



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

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- [Home](#)

## Entity Print



- [School Home](#)
- [About Our School](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Counseling Services](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Get Involved / Partnerships](#)
- [Handbook](#)
- [Health Services](#)
- [Library Services](#)
- [Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Prekindergarten](#)
- [Principal's Corner](#)
- [Psychology Services](#)

- [Registration](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [School Activities](#)
- [School Excellence Report](#)
- [School Improvement](#)
- [School Meals Program](#)
- [School News](#)
- [Student Transition Program \(Inbound & Outbound\)](#)
- [Student Transportation](#)
- Spacing
- [AHERA](#)
- [ICE](#)
- [SHAP](#)

## Universal Prekindergarten Program: A New Chapter in DoDEA Education

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) announced the implementation of Universal Prekindergarten in 80 locations for School Year 2024-2025. This initiative marked the first phase of a comprehensive three-phase plan to enhance early childhood education within the DoDEA school system.?

### Key Program Details:

- **Phase I:** 80 schools, including MC Perry Primary School, which opened in SY 23-24, opened their doors to young learners, providing a solid foundation for their educational journey.
- **Phase II:** Fort Campbell schools (Barkley, Barsanti, Lucas and Marshall), Kleine Brogel and Ramstein Elementary Schools will implement UPK in school year 2025-26.
- **Phase III:** Ansbach, Aukamm, Parker and Wiesbaden Elementary Schools will implement UPK when school capacity is available.

## School Enrollment

DoDEA implemented universal full-day PK at most elementary schools starting in school year (SY) 2024-25, providing intervening services for all four-year-olds who met the eligibility policies outlined in [DoDEA AI 1344.01, Eligibility and Enrollment Requirements for DoDEA Schools](#).

PK enrollment is projected to be similar to the current kindergarten enrollment.

Students who currently have a disability and are eligible for educational and related services within their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will enroll in the PK program and be supported to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

DoDEA's PK Program will embrace and implement the co-teaching methodology in which teachers are paired together to share responsibilities of planning, instructing, and assessing students to provide a continuum of services.

# Prekindergarten Benefits for DoDEAs Military-Connected Students

- **Education:** PK helps prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond by building foundational abilities in language, literacy, and math.
- **Resilience and well-being:** PK programs can help children develop important skills, such as cooperation, communication, and self-regulation.
- **Cognitive:** Studies have shown that children who attend PK programs have better cognitive outcomes, such as better memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.
- **Economic:** Investing in PK may have long-term savings to the government, such as reducing the need for special education services and increasing the likelihood of children graduating from high school and going on to college or a career. It is also a significant cost savings for military families who pay for private PK programs and/or childcare services.
- **Academic Achievement:** PK programs are proactive, responsive and comprehensive to develop all children to their greatest potential by providing excellent instruction based on student needs.
- **Family engagement:** PK programs support families by providing them with resources and information to support their child's learning at home and encouraging family engagement in the child's education.

## Family-Style Dining

The full-day PK program includes lunch served family-style in the classroom. Family-style dining is a meal service which permits children to serve themselves and make choices in selecting foods and serving size. The use of small pitchers, a limited number of portions on service plates, and adult assistance enables children to successfully serve themselves. Family-style dining is a best practice and is encouraged by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The [DoDEA Student Information System \(DSIS\)](#) will provide multiple notifications during the enrollment process about the mandatory participation in the Student Meal Program (SMP) as part of the enrollment conditions.

For PK enrollment, sponsors are required to fill out the Free and Reduced Meal Application. This will determine the eligibility for free or reduced lunch. Unless students qualify for free or reduced-priced meals, sponsors are obligated to buy daily lunch at full cost. Home-sent meals and snacks are not permitted.

Sponsors are required to establish the student's SMP account with the identified installation SMP provider.

Students benefit from family-style dining in a variety of ways. Family-style dining meets the PK standards by fostering social skills such as executive functioning, language development, nutrition and health education, and motor skill development all which supports the PK standards

## A Milestone Achievement

While select schools within DoDEA have previously offered the Sure Start Program and part-time Prekindergarten to eligible families, this marks the FIRST time DoDEA will have a PK program OPEN in ALL primary schools. DoDEA is committed to creating an enriching learning environment for our military-connected students.

## Program Highlights

- **Qualified Educators:** Our prekindergarten program will be led by qualified and experienced early childhood educators.
- **Tailored Curriculum:** Age-appropriate curriculum designed to individual needs.
- **Play-Based Learning:** Encouraging creativity and critical thinking through play-based activities.
- **Family Collaboration:** Collaborative partnerships with parents and families to enhance the learning experience.

## Next Steps

We are on the verge of a new chapter in DoDEA education, and we invite you to stay connected and engaged in this exciting journey. As we prepare to open doors to additional schools in Phase II, DoDEA remains dedicated to providing the highest quality education to our military-connected students.

**Thank you for being a part of this momentous occasion as we shape a brighter future for our young learners!**

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