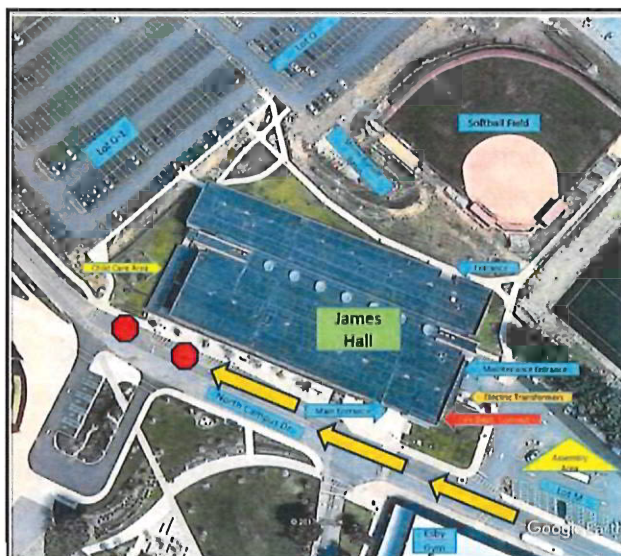
Report Cards and Student Grades

Preschool Assessment & Checkpoints

In our Preschool program, we use Teaching Strategies GOLD, an authentic, ongoing observational assessment system designed to support the development of the whole child. GOLD aligns with widely held expectations for preschool-aged children and enables teachers to gather meaningful data on each student's growth in key developmental domains: social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive. Families will receive formal progress updates three times per year, following each checkpoint period.

- Checkpoint 1: Notification on November 30th
- Checkpoint 2: Notification on March 8th
- Checkpoint 3: Notification on June 18th

Drop-Off Procedures



- **Location:** The Mitcho Early Childhood Center is located inside James Hall on Rowan University's Glassboro campus. The physical address for James Hall is 445 North Campus Drive, Glassboro, NJ 08028. Families should use this address when navigating to the building.
- **Drop-Off Route:** Families should travel around to the rear of James Hall using North Campus Drive and approach the drop-off area facing toward Lot O. Please follow the designated route and drop-off locations shown on the Mitcho Early Childhood Center arrival and dismissal map.
- **Drop-Off Area:** Parents should pull up only along the roadway closest to James Hall. Please do not stop or park on the opposite side of the roadway and walk your child across the street. This creates a safety concern for children and may interfere with the flow of traffic.
- **Bus Area:** The roadway closest to the Child Care Area must remain clear of cars so that our school bus can safely enter the area and unload students. Parents should not stop, park, or drop off near the stop signs identified on the arrival and dismissal map.



- **Drop-Off Times:** Drop-off is between 8:15 AM and 8:30 AM. During this time, parents should walk their child to the white fenced playground entrance, where a staff member will greet your child and escort them into the playground area.
- **Playground Safety:** We ask that parents remain outside of the fenced playground area during arrival. A staff member will meet families at the white fence before entering the playground. Keeping the playground area clear allows staff to safely supervise students as they arrive.
- **Late Arrival:** If your child arrives after 8:30 AM, please do not enter the playground area or knock on the exterior doors or windows of the Mitcho Early Childhood Center. Instead, enter James Hall through the main building entrance and proceed to the Mitcho Early Childhood Center, where you should ring the bell for assistance.
- **Campus Safety:** Please remember that the Mitcho Early Childhood Center is located on an active college campus. Vehicle traffic, Rowan University students, faculty, and staff may be moving throughout the area during arrival and dismissal. Please drive slowly, remain alert for pedestrians, follow all posted traffic signs, and use only the designated Mitcho drop-off area.
- **Efficiency:** Please have your child ready for drop-off when you arrive, with coats on, backpacks zipped, and belongings ready. Conversations with staff should be kept brief during arrival so staff can safely supervise students and keep the drop-off process moving.
- **Bus Drop-Off:** Bus students will be unloaded in the designated bus area closest to the Child Care Area and escorted by staff into the Mitcho Early Childhood Center. Cars are not permitted in the designated bus unloading area during arrival.

Dismissal Procedures

The Board of Education requires that students be in attendance for the full school day in order to fully benefit from the instructional program. This requirement will be waived only when compelling circumstances require that a student arrive late to school or be dismissed before the end of the school day.

The Principal may approve late arrivals or early dismissals for good cause when a written request is submitted in advance by a parent or legal guardian. Good cause may include, but is not limited to, medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside the school day.

We dismiss parent pick-up and bus students each day at 2:30 PM.

- **Parent Pick-Up:** Parents and authorized adults should come to the white fenced playground entrance used for morning arrival. A staff member will meet you at the fence, and your child will be signed out and released directly to you. Please remain outside of the fenced playground area during dismissal.
- **Bus Riders:** Students will be escorted by staff to the designated bus area and onto the bus. A responsible adult must be at the bus stop to receive your child. If no one is present, an attempt will be made to contact the parent or guardian. If contact cannot be made or no one arrives at the stop in a timely manner, the student will be returned to J. Harvey Rodgers for pick-up. Multiple incidents in a school year or repeated returns to the school may result in suspension from bus services in accordance with district policy. In



such cases, a meeting will be required with the building administrator and the transportation department.

Dismissal Traffic: Please do not line up vehicles early on North Campus Drive while waiting for dismissal. This creates a safety concern and may interfere with traffic on Rowan University's active campus. Since the Mitcho Early Childhood Center consists of only two classrooms, dismissal will move quickly and there is no need to arrive early or form a line of vehicles. Please also keep the designated bus area closest to the Child Care Area clear so the bus can safely load students.

Students are expected to remain in school for the entire day. Requests for early release should be reserved for unavoidable circumstances. To minimize disruption to the instructional program, early release during the last 30 minutes of the school day will only be approved in cases of genuine emergency. If you need to pick up your child early, please:

1. Enter James Hall and proceed to the Mitcho Early Childhood Center. Ring the bell for assistance and be prepared to present a valid photo ID.
2. Ensure prior written notice has been provided to the school whenever possible.

Change in Dismissal Plans: If your child usually rides the bus but will be picked up by someone else on a specific day, please send a written note to your child's teacher. The note must include the date, the name of the person picking up your child, and a parent or guardian's signature.

Students will only be released to parents or individuals designated in writing by a parent or legal guardian. A photo ID will be required for verification. Please ensure that you and any designated individuals are prepared to present identification at pick-up.

Visitor Protocol, Parent Meeting Requests, and Student Item Drop-Off

The safety of our students and staff is our top priority. All visitors must follow these procedures:

Main Entrance & Sign-In

- Enter through the James Hall door closest to the playground. Upon entering, the Mitcho Early Childhood Center is located on the right-hand side.
- Use the buzzer system for assistance.
- Parents/ guardians may use the seating area outside of the Mitcho Early Childhood Center while waiting for an appointment or for their child.
- Confirm your appointment or reason for visiting.
- Present valid photo identification (driver's license preferred) and sign in.
- Wear the visitor badge provided at all times while in the Mitcho Early Childhood Center. Staff may ask to see your badge at any time.
- Visitors are not permitted to walk through the Mitcho Early Childhood Center without prior office approval.



Parking

- Parking outside of James Hall is for Rowan University staff only. Rowan University police and security monitor the parking lot regularly for the appropriate placard.
- If you are picking up or dropping off your child, and will only be a few minutes, it should not present a problem for you to park in this area. Please park in a spot and not the fire lane where drop-off and pick-up occurs.
- If parking for more than a few minutes, please do not park at the James Hall parking lot to avoid getting a ticket from Rowan University police. Please park in Lots C and D. Parking is also available at the Beach Administration Building across the street, next to Glassboro High School.

Parent Meetings

- To schedule a meeting with the principal, teacher, or other staff member, call or email in advance.
- Meetings may be scheduled in-person, by phone, or virtually.

Student Item Drop-Off

- Please follow the same procedure as *Main Office/Sign-in*.
- School staff will deliver items to the classroom to avoid interruptions.
- Limit drop-offs to essential items. If a lunch is forgotten, a school lunch will be provided.
- For safety reasons, do not walk up to exterior doors or hand items directly to staff or students outside.

Student Pick-Up Authorization

- Students will only be released to individuals listed on the Student Pick-Up Authorization Form completed at the start of the year.
- Keep this form updated and notify both the main office and your child's teacher of any changes.
- All individuals picking up a student must present valid photo identification.
- Individuals listed on the Student Pick-Up Authorization Form are only permitted to pick up students during regular dismissal. They may not be used for early pick-ups or nurse emergencies due to illness or injury unless the parent or guardian has contacted the school with this information. If no prior notification is provided, the school will contact a parent or guardian before releasing the child.

Special Events

- Family engagement events, such as learning activities and end-of-unit studies, are held throughout the year.
- These events are designed for you to work closely with your child.
- For safety and to maintain the learning environment, siblings or other children are not permitted to attend these events, regardless of age.

School Security and Drills

Student and staff safety is our highest priority. Our school follows established safety and security protocols to ensure a safe environment at all times.

- All visitors must follow sign-in procedures as outlined above.



- Staff members are trained regularly in safety and emergency protocols.
- As required by state law, we conduct two drills each month — one fire drill and one security drill — to ensure preparedness.
- In the event of an evacuation to an alternate location, our reunification procedures will be followed. Anyone picking up a student from the relocation site must present valid photo identification.
- Reunification and emergency protocols are reviewed and updated annually to maintain a secure and organized process.

Breakfast Program and Lunch

A monthly lunch menu is available on the district website to help families plan ahead and determine if their child may prefer to bring lunch from home on certain days.

Parents and guardians may set up a prepaid lunch account through the school's lunch supervisor. Funds can be deposited into the account and are deducted as purchases are made. Account balances and transaction history can be monitored to help manage your child's lunch needs. All lunch prices are established in accordance with district policies and state guidelines. For more information, please visit [GPSD Meal Charges](#).

For the 2026–2027 school year, free or reduced-price lunches are available for eligible students. Families must complete a new application each year to be considered for this program by visiting [Free and Reduced Lunch Application](#). Applications are reviewed for approval based on state income eligibility requirements.

Breakfast is available to all students at no cost. We encourage every child to eat breakfast at home or at school to ensure they are prepared to learn and perform at their best. Students who wish to participate in the school breakfast program should arrive by 8:30 a.m.

Bulldog PRIDE Character Education Program

In 2025, J. Harvey Rodgers School was proudly recognized as both a State School of Character and a National School of Character, a distinction awarded to only 71 schools across the country. This honor reflects our school's unwavering commitment to fostering a positive, character-rich environment for all students. Additionally, we were one of just 12 schools nationwide featured in Character.org's publication *Growing Goodness*, which highlights best practices in character development from across the country. You can view the publication here: *Growing Goodness* by Character.org – Featured on pages 26–27.

Glassboro School District has enthusiastically embraced a district-wide character development initiative and has worked closely with a team of consultants from CITRS (Character–Integrity–Trust–Relationships–Success). Along with our continuing emphasis on academic growth, we are paying special attention to increasing the character of our young people. It is the district's firm belief that this will not only improve our schools but have a life-long benefit for every one of our students. Each month we will be discussing a character "virtue" that



is integrated into our teacher-to-student language, morning meetings, character education lessons, and more.

PRIDE is an acronym for our district Core Values. By emphasizing these values, we foster a positive and supportive learning environment where children not only excel academically, but also grow into responsible and compassionate individuals. Your ability to reinforce these core values at home can further strengthen their impact.

- Perseverance (P): This means encouraging our children to keep trying, even when things are difficult. It's about teaching them not to give up easily and to stay determined in the face of challenges.
- Respect (R): Respect involves treating others the way we want to be treated. It means being polite, listening to others, and valuing everyone's differences.
- Integrity (I): Integrity is about being honest and doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. It's about building trust and being a person of strong moral character.
- Dependability (D): Being dependable means that others can rely on us. It's about being responsible, keeping promises, and completing tasks on time.
- Empathy (E): Empathy means understanding and caring about how others feel. It's about being kind and supportive to others, especially when they are facing challenges.

We also honor a student from each classroom every month based on the monthly virtue. Students receive a letter home, a certificate, a small token, and have their name announced during a special monthly celebration of our Bulldog Buddy Winners!

Mission Statement: "Empowering students to be unique, exceptional citizens through a culture of character and learning."

Vision Statement: "Building model citizens."

Core Values: Perseverance; Respect; Integrity; Dependability; Empathy

Strategic Code of Conduct:

1. We are truthful and respect ourselves and others.
2. We are mindful of others while making decisions.
3. We are problem-solvers who seek knowledge and wisdom.
4. We are responsible for our own words, actions, and consequences.
5. We are humble leaders who model good behavior and show compassion to all.
6. We make good decisions by having self-control and inner strength.
7. We treat others fairly and always help those in need.
8. We give time and effort to improve our school and community.
9. We always try our best in everything we do, even when it's hard.



- *Monthly Virtues:*

Month	Virtue	Definition	Visual	Phrase
September	Wisdom	Wisdom is seeing what is right, what is truthful, and knowing the right thing to do.	Owl	"How can you make wise choices today?"
October	Integrity	We can show integrity by following the rules, being honest, and telling the truth.	Pinocchio	"When you wish upon a star, integrity shows who you are!"
November	Self-Control	Self-control is the ability to control your feelings, emotions, or reactions.	Bubbles	"Show self-control, don't pop other people's bubble."
December	Justice	Justice is treating other people fairly, as you would want to be treated yourself.	Balance Scale	"Fair means everyone gets what they need."
January	Fortitude	Fortitude is sticking with it and doing the right thing.	Train	"I think I can! I think I can!"
February	Positive Attitude	Positive Attitude is thinking and believing that everything will turn out well in all that you do.	Bulldog Mascot - Mugs	Words to live by - "I'm going to have a good day."; "I choose to be happy."; "My brain is powerful."; "My feelings matter."
March	Humility	Humility is being confident without thinking you are better than someone else.	The Tortoise and the Hare	"Friendship is gained through humility and actions of the heart."
April	Respect	Respect is making an effort to understand how others think and feel, while treating them with kindness.	Two Way Street	"Respect is a two-way street, if you want to get it, you've got to give it."



May	Love	Being a true friend who unconditionally gives and wants the absolute best for someone.	Heart	"Love yourself, your friends, and your school."
June	Charity	Charity is caring for and helping other people through acts of giving and service.	Heart with Hands	"Show us how you can help your school and community."

Through the modeling of schoolwide expectations (rules), common vocabulary, and data-driven decision-making, our children quickly learn what a positive learning environment "looks like." As our *Bulldog Buddies* motto states, every student at the Mitcho Early Childhood Center will: *Take care of yourself, your friends, and your school!*

Teachers begin by teaching children that there are positive consequences for following expectations. This includes rewarding students with specific, positive praise statements. The schoolwide expectations and "what they look like" in practice are explained as needed and are modeled several times throughout the year.

Our students also understand that there are logical consequences for not meeting expectations. These consequences are designed to help students address their issues through constructive interactions with our school faculty. Parental support is essential in reinforcing appropriate behavior, so staff will communicate with parents to ensure consistent messaging between home and school. For more serious behaviors that impact safety, general well-being, or the learning environment, further consequences may be required. In such instances, the school principal will collaborate directly with the student and their family to support and guide behavioral improvement.

Rodgers Bulldog Character Education Award

The Rodgers Bulldog Character Education Award is presented each month to one student from every classroom, as well as one kindergarten student selected by our special area teachers (Music, Gym, and Science), who exemplifies outstanding character and citizenship by demonstrating the monthly virtue. In addition, one preschool student and one kindergarten student are recognized each month for their participation in the RASKEL program.

Guidance & Anti-Bullying

J. Harvey Rodgers School has a full-time guidance counselor and part-time preschool social worker dedicated to supporting students and families with concerns that may affect learning or well-being. The counselor can also connect families with outside agencies for additional assistance when needed.



Our guidance program plays an important role in fostering a healthy and safe learning environment by:

- Implementing school-wide programs that promote well-being
- Helping students develop self-regulation and positive social skills
- Facilitating small group counseling for students who need additional support
- Providing one-on-one counseling as necessary
- Assisting teachers in integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies into daily classroom instruction

We are also committed to maintaining a safe and respectful school community. The New Jersey Department of Education requires all districts to complete annual self-assessments to evaluate compliance with the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (ABR) Act in each school.

To review the Glassboro School District's Anti-Bullying Self-Assessments and the official NJDOE release of district scores, please visit the [Glassboro School District Anti-Bullying webpage](#). Additional information and resources related to our anti-bullying efforts are also available on that page.

If you have questions or wish to submit comments regarding the self-assessments, please email Craig Stephenson, District Anti-Bullying Coordinator, at cstephenson@gpsd.us with the subject line: *Public Comment on ABR Act Self-Assessments*.

If You Suspect Bullying:

If you believe your child or another student is experiencing bullying, report it immediately to the school principal, guidance counselor, or the school's Anti-Bullying Specialist. You may also submit a written report or complete the district's online bullying report form. All reports are taken seriously and will be investigated according to state law and district policy.

Back to School Night

We are excited to welcome families to Back to School Night on Wednesday, September 30th, 2026, at 6:00 PM. This important event offers a valuable opportunity to learn more about your child's daily classroom experience, curriculum, and learning environment. Families will hear directly from teachers about instructional goals, classroom routines, and ways to support learning at home. We encourage all families to attend as we begin the year together in partnership.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Teachers will send appointment details in advance and every effort will be made to accommodate your schedule. Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled for the following dates during the 2026–2027 school year:

- Fall Conferences: Tuesday, December 1 through Friday, December 4
 - Evening Conferences: Tuesday, December 1 from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM



- Spring Conferences: Tuesday, March 9 through Friday, March 12
 - Evening Conferences: Tuesday, March 9 from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

Conferences provide a valuable opportunity to review student progress, gather parent input, and discuss ways to support learning at home. Your participation plays a vital role in your child's success, and we strongly encourage all families to attend.

Additional individual conferences may be scheduled throughout the school year as needed. Parents or teachers may request these meetings to address specific concerns or to further support the student's development.

School Supplies

At Mitcho Early Childhood Center, we are proud to continue our commitment to ensuring that every child has what they need to start the school year ready to learn. All students will be provided with the essential school supplies they need for classroom use. These include:

- Crayons
- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Watercolors
- Play-Doh
- Folders
- Dry erase markers

These items will be distributed for individual use in each classroom. If a specific item is needed beyond what is provided, your child's teacher will communicate directly with you. At the start of the school year, families do not need to send in individual school supplies.

In addition to the materials provided, we ask that each student brings the following items from home:

- A backpack large enough to hold a folder and lunchbox
- A refillable water bottle
- A lunch bag, if your child is bringing lunch from home
- A change of clothes (including socks and underwear) in a labeled bag to be kept at school

If you are unable to provide a backpack or have any concerns about supplies, please reach out to Dr. Giordano at tgiordano@gpsd.us for assistance.

Pre-K students should bring a small blanket and sheet for rest time. Each child will be assigned a hard nap mat for their individual use during the school year.



By providing school supplies and minimizing what families need to bring, we aim to create an equitable and welcoming start for all students. We thank you for your continued partnership and look forward to a wonderful year of learning and growing together.

School Dress Code

For safety reasons, all students must wear footwear that provides secure footing, good balance, and adequate protection. Shoes with loose or untied laces or straps, flip-flops, slides, sneakers with wheels, slippers, or any other footwear that may pose a safety hazard are not permitted during the school day.

Sandals may be worn only if they fit securely and have a strap around the heel. However, please note that certain playground activities may be limited for students wearing sandals to ensure their safety.

Additionally, hoods and hats are not permitted to be worn inside the school building during school hours unless it is part of a designated school event or spirit day.

In special circumstances, such as health or safety concerns (e.g., temperature fluctuations in the building), temporary modifications to the dress code may be made. These adjustments will be determined in advance by the classroom teacher and/or building principal for specific situations such as field trips, or special events.

Valuables

Students are strongly discouraged from bringing valuable personal items to school. Please note that the school is not responsible for any personal belongings that are lost, stolen, or damaged.

Items such as laser pointers, electronic games, toys, skateboards, roller blades, scooters, radios, cell phones, iPods, CD/MP3 players, and collectible or trading cards are not permitted at school unless written permission is provided by a classroom teacher or an administrator. If these items are brought to school without permission, they will be confiscated and will only be returned to a parent or guardian.

Any additional items that disrupt classroom instruction, pose a safety concern, or interfere with the daily operation of the school will also be removed. Parents may contact the main office to make arrangements to retrieve any confiscated items.

Playground

The Mitcho Early Childhood Center playground is closed to the public while school is in session. For safety and security reasons, the playground is not available for use during arrival, the school day, or dismissal. This policy helps ensure the health and well-being of our students, families, and staff.



Celebrations

We value celebrating special occasions with our students, but we do so in ways that ensure safety, inclusivity, and minimal disruption to learning.

- **Food Items:** Parents and guardians are asked to limit how often food items are sent to school for birthdays or other celebrations. If you choose to send a treat, it must be prepackaged. Contact your child's teacher in advance so they can consult with the school nurse about potential food allergies.
- **Non-Food Items:** For safety and transportation reasons, flowers and balloons are not permitted in school and are not allowed on the bus.
- **Classroom Visits:** Parents and guardians are not permitted to enter classrooms to celebrate birthdays or other special occasions.
- **School-Wide Events:** Classroom and school-wide celebrations, such as holiday parties or end-of-year activities, will be planned by teachers in accordance with school guidelines. Families will be informed in advance if there are opportunities to contribute items or volunteer.

We appreciate your cooperation in helping us create a safe, inclusive, and enjoyable environment for all students during celebrations.

Water Bottles

Students are encouraged to bring a reusable, spill-proof water bottle with a secure lid or straw to school each day. Refillable water bottle stations are available throughout the building so bottles can be filled as needed. Please clearly label your child's water bottle with their first and last name.

Toileting, Changing Diapers, and Soiled Clothing

We ask that all students keep a change of clothes at school in case of spills, accidents, or other unexpected needs. Please send a full set of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, and socks) in a labeled zip-lock bag with your child's first and last name clearly written on it.

For students who are currently potty training or may have more frequent accidents, we recommend sending an additional set of clothes in a separate zip-lock bag to be kept in your child's backpack.

Any clothing we provide during the day is based on donations we receive. If you are cleaning out your closets or transitioning between seasons, we gladly welcome gently used boys' and girls' shorts and pants in smaller sizes. Your donations help us support children in need throughout the year.

If you would like to donate clothing, please contact our School Nurse, Tricia Scappa, at psscappa@gpsd.us to arrange a convenient drop-off time.



Medications

Whenever possible, medications should be given at home. For students with chronic illnesses or special needs who require medication during the school day, specific procedures must be followed. Students are not permitted to carry any medication, whether over-the-counter or prescription, into school.

The Mitcho Early Childhood Center does not have a nurse located on site throughout the school day. Tricia Scappa, the J. Harvey Rodgers School nurse, is the assigned nurse for the Mitcho Early Childhood Center and is available on call as needed. She will also visit the Mitcho Center when necessary to administer medications and provide other required nursing services.

If your child needs medication during school hours, please contact Mrs. Scappa at pscappa@gpsd.us to review the required procedures. The Board of Education has established clear guidelines for the safe handling and administration of all medications.

Illness Policy

To protect the health and safety of all students and staff, children who are ill should remain at home. Students must be well enough to fully participate in school activities before returning.

- **Sick Days:** Keep your child home if they have vomiting, fever, or diarrhea.
- **Fever-Free Rule:** Students must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication (such as Tylenol or Aspirin) before returning to school.
- **Outdoor Activity:** If your child is well enough to attend school, they should be prepared to participate in outdoor activities with their class, weather permitting.
- **Illness During School:** If your child becomes ill during the school day, you will be contacted to pick them up. Please ensure your contact information is always up to date.
- **Chronic Illness:** For ongoing conditions such as asthma, inform the school nurse. Medication orders from your child's physician may be submitted to support care at school and help reduce absences.
- **Contagious Illnesses:** Notify the school nurse if your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness, rash, head lice, or ringworm. Any illness accompanied by a fever of 100°F or higher should be evaluated by a doctor before your child returns to school.
- **Injuries:** Report any injuries sustained outside of school to the nurse. A doctor's note is required for any activity restrictions for gym, recess, or other physical activities, along with a follow-up note to resume participation.

Vaccinations

All students under the age of five are required to receive an influenza vaccination by November 30th, 2026. In accordance with NJDOE regulations, students who have not received this vaccination by the deadline will be excluded from school. Please provide documentation of all required vaccinations at the time of registration. For questions about vaccination requirements, contact our school nurse, Tricia Scappa at extension 5311 or pscappa@gpsd.us.



Glassboro PTO

Parents and families are an essential part of the Mitcho Early Childhood Center community, and their partnership greatly enriches the educational experience of our students. The Glassboro PTO meets monthly to discuss school-wide topics, share ideas, and plan fundraising events that support programs and activities for our students. Families contribute in many ways, such as volunteering at school events, assisting with fundraisers, chaperoning field trips, and taking part in Family Participation Nights. These opportunities not only strengthen our school community but also provide meaningful ways for families to stay connected and engaged in their child's education.

Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)

The Early Childhood Advisory Council serves as a valuable forum for community collaboration and family engagement. Its purpose is to bring together stakeholders to share ideas, provide feedback, and make recommendations that support the needs of our students and the broader Glassboro community. Through open communication and active participation, the council works to strengthen our Preschool Program and enhance the services we provide to children and families. Meetings are held in person at J. Harvey Rodgers School with a virtual option available for those who cannot attend on site. Meeting dates and times are as follows:

- October 7th at 3:15
- December 9th at 6:00 pm
- February 18th at 6:00 pm
- May 6th at 3:15 pm

Pre-K Parent Workshops

These workshops are designed to help preschool families better understand the developmental stages of early childhood and learn practical ways to become active participants in their child's learning. Each session is based on feedback from a Family Needs Assessment conducted at the start of the school year and focuses on relevant topics chosen by families and staff. Workshops are held virtually from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM and led by our knowledgeable preschool team.

- Parent Workshop 1 – October 29th
- Parent Workshop 2 – January 14th
- Parent Workshop 3 – March 4th
- Parent Workshop 4 – April 29th



Multicultural Meeting

The Multicultural Committee brings together families to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of our school community. This group meets twice a year to share traditions, exchange ideas, and help plan a special end-of-year multicultural celebration for our preschool families.

Meetings take place virtually from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM and offer an inclusive space for all voices to be heard.

- November 19th
- April 15th
- June 1st (Event)

J. Harvey Rodgers School Accomplishments

J. Harvey Rodgers School is proud to be recognized locally, statewide, and nationally for our commitment to excellence, character education, and student well-being.

- **Heart Safe School Designation** – In 2024, we became the first school in Gloucester County to earn this designation through Project ADAM. This recognition, held through 2027, honors our implementation of a comprehensive sudden cardiac arrest program that promotes a Heart Safe environment for all members of our school community.
- **Promising Practice Awards**
 - 2023: Recognized by Character.org for our character education curriculum, which builds a foundation of character one virtue at a time through developmentally appropriate visuals and phrases.
 - 2024: Honored again for our *Full Circle for Character Education Initiative*, which fosters caring relationships by having Glassboro High School students serve as role models and teach character lessons to our kindergarten students.
 - 2025: Received our third consecutive Promising Practice Award for the *P.A.W.S. (Positive Adults Working with Students) Program*, a targeted mentorship initiative that strengthens student connections, provides emotional support, and reinforces our Bulldog PRIDE values.
 - 2026: Received our fourth consecutive Promising Practice Award for *Parenting with PRIDE*, which provides families with concrete tools, shared language, and meaningful opportunities to reinforce core values at home.
- **School of Character Recognition**
 - January 2024: Earned Honorable Mention as a State School of Character.
 - January 2025: Designated as a State School of Character for 2024–2025, one of only 22 schools in New Jersey to receive this honor. This is a five-year designation.
 - May 2025: Earned the National School of Character designation for 2024–2025, one of only 71 schools nationwide to achieve this five-year honor.
- **Grow NJ Kids 4-Star Rating** – In 2024–2025, achieved a 4-star rating, one of only six schools in Gloucester County to earn this recognition.
- **State Demonstration Site for Highly Inclusive Practices** – Selected in 2024–2025 as one of only two schools in New Jersey to receive this designation. In the 2025–2026 school year, recognized again as one of just three schools statewide and the only representative from southern New Jersey.



- **National Publication Feature** – In 2024–2025, featured in Character.org's *Growing Goodness* publication as one of just 12 schools nationwide to be highlighted.



Questions/Concerns & School Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your child's teacher. Teachers are available before and after school or you may leave a voicemail during the school day. You may contact Mitcho Early Childhood Center at 856-649-6780 or the J. Harvey Rodgers School office at 856-652-2700, Ext. 5101 for assistance. Teachers can be reached by email using the format first initial + last name@gpsd.us (Example: tgiordano@gpsd.us).

Staff	Position
Rachel Brown	PreK Teacher
Shannon Buenventura	PreK Teacher
Hailie Huntelman	PreK Teacher
Victoria Marchan	PreK Teacher
Victoria Mason	PreK Teacher
Alicia Smith	PreK Teacher
Daria Lombardi	PreK Teacher
Kayley Steponick	PreK Teacher
Amanda Belko	PreK Teacher
Suzanne Tuttle	PreK Teacher (Rowan Mitcho Early Childhood Center)
Kelley Wheat	PreK Teacher (Rowan Mitcho Early Childhood Center)
Nicolette Senior	PreK Special Education Teacher
Heather Stewart	Kindergarten Teacher
Suzanne Rutter	Kindergarten Teacher
Maire Kennedy	Kindergarten Teacher
Lori Kaszupski	Kindergarten Teacher
Gabrielle Pipher	Kindergarten Teacher
Kaitlyn Piontkowski	Kindergarten Teacher
Melissa McWilliams	Kindergarten Teacher
Alisa McDermott	Kindergarten Special Education Teacher
Danielle Cerrato	Kindergarten Special Education Teacher
Victoria Toczyłowski	Kindergarten Special Education Teacher
Carrie Owens	Basic Skills Teacher
Annette Rainear	ESL Teacher
Amanda Brice	Guidance Counselor
Erin Pimpinella	Science Elementary Teacher
Beth Conley	Physical Education Teacher
Chad Yates	Physical Education Teacher
Alexa Kowalski	Music Teacher
Brynn Morgan	BCBA
Selina Delgado	Occupational Therapist
Allison Dilks	Speech Therapist
Christine Williams	School Psychologist
Patricia (Tricia) Scappa	School Nurse
Brad Unick	Preschool Instructional Coach
Kelly Franklin-Moxey	Community Parent Involvement Specialist
Kelly Jacobs	Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist
Elizabeth (Nina) Gomez	Secretary
Theresa Raynor	Clerical Assistant
Jack Raines	Security Aide
Officer Beck	SRO
Officer Gio	SRO (District)
Brandi Sheridan	Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction
Melanie Sweeney	Director of Elementary Education
Karen Carino	Principal