



## *South Orange Maplewood School District Preschool Program*

July 24, 2019

Dear Preschool Parents/Guardians,

The new school year will bring about a new experience for all students and their families attending the District's Preschool Program. The implementation of the Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA), designed to offer high-quality early learning, is allowing the district to serve even more resident students for the 2019-2020 school year.

While we had an unprecedented interest in the program, a random selection of applicants led to the assignment of students to three sites thus far, Applecore Learning Early Childhood Center, Marshall Elementary portable classroom and Montrose Early Childhood Center. New students were selected based on a lottery system drawn in accordance with the District's Registration Policy and Regulations. Our commitment to preschool education is fostering partnerships with local child care providers to secure additional classroom space for South Orange and Maplewood students to have access to a high-quality preschool experience.

As the program continues to grow, the research-based curriculum (Tools of the Mind) and developmentally appropriate assessment practices (Teaching Strategies GOLD) will be implemented with uniformity across all sites. An oversight team has been assembled to provide program leadership, professional development and support for the staff throughout the year.

Attached is a FAQ prepared by educators and parents as a tool to answer essential questions the community may have. Please review it and if you have any further questions, let me know. I can be reached at (973) 762-5600, Extension 1841 or you may send an email to [lmorana@somds.k12-nj.us](mailto:lmorana@somds.k12-nj.us). Additionally, we have reserved next Tuesday, July 30, 2019, 7:00-8:30pm at Columbia's High School's Auditorium, 17 Parker Ave, Maplewood, to address any further questions or concerns from our parents and families. I hope that you will join me then.

Sincerely,

*Laura C. Morana*

Interim Assistant Superintendent for Special Services



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### **Frequently Asked Questions as of July 23, 2019**

The FAQ will soon be available for families via SOMSD's, Applecore's and Montrose's websites.

Periodically, the FAQ will be added to or updated so please check back regularly.

- 1. What is the Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA)?** PEEA is a New Jersey state-based funding program that eligible school districts in New Jersey can apply to in order for three and four year old children to receive a free high-quality preschool education. The South Orange Maplewood School District applied for PEEA in the summer of 2018. Based on enrollment, the state of New Jersey awarded the District \$1.4 million for the 2018-2019 school year. For the 2019-2020 school year, SOMSD received \$2.9 million.
- 2. What is the SOMSD Preschool Program?** The SOMSD Preschool Program, funded by the PEEA, is a free high-quality preschool education program for three- and four-year old students who are residents of South Orange or Maplewood.
- 3. If I would like my child to attend the Preschool Program, what should I do?** Any South Orange or Maplewood family that is interested in having its age-eligible child attend the Preschool Program needs to register him/her with the South Orange Maplewood School District. Go here to find out more: <https://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/district/registration/sy1920registration/>
- 4. Where is the preschool program located?** For the 2019-2020 School Year, the program currently includes:
  - Applecore Learning Early Childhood Center (240 Franklin Ave, Maplewood) 3 classes
  - Marshall Portable (262 Grove Rd, South Orange) – 1 class
  - Montrose Early Childhood Center (356 Clark St, South Orange) – 9 classes
- 5. How is the assignment of my child determined?** The first lottery, done on April 29, 2019, provided every registered 3 and 4 year old student a number. Due to availability, the first building to fill was Montrose, then Marshall portable, then Applecore. For all children that did not have a secure seat, they are on a waiting list based on their lottery number. When more classrooms become available, families will be notified. Creating more partnerships with private preschools continues to be a goal of the District.



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- 6. Do I get a say in which school my child attends?** At this time, there is no parental choice.
- 7. What is the cost of the SOMSD Preschool Program?** There is no tuition for any age eligible child from South Orange or Maplewood.
- 8. Will my child take a bus?** Currently, only children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are bused to and from preschool.
- 9. What are the school day hours?** The school day is six hours long. Start and end times vary, depending on the building:
  - Applecore: 8:45am-2:45pm
  - Marshall Portable: 8:50am-2:50pm
  - Montrose: 8:30am-2:30pm
- 10. Are there half day hours available?** No. We are required to offer a full six-hour day.
- 11. Is there before and after care?** That depends on the location.
  - Applecore runs its own before and aftercare program. Before care runs 7:00-8:45am, aftercare runs 2:45-6pm. Contact Applecore for more information and pricing. [Applecorelearningecc@gmail.com](mailto:Applecorelearningecc@gmail.com)
  - At Marshall portable, there is currently no before or aftercare provided. (We're exploring options.)
  - At Montrose, the YMCA runs the before and aftercare program on site. There are limited spots. Before care runs 7:15-8:30am, aftercare runs 2:30-6:30pm. Contact the Y directly to find out if there is space available. [www.metroymcas.org/south-mountain-ymca/montrose-before-care-after-care/](http://www.metroymcas.org/south-mountain-ymca/montrose-before-care-after-care/)
- 12. When does the school year start?** The first day of school is Thursday, September 5. This is an orientation day for families to join their children to visit the classroom. It is NOT a full day of school.
  - Applecore: 9:00am – 9:30am
  - Marshall: 9:45am – 10:30am
  - Montrose: 8:45am – 9:30amThe first full day of school at all locations is Friday, September 6, 2019.
- 13. Where can I find the 2019-2020 School Year Calendar?** On the School District's website: [www.somsd.k12.nj.us/mdocs-posts/2019-2020-school-calendar/](http://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/mdocs-posts/2019-2020-school-calendar/)



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- 14. How many children are in a class?** All classes\* have up to fifteen students. \*Except the self-contained special education classroom at Montrose has a maximum of twelve students.
- 15. Are the 3s and 4s classes separate?** No. All classes are multi-age.
- 16. What are the teacher qualifications?** All teachers are New Jersey State Certified, with a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree. The District is committed to hiring dual certified\* teachers for their preschool program. \*Dual certified is having certification in both early education and special education.
- 17. What is a paraprofessional? How many are in a classroom?** Paraprofessionals are classroom aides. There is one "classroom para" in every class to help support the teacher and students. Due to Montrose being a larger, more populated building, there are four "building paras" to go where they are needed. Depending on special education programming, there may be additional paraprofessionals assigned to students with special needs. This may be a "1:1 para" or a "shared para". Students eligible for a paraprofessional via a Section 504 Plan may also receive this service.
- 18. How do lunch and snack work?** Every class has its snack and lunch in the classroom. The students bring their own snacks; there is no communal snack. Lunch can be bought at school or brought from home. Information on ordering lunch will be available before the start of the school year. If you think your family qualifies for a free or reduced lunch, or as families' financial circumstances change, the following form can be completed at any point during the school year. <https://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/district/food-services/freereducedapplication/>
- 19. My child has food-related allergies. What is your policy for food-related allergies?** Each school building will abide by its own allergy policy. If there are students with food-related allergies, the teacher will let families know before the start of the school year what is not allowed to be brought into the classroom. Currently, all preschools, Montrose, Marshall portable and Applecore, follow the BOE policy #5331 that can be found here: <https://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/board-of-education/policies/>
- 20. Does my child need to be toilet trained to attend the preschool program?** No. Toilet training is supported in the classroom so when your child is ready you can make arrangements with the teacher. If your child is not toilet trained, you will need to provide diapers, plus extra wipes, as needed.
- 21. What is an 'inclusion' classroom?** Inclusion means that there are students with special programming in the class with their general education peers. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states that all children who are eligible to receive special services to be provided a Free and Appropriate Education in the Least Restrictive



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Environment which includes the general education setting. There is a maximum of five students, in a fifteen student classroom, who have special programming.

- 22. I believe that my child needs more support in the classroom, what do I do?** First contact your child's teacher and discuss your concerns. If appropriate, the teacher will request assistance from the Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) to work on strategies to help your child.
- 23. How will my child be identified as needing special services?** Child Find is a legal requirement that schools find all children who have disabilities and who may be entitled to special education services. Child Find covers every child from birth through age 21. The child can be experiencing physical, sensory, emotional, communication, cognitive, or social difficulties. Any parent who has concerns about the development of their preschool child who will be 3 years old within the next year or a child between the ages of 3 and 5 years old should contact the Department of Special Services at 973-762-5600 ext. 1840.
- 24. How do parents and families get involved?** We welcome and encourage families to be actively involved with our preschools, whether it be reading to your child's class or volunteering for school-wide projects. Please contact the director or principal at your school to find out more.
- 25. How can I obtain additional information?** Family Handbooks will be made available before the start of the new school year. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact:
- Applecore, Ms. Stacy Brutus, Director [Applecorelearningecc@gmail.com](mailto:Applecorelearningecc@gmail.com)
  - Montrose and Marshall portable, Mrs. Bonita Samuels, Principal: [bsamuels@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:bsamuels@somsd.k12.nj.us)
  - Preschool Program, Dr. Laura Morana, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Special Services: [lmorana@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:lmorana@somsd.k12.nj.us)
  - Preschool Program, Mr. Leroy Johnson, Supervisor of Preschool Education: [ljohnson@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:ljohnson@somsd.k12.nj.us)