



Frequently Asked Questions:

What is Stepping Stones?

Stepping Stones is a year-round, full day, full week preschool and child care program, for children ages 3-5 and is open from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm (Monday – Friday). Stepping Stones is a certified child care center through the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Our professional staff encourage children to progress at their own pace, according to individual needs and abilities. Children gain skills and experiences in cooperative learning, critical thinking, number and letter recognition, phonemic awareness and early math concepts, science, dramatic play, art, music, and on-going discovery. Stepping Stones' participants also have the option of attending Wee Tigers preschool during their day. Stepping Stones accepts Dakota County Child Care Assistance.

How does Stepping Stones differ from Wee Tigers?

Wee Tigers preschool, for children ages 3-5, is a half day or full day, partial week preschool program that is a Parent Aware 4-Star rated program offered during the school year, in multiple locations throughout the district. Wee Tigers offers each child a positive learning environment and prepares the child for Kindergarten entrance. Wee Tigers teachers have Bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education and are licensed by the state of Minnesota. Wee Tigers Preschool has developed a curriculum that follows the Creative Curriculum and the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress Standards set by the Minnesota Department of Education. Wee Tigers offers an "in person classroom" and an online option through our Wee Tigers Online Academy. Pathways I and Pathways II scholarships can be used for Wee Tigers preschool.

Will I be allowed to enter the building and visit my child during Stepping Stones?

Outside visitors are not allowed in the building past the Greeter (or check-in desk). Authorized pick-ups may enter the building to drop-off and pick-up their child. A staff member will be available to check in your student.

How do I register for the Stepping Stones program?

Online registration is available year-round as space in the classrooms is available. Children currently enrolled in Stepping Stones must re-register for each new school year and summer session. Openings are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

How to register:

Register Online at: www.farmingtonsteppingstones.com (Click on Register Now).

If you have already created an account for another Community Education program you may use that account to register.

If this is your first time, the program will walk you through a simple registration process to create your account.

All previous Community Education registrations must be PAID IN FULL prior to the first day of Stepping Stones.

How do I add an Authorized Pick-up to my account?

Children will be released to those designated as “authorized pickups” only. You may add authorized pick-ups by reviewing the [Managing your Child Care or Preschool Account Online](#) document linked here. Siblings may pick up, but must be at least 12 years of age (in accordance with Dakota County practice) AND listed as an Authorized Pick-up. Staff are required to ask for identification from anyone unfamiliar attempting to pick up a child. If a person who is not authorized attempts to pick up, you will be contacted. If you cannot be reached, your child will be held until you or an authorized pick-up arrives. This policy is designed to protect your child.

Are Meals or Snacks provided in Stepping Stones?

Breakfast and lunch can be purchased through Chartwell’s Food Service, the school district’s food service provider, at all locations except the TLLC. [Visit their website for more information](#) or contact them at (651) 460-3820. Children may also bring breakfast and/or lunch from home. Nutritious snacks will be provided at all locations. Children will eat meals with their teachers in the elementary school cafeteria or in their classrooms. New for 2022-2023 school year for ISD #192: **NO OUTSIDE FOOD** is allowed in any classrooms to share. This includes Birthday treats.

Are there any dates that Stepping Stones is CLOSED?

With the exception of designated dates prior to and following the summer program, Stepping Stones will be open most weekdays during the school year with the exception of the following recognized holidays when the school buildings are closed: (President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Thursday and Friday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day).

If my child does not attend Stepping Stones on a day they are scheduled to attend, do I have to pay for that day?

Our invoicing system is contract-based vs. attendance-based so you will still be charged for the days that your child is absent. However, you are allowed five (5) Leave Day Coupons for use during the school year. Please note that any leave (vacation, sick, bereavement, etc.) can be credited to your account by using a Leave Day Coupon. Contacting the Attendance Line does not automatically credit your account; you will still be required to submit a Leave Day Coupon. You may click on the link to access the Google Doc in order to submit a LDC. **[Leave Day Coupons \(fill out and submit online\)](#)**

If school is closed, has a late start, or gets out two hours early due to severe weather is Stepping Stones open?

In the event that the Farmington School District closes due to extreme weather or other emergency, Stepping Stones will also be **closed**. In the event of a closing, all attempts will be made to notify you by email. There will not be tuition reimbursement on the first two of such closings. Due to such unforeseen "acts of mother nature" tuition reimbursement for the day's attendance will occur starting on the third day that Stepping Stones is closed.

- If there is a **2 hour late start**, Stepping Stones will be open two hours late, at 8am. – At all Site locations.
- If school is **released early** due to weather, Stepping Stones will also close early.
- If **evening activities are cancelled** but elementary school remains in session all day, Stepping Stones will remain open until 6:00 pm, or until a time that is deemed necessary according to the weather conditions. We encourage parents to plan to pick up as early as possible. Refer to our website and email notifications in the event of a snow or cold day closing. School closings are also announced on local tv stations and the District's website at **www.farmington.k12.mn.us**.

Do you assess kids in different content areas?

We assess children twice a year in the following areas; social & emotional skills, language & listening skills, cognitive skills, color recognition, fine motor skills, shape recognition, practical skills and gross motor skills.

How do you plan activities for different skill levels (behind/ahead of the curve)?

Our lessons are differentiated based on skill levels of children in the room, the approach varies by curriculum topic.

How do you monitor progress?

Twice a year we have progress reports that will be sent home with the option to meet with our staff to discuss further.

How do you adjust instruction when kids aren't moving along or when they exceed learning targets?

Lessons are differentiated based on skills levels. Some children may receive extra assistance meeting a learning goal and require small group or one on one guidance, while others may be given two or three step instructions and have the ability to follow them with minimal assistance from staff to meet the goal.

Is there specific curriculum you use?

Houghton Mifflin Curriculum is used in all of our Stepping Stones classrooms.

How do you build upon your professional development?

Our staff are offered a variety of professional development opportunities throughout the school year to meet the required amount of continuing educational credits based on their position.

Do you go outside every day? Movement activities (gym/music)?

We go outside daily in the morning and afternoon dependent upon weather. If weather is not favorable, we have access to a gym twice a day. We also have music in the classroom.

How do you address discipline issues? Pushing? Social issues? Misuse of materials?

Our staff are trained in *Conscious Discipline* techniques of classroom and behavioral management.

What is your student/teacher ratios?

We operate a 1:10 ratio in our preschool classrooms with a maximum of 20 students and two staff.

What ways do you communicate with parents?

Parents are communicated with via email and phone with the ability to request meetings on an as-needed basis. Parents are emailed our curriculum newsletter on a weekly basis so they can see what skills and topics we are covering that week.

Do you practice weather and safety drills?

We practice shelter in place and evacuation drills on a quarterly basis within each of our buildings.

Where do I find Leave Day Coupons?

Each child enrolled will earn five (5) Leave Day Coupons (LDCs) for the school year and two (2) LDCs for the summer contract to be used for sickness or vacation days. LDCs expire at the end of each contract session and may not be rolled over or combined. LDCs must be submitted within 30 days of the absence date. You may fill out a [Leave Day Coupon Google Form](#) to request to use Leave Day Coupons.

Is Financial Assistance available for Stepping Stones?

Financial Assistance, to those who qualify, may be available through the Dakota County Community Services, Child Care Assistance Program. For eligibility information please call (651) 554-5611 or visit their website at: www.co.dakota.mn.us.

How do I obtain my tax statement?

[Click here](#) for instructions on how to obtain your tax statement.

How do I withdraw from Stepping Stones?

If you choose to withdraw your Stepping Stones contract, please submit your request by email to klester@farmington.k12.mn.us. A two-week notice is required, unless special circumstances are taken into consideration. No exceptions will be made once billing has been processed.

Do you have other questions that have not been answered here?

Please let us know!

Contact **Kim Lester, Administrative Assistant**

Program Support for Kid Connection and Stepping Stones

Email: klester@farmington.k12.mn.us