

# Orrington Kindergarten Information

## Important Contact Information

Orrington School Office: (847) 859-8780

(follow prompts to report absences and tardies)

Principal: Dr. Jessica Plaza ([plazaj@district65.net](mailto:plazaj@district65.net))

Assistant Principal: Mr. John Siegler ([sieglerj@district65.net](mailto:sieglerj@district65.net))

Secretary: Ms. Rowena Edwards ([edwardsr@district65.net](mailto:edwardsr@district65.net))

Health Clerk: Ms. Mary Robinson ([robinsonm@district65.net](mailto:robinsonm@district65.net))

Orrington Website: [www.orrington.district65.net](http://www.orrington.district65.net)

School Closings and other District 65 Information: [www.district65.net](http://www.district65.net)

## Additional Contact Information

Kindergarten Transition Team	Phuong Le	<a href="mailto:swarm10@hotmail.com">swarm10@hotmail.com</a>
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PTA Co-Presidents	Sarah Darnton	<a href="mailto:twogoofydogs@yahoo.com">twogoofydogs@yahoo.com</a>
	Molly Fouts	<a href="mailto:molly.fouts@gmail.com">molly.fouts@gmail.com</a>

Orrington PTA Webpage: <https://www.district65.net/domain/664>

PTA Questions: Please email [info@orringtonpta.org](mailto:info@orringtonpta.org)

Welcome to Orrington Elementary School! This packet of commonly asked questions has been put together in hopes of better informing you and alleviating some common concerns and questions new families often have. If you're feeling a little anxious about your child's transition to "big kid school," you are not alone! *Information that has changed or is fluid due to the pandemic is written in italics.*

- 1. What will my child's typical day be like?** Each classroom is slightly different, but all will have a regular schedule that remains consistent throughout the year. Teachers will hand out more specific schedules at the start of the school year. Their day will include (not in this particular order):

- Literacy development -- Reading and Writing
- Math
- Lunch/Recess (12-1 pm during remote learning; 20 minutes each for students doing in-person learning)
- Science
- Social Studies
- Gym (20 minutes/daily)
- Daily snack

- “Specials” (a rotating schedule of library, art, drama, social-emotional learning and music) 5 days/week.

*\*2020-21—All children will begin the school year as remote learners. The teachers will have schedules available prior to the start of school so that all parents/guardians/caregivers have a clear understanding of each day’s structure. All kindergarten students will eat lunch from 12-1 pm during remote learning. Remote learning will include recorded lessons, small group work, whole class social/emotional check-ins, movement breaks and independent work.*

**A full day is so long – I’m worried my child can’t handle that....** For children used to two and a half hours of school, or no school at all, being in school for six hours is definitely a transition. All of Orrington’s kindergarten teachers recognize that this is a big change for children and do allow for down time throughout the day. Each teacher has a less structured, free choice period during the day where children can choose an activity such as building a train, playing with blocks, Legos, coloring, doing puzzles, etc. Teachers are very sensitive to five year olds’ need to move regularly and their still developing attention span – learning is hands on and concrete at this level. With that said, your child will be tired at the end of day. Try and keep his/her schedule light those first months with few after school commitments. You may even want to limit play dates.

- 2. What can I do to help my child make the transition to kindergarten easier?** For many, the transition from preschool to kindergarten is an exciting but anxiety-producing event, often more so for the adult than for the child. Recognizing this and helping to reassure your child goes a long way to helping your child make the transition smoothly.

- Talk and read to your child about what Kindergarten will be like – if they went to preschool either part day or full day, they will be very familiar with many things they will do in Kindergarten (circle time, snack time, choice time, recess, etc.). Some good books to check out relating specifically to the Kindergarten transition include (but are not limited to):
  - *WE DON'T EAT OUR CLASSMATES* by Ryan T. Higgins
  - *SCHOOL'S FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL* by Adam Rex, ill. Christian Robinson
  - *KING OF KINDERGARTEN* by Derrick Barnes
- Reassure your child that adults will be there to help when they need it. Acknowledging and validating their feelings of being scared, nervous, or shy is completely appropriate.
- If your child will be attending in-person and is nervous, create a routine for saying goodbye – a kiss in the palm of the hand they can have with them during the day, a high five, a fist bump, etc. All can help with the difficult task of separation. Placing a photo of you and your child in their backpack may help him/her know you are still with them even when you’re apart. Some good books about separation include (but are not limited to):
  - The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
  - Mommy in my Pocket* by Carol Hunt Sendenak
  - I Love you All day Long* by Francesca Rusackas
  - Don't Go* by Jane Breskin Zalben
  - Llama Llama misses Mama* by Anna Dewdney
- Familiarize your child with Orrington and other children they may see. *\*2020-21--Even though we can not offer get-togethers during this pandemic, kindergartners can virtually tour the building and meet staff ([hyperlink to virtual tour](#)).* Orrington’s Kindergarten Transition Team will also be reaching out to our incoming families for community building activities. Arm yourself with information – if you, the parent/guardian/caregiver, are feeling

uncertain and anxious about the transition, talk to another adult who may be able to help alleviate your concerns. Children are extremely perceptive and can quickly pick up on your anxiety.

- **Don't talk about it too much!** At this age, time is a very amorphous thing. A month is a long time to wait or be anxious about something so unknown. Talking about Kindergarten too much can serve to increase anxiety in some children, particularly when they are uncertain what it will be like.

- 3. What expectations do teachers have of my child the first day?** Self-help skills are invaluable skills for children of all ages to develop. Allow children time (and arm yourself with much patience) while they work to learn to put on their own clothes, jackets, and shoes, wash their own hands, clean up their own spills, toilet themselves completely, etc. If they haven't learned the "magic flip" it is an easy way for them to start getting their own coat on. (Magic Flip--Lay jacket on the floor, stand at the top of the coat where their head would be facing the coat, place both arms in the arm holes and flip it over the head and on.)

For in-person learners, if your child attended a daycare program or was at home with a caregiver, they will experience a higher teacher-to-child ratio in Kindergarten. This could be a challenge for your little one. Please prepare and remind your child that there will be fewer adults in their kindergarten classroom. They will have to be patient and learn to raise their hand for their teacher's attention.

Beyond good self-help skills, being able to listen and follow directions, sit still and pay attention for 5-10 minutes, and some basic pre-literacy (recognition of some letters, recognizing and maybe writing their name, matching some letters with the sounds they make) and pre-math skills (basic counting, patterning, and categorizing) are all valuable but not mandatory.

One of the biggest things that teachers wish for are children who are eager learners – help your child see that learning can be great fun!

- 4. My child is not writing yet, what should I do?** It is true that in Kindergarten there is a strong emphasis on literacy. However, for some children, fine motor development takes a little longer than for others. Strong fine motor skills are the muscles in the hand and fingers that enable children to grasp a pencil comfortably and firmly. Working to help children strengthen these muscles in the hands is a good place to start. Here are some ideas:

- Playdough and clay offer resistance and help strengthen hands (use instruments to poke holes and explore— like toothpicks, scissors, popsicle sticks, rolling pins, cookie cutters, or even items from outdoors – get creative!)
- Set up a writing center in your house – stock it with envelopes, paper, post-its, children's scissors, a hole punch, a stapler, tape, stickers, pencils, pens etc. Using a hole punch, scissors and stapler are often fun for children particularly uninterested in "writing".
- Threading inexpensive beads on string to make keychains, necklaces, or bracelets.
- Create authentic ways to practice writing – have children help to make grocery lists, make signs and labels for things around home, play restaurant and have them take orders, etc.

Rest assured that all children have unique paths of development – children (not adults) will decide when they are ready for each developmental stage. Orrington has a fantastic literacy team—our

reading specialist is on staff full time to offer supports to all Orrington children during the years they are here.

5. **(For in-person learners) What if my child cries when I leave?** *\*2020-21--School drop-off will look different this year as the school will prioritize getting all children into school safely. As we near the date that in-person learning begins, please be on the look-out for information from Dr. Plaza about the drop-off and pick-up procedures.* If your child is upset, his/her teacher will be there to help them through the separation. Many years of experience teaching Kindergarten have taught the teachers that predictability and consistency (rather than lingering or drawing out the separation) are the most effective ways to help children through this transition.
7. **Will I be able to participate in the classroom?** During normal times, parents/guardians /caregivers are able to volunteer in classrooms (please see hyperlink to PTA volunteer page). *\*2020-21--Unfortunately this year, non-staff adults will not be allowed into the school building.*
8. **(For in-person learners) How does drop off work at the beginning of the day?** *The description below is for procedures that happen during a normal year. 2020-21 drop-off procedures will likely change to meet the CDC requirements for keeping children safe. Please look for detailed guidance from the administration as the date for in-person learning nears.*

Morning playground supervision begins at 8:50am. The bell rings for the children to line up at 9:00 am. Each class has a specified area where their class will line up on the West (playground) side of the school; to see the **line-up map** click [HERE](#). Your child's teacher will meet the class in this location and lead them into the building.

If you are driving your child to school, you should plan to drop them off on Monticello Place and the East side of the school along Orrington Avenue. Please do not park on Orrington between Monticello and Clinton. If you plan to walk your child onto the playground, please park your car on a nearby street and leave the area next to the school on Monticello Place free for other families who wish to drop off their children. Please note that parking restrictions exist on many of the streets around the school and parking close to the school can sometimes be a challenge. Please take care to check for any restrictions before you leave your car, as Evanston City Parking Service will issue tickets to cars parked in restricted areas.

The buses drop off along the East side of the building on Orrington Avenue near the front entrance of the school. Please be sure not to block the area where buses need to park.

For a detailed **traffic pattern map**, please click [HERE](#).

In the event of inclement weather, children will go directly into the school at drop off and do not line up outside. Students will be instructed to line up in the hallway, just outside their classrooms. *\*2020-21--Children will go directly into classrooms.*

- 9. (For in-person learners) How does the end of the day work?** *The description below is for procedures that happen in a normal year. 2020-21 pick-up procedures will likely change to meet CDC requirements for keeping children safe. Please look for detailed guidance from the administration as the date for in-person learning nears.*

During a normal school year, Kindergartners are dismissed at 3:30 pm as their teachers lead them out the sport court door (located on the West side of the building by Monticello). Teachers will only dismiss Kindergarten students to approved adults or older siblings.

- 10. (For in-person learners) What if my child is going to ride the bus?** *\*Busing procedures for 2020-21 are still being determined by the district and will be released as the date for in-person learning nears. You should receive a letter prior to the start of in-person learning informing you of your child's bus number and bus stop location if you signed up for bus service at registration. If you do not receive a letter by the week before busing begins, call the D65 transportation office at 847-859-8019.*

Make sure your child knows his/her bus number! (Write it on their backpack, hand, whatever works for them). You might want to consider utilizing a backpack tag system if bus ridership will be inconsistent. Attach a "BUS" tag if she/he will be taking the bus home. Attach a "PICK-UP" tag if you will be picking your child up.

- 11. What if my child is sick or going to be late?** For any type of absence, the parent/caregiver/guardian is required to call the Orrington Main Office at 847.859.8780 and follow the prompts, or email Ms. Robinson, the school health clerk, at [robinsonm@district65.net](mailto:robinsonm@district65.net) by **10:00 am**. For an illness, leave a message that provides the following information: student name, teacher name, parent/guardian's name, reason for absence, phone number where a parent/guardian can be reached that day. If your child is going to be late, leave the same information except include whether or not he/she will be eating hot or cold lunch. If your child becomes ill during the day, the school nurse will contact you to pick up your child.

- 12. (For in-person learners) What items do I need to label with my child's name?** You will be asked to provide an extra set of clothes for your child to keep at school. Your teacher will ask you to replace them based on season. You should plan to clearly label with permanent marker all personal items: lunch bags, backpacks, clothing items, including both gym shoes, both mittens, etc.

- 13. (For in-person learners) Where will my child eat lunch?** *\*2020-21—All students will eat lunches in the classroom this year. Purchased lunches/milk will be delivered to each room. If necessary, allergies will be communicated to the class in order to keep classrooms safe. Any other type of food allergies or concerns regarding food allergies or epi-pens should be discussed in advance with the school health clerk, Ms. Robinson (she can be reached at 847-859-8782 or [robinsonm@district65.net](mailto:robinsonm@district65.net)).*

You can choose to purchase hot lunches and/or milk, or you can send a lunch from home. District meal plan information is available [HERE](#). For lunches sent from home, there is no refrigerator or microwave for lunches. If desired, invest in an insulated lunch bag and include a freezer pack and/or a thermos. Eating time is brief so don't pack too much food; start small (i.e. sandwich, yogurt, fruit or veggie) and add more food if your child requests. If you choose to buy lunch or milk occasionally, send cash or check (to District 65 Food Service) at the beginning of the year (purchases will be deducted from that amount). Or you can create an account at [myschoolbucks.com](http://myschoolbucks.com) and do it all online.

**14. (For in-person learners) Will my child be able to eat a snack if they're hungry?**

*\*2020-21--Each child participating in in-person learning will have the opportunity to eat a small snack at one point in the school day. The timing of the snack will depend upon when the class eats lunch. For example, classrooms with a later lunch time will have their snack in the morning. Each teacher determines the snack policy in their individual classroom. Your child's teacher will let you know more details about how snack time will work in their classroom. Teachers will also ask for families to volunteer to sign up to send in a box of snacks to be kept in the classroom to provide snacks to any children who have forgotten to bring one. [HERE](#) is a list of district approved snacks.*

**15. (For in-person learners) Are kindergartners supervised during recess? Are they outside with other classes?** *\*2020-21--All in-person learners will be given safe, supervised outdoor time if weather permits. Please look for more details from the administration as the date for in-person learning approaches.*

**16. (For in-person learners) What do children do in the event of indoor recess?** Orrington makes an effort to get children outside as much as possible, even in the cold and the snow. Make sure your child brings cold weather gear to school – snow pants, boots, hats, gloves, etc--and please label them as much of it looks the same. If you need clothing assistance, please contact your teacher or Ms. Robinson ([robinsonm@district65.net](mailto:robinsonm@district65.net) or 847-859-8782) who will connect you with Evanston School Children's Clothing Association (ESCCA--<http://www.escca.org/>). If it's raining or below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, children will have indoor recess. During indoor recess, the kindergartners will have supervised time inside where they can read, play board or card games, draw or color.

**17. Are there other opportunities for my child to get involved at Orrington?** There are a few extracurricular activities at Orrington in which kindergartners can take part. *\*2020-21--the Orrington PTA is partnering with other District 65 PTAs to offer many virtual enrichment opportunities for our students, including kindergartners, both before and after school. Please click [HERE](#) to learn about all the district-wide offerings and [HERE](#) to request a scholarship. Registration is ongoing.* Most kindergartners may not be ready (or have the energy) at the beginning of the year to have an extended day, and the enrichments are offered throughout the year (fall, winter and spring sessions).

**18. Are there opportunities for parents to get involved?** There are many opportunities to get involved in our community! The Orrington PTA is entirely made up of volunteers and we are always looking for more. Whether you have an hour a week, an hour a month or an hour a year we have a role for you. Please visit [[hyperlink to Get Involved](#)] for a list of current open roles. Finding a place for yourself in one or more school volunteer activities is a great way to get to know your new school community and to meet the children (and the parents/caregivers/guardians) you and your child will be spending time with for the next several years!

*\*2020-21--Because non-staff adults are not allowed in the building this year, many of our volunteer activities and events will look and feel different--but we are still hoping to provide opportunities for real connections, support, and even some fun! All school events are listed on the Orrington PTA webpage and will be communicated regularly through Dr. Plaza's weekly Eagle Update (Fridays).*

**19. What is the best way to communicate with my child's teacher?** Teachers are typically accessible via email or phone. Your child's teacher will let you know her/his preferred method of communication.

**20. How are things communicated within the school?** In a typical year, at the end of each week your child will receive a **Friday Folder** which contains all the communications from the school, PTA, community organizations, etc. that need to be shared within our community, and any work that your child is bringing home to share.

Dr. Plaza sends out a weekly **Eagle Update** each Friday with information about upcoming events and school information. The Eagle Update is the best resource for staying in the know--make sure you click on all the links and attachments. The Orrington PTA webpage, where all Eagle Updates will be warehoused in case you miss one, and the PTA Facebook page also contain lots of news and information; please like "Orrington PTA" on Facebook!

**21. Who do I contact if my child has special learning needs?** Please contact your child's teacher, the school principal, Dr. Plaza ([plazaj@district65.net](mailto:plazaj@district65.net)) or assistant principal, Mr. Siegler ([sieglerj@district65.net](mailto:sieglerj@district65.net)). If you'd like to connect with a parent resource, please reach out to Chad Calease at [chad@calease.net](mailto:chad@calease.net).

We hope this information makes your transition to kindergarten smoother. If you have further questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher, or a member of the Kindergarten Transition Team (a PTA group of parent volunteers). Chances are, someone else is wondering the same thing! And you can always contact the PTA Co-Presidents, who work hard to be accessible and available to all families, new and returning.

#### **Kindergarten Transition Team**

Phuong Le [swarm10@hotmail.com](mailto:swarm10@hotmail.com)  
Clare Scane [donovanscane@gmail.com](mailto:donovanscane@gmail.com)

**PTA Co-Presidents** [info@orringtonpta.org](mailto:info@orringtonpta.org)  
Sarah Darnton [twogoofydogs@yahoo.com](mailto:twogoofydogs@yahoo.com)  
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**PTA-Sponsored All-School Events (Please see *\*notes for possible virtual events*)**

~~**Back-to-School Social**—Held the Friday before school starts, the Back-to-School social is a fun way to meet and greet families and celebrate the start of a new school year.~~

**Book Fair** – The Book Fair is held in the school library. This year it will be in October. This is the main source of funding for our school library. Proceeds benefit our classroom libraries and our school library.  
*\*2020-21--May be able to proceed virtually.*

**Family Literacy Night** - Families gather at Orrington to learn from teachers about literacy at Orrington and engage in a variety of fun reading and writing activities. *\*2020-21--May be able to proceed virtually.*

**Cultural Festival** - Families celebrate Orrington’s diverse population through a variety of arts and craft projects and food from around the world, led by members of our community. *\*2020-21--May be able to proceed virtually.*

**Family Math Night** – Families gather at Orrington to learn from teachers about Math at Orrington, play math games and enjoy time together at school. *\*2020-21--May be able to proceed virtually.*

~~**School Carnival**—The PTA holds an annual carnival with games, food, and entertainment. This important community event is tons of fun for the entire family. All carnival activities (like face-painting, games, the bounce house, etc) are free.~~

**Talent Show** – This exciting and entertaining event, held in the spring, gives our students an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and talent in a safe, welcoming environment. *\*2020-21--May be able to proceed virtually.*

~~**Family Fun Run and Picnic**—This family event brings our entire community together during the last few weeks of school for an evening of exercise and a community barbecue.~~

### **PTA Curriculum Support Programs**

**Teacher Grants:** The PTA offers Orrington teachers the opportunity to apply for grants to enable them to, for example; undertake professional development and training, purchase additional learning materials, or offer students unique experiences. These grants are intended to support and enhance the learning of all Orrington students with an emphasis on increasing equity at Orrington.

**Book Nook:** Book Nook is Orrington’s very own “bookstore” that all students get to visit once a month with their class. Children may choose one book per visit for their home library - it is theirs to keep! Books are gently used, donated books and/or books purchased from rummage sales and discount clubs. *\*We are unable to run Book Nook in 2020-21.*

**Tutoring:** In a typical school year, Orrington participates in the district’s Fluency and Math Tutoring programs in which volunteers are trained in a specific tutoring technique that provides support to teachers in their classroom reading fluency and math curriculum. Volunteers then work with one classroom teacher, either one-on-one (reading) or in groups with 2-4 students (math) throughout the school year. If you are

interested volunteering as a tutor, please email [fluencytutors@district65.net](mailto:fluencytutors@district65.net) for more information.

*\*2020-21--This program will proceed virtually this year, with some alterations, since adult volunteers will not be allowed in district buildings.*

**Community Garden:** Orrington has a school garden that grows flowers and vegetables, has a green roof shed and composting. It is maintained by parent volunteers and acts as a wonderful outdoor classroom.

*\*2020-21--Looking for volunteers to re-envision our garden program for next year.*

**Bibliomania:** This is a District 65 program where 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders read a collection of books and then participate in various activities based on their knowledge of the books. *\*2020-21--This program may proceed virtually.*

### **PTA CommUNITY Programs**

**Eagle Equity:** The Orrington School community is committed to continued education and discussions about race and racism to develop awareness about the barriers that can divide us. The intention of this work is to help our school community be a more welcoming, equitable and inclusive place for all children and families. Last year we started our work by having regular Eagle Equity meetings led by Corrie Wallac and Dr. Plaza where we engaged in candid conversations by viewing policies, practices, and events at Orrington through an equity lens. This year we are inspired to continue--and deepen--the conversation and the work. All are welcome!

**Community Connectors:** Community Connectors will work together to promote community building at Orrington. Community Connectors will welcome families to the Orrington community, serve as a resource to answer questions or point parents/caregivers to helpful sources, coordinate grade level community events, assist teachers in planning and coordinating the end of year picnics.

**Emerging Bilingual/International Family Group:** Orrington is one of the Evanston schools that has an English as a Second Language Program. The EB coordinator helps to build a sense of community and assist EB families with any questions or help they need. All EB families are invited to join together in regular meetings to discuss important issues that impact EB families and their children.

**Teacher Appreciation:** During Teacher Appreciation Week, usually in early May, the PTA treats the teachers and staff to meals and other surprises to show our gratitude. The PTA encourages families who intend to donate additional funds to put them towards a collective amount that is divided equally between all Orrington teachers and staff as an additional thank-you.

**Hospitality Team** helps show our appreciation for teachers throughout the school year by organizing a number of catered meals for staff, funded by the PTA.

**Spiritwear:** The PTA designs and sells Orrington clothing for students and grown-ups alike – including t-shirts, pajamas, sweatshirts and magnets. These items are available for purchase at various points throughout the school year (in person) and on the PTA webpage. If you need assistance with getting spirit wear for your child, please contact your child's teacher or social workers Ms. Jennifer Lloyd

([lloydj@district65.net](mailto:lloydj@district65.net) or 847-859-8789) and Ms. Vonetta Robinson ([robinsonv@district65.net](mailto:robinsonv@district65.net) or 847-733-3875).

**ESCCA:** Evanston School Children's Clothing Association provides clothing for District 65 students in need. It is an all-volunteer network that accepts clothing donations as well as help organizing the ESCCA store. <https://www.escca.org/>

**EISMA:** Evanston in-School Music Association is a non-profit group, partly funded by District 65 PTAs, which arranges a rotating group of professional concerts by local musicians that come to all District 65 schools. *2020-21 status uncertain due to pandemic.*

**YEA:** Young Evanston Artists is a non-profit group, supported in part by District 65 PTAs, that showcases the artwork and performances of children and youth from across Evanston in their annual Spring festival in Raymond Park. *May 2021 festival status uncertain due to pandemic.*