**Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center**

**Information Packet**

 **School Address** 21 Carter Street, Lowell, MA

**Telephone Number**(978)-446-7000

**School Website:** <https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/Domain/30>

 **WELCOME!**

The staff and administrators of the Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center welcome you and your family to our school community. We look forward to an exciting school year and getting to know you and your child.

Our staff is committed to getting to know all of our students and families and creating a strong school community. Please reach out to our staff if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, we want to foster two-way communication. Preschool children are curious and eager learners. We welcome families as partners in learning and encourage family engagement throughout the school year. Please take a few moments to review this important information packet and keep it in a safe place for future reference.

**Early Childhood Coordinator:** Lisa Van Thiel 978-674-2051

**Assistant Early Childhood Coordinator :** Susan LaCroix 978-674-2050

**Clerk: Laurie Carney** 978-446-7000

**Social Worker**: Jennifer Williams 978-446-7000 x46904

**Nurse Consult (No Nurse on Site)** Hope Desruisseaux

 hdesruisseaux@lowell.k12.ma.us

**HELPFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

**Family Resource Center/151 Merrimack St.** 978-674-4321

**School Department Transportation** 978-674-4333

* **North Reading Transportation(Provider)** 978-323-0101
* **Pride Star Sped Transportation(Provider)** 978-856-7401

**Food Service**  978-674-2077

**Special Education Department** 978-674-4322

**School Hours**

**Half-day AM Preschool Sessions – 9:10 AM - 11:40 AM**

**Half-day PM Preschool Sessions – 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM**

**Full-day Preschool Sessions – 9:10 AM – 3:30 PM**

**Specialists and Special Education Staff:**

Special Education Teacher - Kristen Fletcher kfletcher@lowell.k12.ma.us

Evaluation Team Chair - Kim Travis ktavis@lowell.k12.ma.us

Assistant Special Education Director - Erin Upton eupton@lowell.k12.ma.us

Occupational Therapist - Cassandra Bolles cbolles@lowell.k12.ma.us

Speech & Language – Krystal Gratta kgratta@lowell.k12.ma.us

Psychologist – Marin Cleary mcleary@lowell.k12.ma.us

Board Certified Behavior Analyst BCBA – Megan Chane mchane@lowell.k12.ma.us

**Arrival and Dismissal**

**Walkers** – Walkers will enter through the front door and be brought in by a staff member to meet their class

**Families transporting children -** All families **MUST** drop off and pick-up on Carter Ave. along the side of the school building. Please pull all the way up to the gate, display your child’s name placard on the passenger side window or dashboard. Once your child exits the gate, please walk along the fence with your child to your car. Please place your child in the car when possible from the right side along the fence. **Please buckle children in for safety**.

**Buses will be dropping off and picking up** in the front of the building at 9:10 AM and 3:20 PM. No one can park in front of the school. Families must **AVOID** parking on Livingston Street and walking to the front of the school, it creates extra traffic and safety issues. Families transporting students to and from school must enter via Carter Ave by pulling up to the gate on Carter Ave along the side of the building.

Any student arriving at school after 9:20 AM or 1:10 PM must ring the bell at the front door on Carter Street. Students that arrive late must be accompanied by an adult to the front office. Late students will be accompanied to their classroom by a staff member once they have signed in.

***Students will only be released to a parent/guardian or to a person listed on your child’s emergency form*. *Written notice must be received by the office to release to any other person. All individuals picking up students must have a photo ID with them.***

**PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL**

Please help your child “**be the best that they can be.**”

* Get plenty of rest. Most children need **8 full hours of sleep**.
* Come to school **on time, and attend everyday.**
* Have an **extra set of clothes** in their cubby or backpack.
* Have a **backpack** to carry things to and from school.
* Read **newsletters.**
* Review **On-line Calendars** for both Lowell Public Schools and the Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center. **“Stay in the KNOW.”**
* **Contact us** if you have any information to share, questions, suggestions, or comments.
* **Get involved any way you can**. We are partners in your child’s education.

**Blankets and Pillows:** If your child is enrolled in the **full-day program** please provide your child with a crib sheet, blanket, and small pillow. All bedding will be sent home weekly to be laundered.

**CLOTHING**

Please make sure that your child comes to school in comfortable clothes. We go outdoors every day (weather permitting) and children should be dressed for the weather. In the winter, please make sure your child has boots, mittens, etc. The temperature in our classrooms is sometimes unpredictable. Dressing your child in layers (t-shirt, sweater) is recommended.

We encourage children to be curious and engaged learners. As children explore sand, water, various art mediums, or nature, their clothes may become wet or soiled, so please send children in play clothes and sneakers, or boots. Please leave an extra set of clothes in your child’s cubby.

**Please label** your child’s clothing with their name, especially outerwear. We have a **Lost and Found**in the office, but you can avoid your child’s clothes being added to the pile by placing your child’s first and last name on the tag!

**IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:**

* **Please do not** leave students unattended in the school yard or building prior to 9:10 AM, as adult supervision is not available until that time.
* Please **do not park on the side of the building on Carter Avenue or along Livingston Street especially at the corner as it slows down carpool and makes it difficult for buses to make the corner.**
* **Please keep your child buckled in their car seat** while waiting in the carpool line. **Do not unbuckle them until it is time to unload.** If you must park, please do so behind the school or at the top of Livingston Street and walk down.
* If you are dropping off your child on foot, please drop them off by entering the **front gate** on Carter Street and going to the office.
* Always report directly to the office when entering the building.
* Please do not enter the play yard during drop-off or pick-up.
* Use caution when driving in the school zone!!!

**These measures are in place so that we can ensure that all students are safe at all times! We appreciate your cooperation in these matters.**

**SCHOOL CALENDAR**

The [Lowell Public School Calendar 2023-2024 school year](https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/cms/lib/MA01907636/Centricity/domain/4/2023-2024%20calendars/District%20Calendar%202023-2024.pdf) will be sent home on the first day of school and is posted on the district and school’s websites. Please visit Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center’s home page for additional information at <https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/Domain/30>

**ATTENDANCE**

The School Committee, Central Administration, and staff at the Cardinal O’Connell School consider regular attendance essential for success in school. Thus, we adhere to the [attendance policy](https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/Page/3143) set forth by the Lowell School Committee. Students are expected to be in school each and every day.

Preschool Attendance: It is the parent(s)/ guardian(s) responsibility to ensure regular attendance. Regular attendance matters and assists your child in making friends and participating in classroom activities. Given that there is limited space available in Lowell Public Schools for preschool age children, the district has established an attendance policy. Children with unexcused absences of more than 10% of the total number of days of school will be provided written notice and may be unenrolled.

We acknowledge that an absence will be considered an **excused** absence due to one of the following reasons: illness, a death in the family, a religious holiday, court appearance, disability, or hospitalization and is accompanied by a parent or doctor note.

**Please make every effort to schedule appointments before or after school or during vacations to increase your child’s participation.**

**When your child is absent, you should:**

1. Call the school or Dojo your classroom teacher to notify the school of your child’s absence.
2. Write a note stating the reason for the absence and send it into school when your child returns. Or provide a doctor’s note where applicable.

**Tardiness** to school is disruptive to the learning process for both your child and his/her peers. Please avoid being late as our staff work hard to create a sense of community. During arrival, children and staff often engage in conversations. Arrival and departure routines provide time for children to share information with one another about their lives and introduce family members, peers and adults to one another. ***A student who is late, must be accompanied by an authorized adult into the office and then signed in***.

**Dismissals** during school hours are strongly discouraged and must be kept to a minimum.  A change in your child’s dismissal plan **must be** made by sending in a note or by placing a phone call **before 2:30PM,** so that we can ensure that all of our students are safely and properly dismissed. Last minute changes make dismissal more difficult.

\*\*Please note that **chronic absences and tardies** are detrimental to the learning process and impact children’s interactions with peers. Four (4) or more excused or unexcused absences will be followed up by either the Early Childhood Coordinator or the Social Worker.

**SICK CARE POLICY**

In the event that a child becomes sick during school hours, they will be removed from the classroom and sent to the school social worker or an administrator. Parents will then be called to pick up their child. The Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center does not have the facilities to care for sick children, so it is important that children are picked up as soon as possible.

If your child is home with any contagious illness, please let the school know, so we may take appropriate precautions with other students. While we expect your child to attend school regularly, **please do not send a child who shows signs of being ill to school**. Colds, fevers, etc. spread very quickly in classrooms.

Your child must remain home if he/she has any of the following (printed with permission by the School Health Unit/Lowell Health Department):

* A contagious illness like chicken pox, flu, or strep throat, until the doctor says it’s safe to return
* A rash or skin condition not diagnosed by a doctor
* A fever that causes chills, sweating or muscle aches, or a temperature over 101 degrees within the past 24 hours
* Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
* Red or pink eyes, or drainage from eyes

**NO SCHOOL/HALF DAYS/DELAY OF SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT**

* Early Dismissal on Thanksgiving Holiday @ 11:30 (No half day Preschool)
* Early Release days @ 1:30 (No half day or Full day Preschool)
* On stormy days, the NO SCHOOL or DELAY OF SCHOOL announcements will be made through a ConnectEd (a call to home) and posted on the Lowell Public School website.
* Announcements will also be publicized on the local radio station WCAP – 980 AM and televised on Channels 4, 5, 7 and 25.
* When there is a ***delayed opening AM/PM Sessions of Preschool are canceled***.

**CHILD HEALTH AND SAFETY: NUT SENSITIVE/ALLERGY AWARE**

We are a **Nut Sensitive School.** Our goal is to keep all of our students safe, so we ask that you **do not** send nut-based food items to school. There are many nut-based substitutes that help to ensure the safety of all our students. It is **important** for parents to keep the school up to date on any allergies their child may have, so that we can plan accordingly and take the necessary precautions.

**NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION**

Parents are requested to send snacks and lunches that reflect healthy eating habits. Lunch should include a sandwich, fruit, and milk or water. Please be sure to send in meals that your child enjoys and items that they can easily open and manage. For the safety of children, please do not send any sort of glass bottle for lunch or snack.

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

Parents and guardians must be responsible for keeping information in our system correct including:

* Change of Address
* Work and home numbers for parents
* Name and contact information for emergency contacts

In order that we have up-to-date information in case of an emergency etc., please notify the school as soon as possible if there are any changes in parent/s, guardian/s, student address, or telephone number. It is imperative that the school is able to reach you during school hours. Please call the school’s clerk, Laurie Carney@ 978-446-7000 she will be happy to make any necessary changes. You may also find our emergency form online and download with updates at any time. **If changes are required in bus routes or stops, you must make them at the Family Resource Center at 151 Merrimack St.**

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

We welcome parents to visit the school and encourage you to keep the lines of communication open at all times. You know your child best and when we work together, great things can happen. Please complete and return a completed [Family Survey. It will](https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/cms/lib/MA01907636/Centricity/Domain/2813/Family%20Survey%202020%2021.docx) help us get to know more about your child and your family’s interests.

All visitors (including parents) must report to the office upon entering the building.

If you would like to speak to your child’s teacher, please call the office to set up a time or to leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible. If you have questions or concerns about your child, your first step should be to speak with the classroom teacher.

School Site Council meets regularly. Please keep an eye out for our meeting schedule on the website or in the monthly newsletter. We welcome and encourage all to attend. Please consider being nominated to serve on our Council. Please email lvanthiel@lowell.k12.ma.us for more details. All parents and families are welcome to participate and share ideas.

**FAMILY COMMUNICATION**

A **monthly newsletter** will be posted on the website, sent via Dojo and email to families. This document is created in an effort to keep everyone informed! Please take a few minutes to read it. You can also check out the school **website** <https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/Domain/30> for school events and the school calendar.

**Two-way communication** – Each classroom teacher will communicate to families directly through the  **Class Dojo App**. You will receive information about how to download and use this app. We will let you know if there are any changes at school that will affect your child. If changes occur at home: new baby, moving, etc. please let us know. Oftentimes changes impact behavior and together we can work in the best interest of your child.

**FAMILY VOLUNTEERS**

Parents are always welcomed to volunteer within our school. Many volunteer opportunities are available in our school both on a regular and a one-time basis.   However, all in-school volunteers must have a criminal record check (CORI) before volunteering in our school. There are many ways for families to volunteer and we look forward to your participation and ideas. If you wish to volunteer, you must fill out a CORI form.

[LINK TO CORI FORM](https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=3767&dataid=3732&FileName=2017_2018_SCHOOL_VOLUNTEER_FORMS.pdf)

**FAMILY CONFERENCES, PROGRESS REPORTS AND REPORT CARDS**

All students are assessed throughout the year and progress is shared with families. Progress Reports are completed one time per year and Report Cards completed three times per year.

Family Conferences occur two times per year; first meeting to discuss the Progress Report and the second conference will occur to discuss the second report card grading. Expect to hear from your child’s teacher in October and April to schedule a parent conference.

**TEACHER ASSISTED TEAM (TAT)**

If a parent or teacher has concerns about a student’s development, progress or behavior, families will be invited to attend a TAT meeting to discuss strategies to support growth. Meetings can be requested by families by reaching out to your child’s teacher.

**ASQ**

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is a developmental and social emotional screening tool we ask parents to complete at the beginning and the end of the school year. Drawing upon parents’ expert knowledge, ASQ has been specifically designed to pinpoint developmental progress and identify areas of growth. You will receive an email from your child’s teacher with a link that will allow you to complete the ASQ from your computer, tablet or phone. This is an excellent opportunity for parents and teachers to work as a team in supporting the growth and development of students.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

**TOYS AND VALUABLES**

Toys or valuables from home should be left at home. The Cardinal O’Connell staff’s priority is to create a safe and nurturing learning environment for children. When children bring toys or valuables to school they can distract from learning, get broken, stolen, or lost. Unless children are asked to bring something to school please leave all toys and other personal items at home. Given Covid 19 following the above policies is very important.

**BIRTHDAY PARTIES**

Children’s birthdays will be acknowledged as part of community meetings held daily. If you wish to send in something special for your child’s birthday, we ask that you consider healthy alternatives such as fruit or vegetable trays, raisins and chocolate chips, or cheese and crackers. Please send items to be shared in the original package to ensure it is safe for students with allergies. Please NEVER send anything with nuts to school or snacks to be shared with others unless you have spoken to the classroom teacher. The Cardinal O’Connell School is a Nut Free Zone/Allergy Aware.

**HOLIDAYS**

We recognize that some holidays are recognized by sharing special treats e.g. Halloween and Valentines. Please, if you wish for your child to share with classmates, consider healthy choices and follow our Nut Free Zone/Allergy Aware Policy.