



2026-2027 FAQ for New Families

Welcome to Spectrum!

We are a small, community-centered school serving students ages 3 through 14 years. Because of our size, teachers and staff are able to know students well and work closely with families. At Spectrum, we believe children are active participants in their own learning. We value curiosity, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, kindness, and a genuine love of learning.

This guide is designed to answer the practical questions that come up most often for new families and to help you feel comfortable navigating your first year at Spectrum. This guide is intended as a quick reference. For complete school policies and procedures, please refer to the current 2026-2027 Spectrum School Handbook.

The Spectrum Experience

What does “progressive school” mean?

At Spectrum, progressive education begins with understanding each child as a whole person and as an individual learner. Rather than following a rigid, identical sequence of lessons for every student, teachers design learning experiences that respond to students' questions, interests, needs, and developing abilities.

You will see students:

- Ask questions and investigate ideas
- Learn through projects, experiences, discussion, and hands-on activities
- Make choices about aspects of their learning
- Work collaboratively with classmates
- Develop strategies for thinking, reading, solving problems, and designing solutions
- Connect ideas across different subject areas
- Explain and reflect on what they have learned
- Demonstrate their learning in different ways

At Spectrum, **how students learn matters as much as what they produce.**

Creativity, curiosity, collaboration, caring for others and the planet, and student ownership of learning are central to our approach.

What might feel different from a traditional school?

Families may notice that Spectrum does not always look like a conventional school. There is not necessarily one identical assignment, project, or learning path for every student. Teachers may integrate subjects around themes or projects, and students may have meaningful choices in how they demonstrate what they know.

Our goal is not simply to teach students what to think. We want to help them develop the strategies and confidence to **think, question, solve problems, create, communicate, and learn independently.**



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The School Day

When is the first day of school?

Monday, August 31st. The Year at a Glance calendar can be found on our website under the Student Life tab.

What times does school start and end?

- Morning drop off begins: 8:10AM
- The school day begins: 8:30AM
- Preschool morning-only dismissal: 11:30AM
- All full-day levels dismissal: 3:00PM

Where do I drop off my child?

All levels drop off at the **upper driving circle** beginning at 8:10AM.

Where do I pick up my child?

Preschool

Preschool families park in the **lower lot**. Pickup is on the playground or outside the main office at:

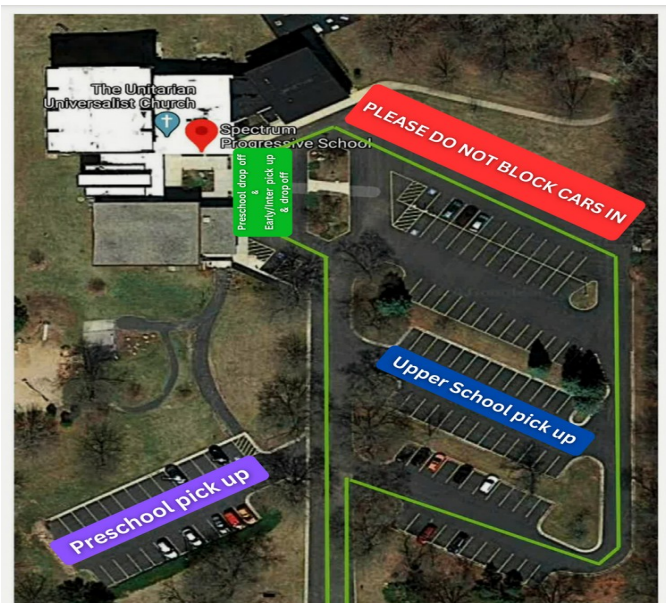
- Morning-only program: 11:30AM
- Full-day program: 3:00PM

Early / Intermediate

3:00PM pickup is at the **upper driving circle**.

Upper

3:00PM pickup is at the **middle level lot**.





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A Day at Spectrum

What does my child's schedule look like?

Teachers will provide class schedules early in the school year. Schedules and additional information about classroom routines are also available in the Spectrum School Handbook.

What should my child bring to school?

Suggested list for families:

- Backpack
- Water bottle
- Lunch
- Daily snack
- Weather-appropriate clothing
- Outdoor/winter gear as required
- Extra clothing for preschool students

What should my child wear?

Students should come dressed for comfortable participation in the school day, including outdoor activities. Spectrum's School Handbook includes additional information regarding clothing and weather-related outerwear requirements.

Lunch and Snacks

What should I send for lunch?

Students should bring lunch from home. In addition, each child should have a healthy snack each day.

Examples include:

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Crackers
- Yogurt
- Other nutritious snacks
- Water or a juice box

Snacks are available for purchase daily in our school store. We offer a variety of snack options for students to choose from.

Soda, energy drinks, and gum are not allowed at school.

Students eat lunch in their classrooms.



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Attendance, Absences, and Sick Days

What should I do if my child will be absent?

Please notify the school as soon as possible if your child will be absent.

When should my child stay home because they are sick?

- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature over 100 degrees. Students may not return to school until he/she has been fever free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication).
- Diarrhea: defined as 4-5 loose stools within a 24-hour period. Students may not return to school until 12 hours after the last episode.
- Vomiting: students may return to school 12 hours after the last episode and are able to tolerate food.
- Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis): children must be treated with prescription antibiotic drops for a full 24 hours before returning to school.
- Acute infections: this could include, *upper respiratory infections, strep throat, scarlet fever, etc.* Any infection requiring an antibiotic will require that the child be excluded from school until they are fever free and on the antibiotic for a full 24 hours.
- Chicken Pox: students may not return to school until they are fever free for a full 24 hours and all of the lesions are dry and crusted.
- Head lice: students may return to school once the first treatment is complete and the child is nit (egg) free.

Health, Medication & Emergencies

What if my child needs medication during the school day?

Please contact the main office and review the medication procedures in the School Handbook.

What if my child has an allergy or other medical need?

Families should make sure the school has current information about any medical conditions, allergies, medications, emergency contacts, and other needs that could affect a student's safety or ability to participate in school.

What should I do if there is a family emergency?

Please call the main office at 815-877-1600 and inform our staff. They will inform teachers and support necessary actions.

How will I be notified during an emergency?

For emergency school closures, Spectrum currently uses multiple communication channels, including:



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- Emergency notifications to cell phones through Bright Arrow
- Email
- Facebook
- The school website
- The website's bulletin board/front page
- News media when appropriate

Communication

How does Spectrum communicate with families?

Spectrum uses several communication methods, including:

- Email blasts,
- The school website (www.spectrumschool.org)
- Email from the teachers and staff
- Text messaging if worked out with the teacher/staff
- Social Media Platforms:
 - A private Facebook group **Spectrum Progressive School Community**, (note, the Public Facebook page is Spectrum Progressive School of Rockford). You can search for this on Facebook and ask to join the group, or you can ask our Facebook admin to send an invite. (r.barnett@spectrumschool.org)
 - TikTok

The public Facebook page is Spectrum Progressive School of Rockford. The private Facebook group, Spectrum Progressive School Community, is intended for Spectrum families and staff.

Who do I contact if I have a question or concern about my child's progress?

The child's teacher is always the first point of contact. Please feel free to communicate TO the school via phone, texts, email, or a written note to the teacher. It is best protocol to first contact the staff member closest to your child or the situation should a question or concern arise.

Who do I contact with any tuition or fee questions?

Marci Hallgren, Director of Finance at m.hallgren@spectrumschool.org



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Curriculum & Learning

How can I find out more about the curriculum?

Families can learn more through:

- The Spectrum website - information and videos
- The school handbook, located on our school website
- Conversations with classroom teachers
- Members of the Education Committee. We can share contact information on request.

How is my child's progress communicated?

Parent-teacher conferences are conducted each semester. We also hold portfolio / showcase nights to recognize and celebrate student achievement.

Before- & After-School Care: Compass

Is there any before or after school care?

Yes. Compass provides before- and after-school care as well as some full-day programming when school is not in session. Compass offers supervised play and scheduled enrichment activities.

Information regarding our Compass program and current fees can be found on our website under Student Life.

Field Trips & Experiential Learning

Why does Spectrum take field trips?

Field trips are an important part of Spectrum's experiential approach to learning. Every Spectrum field trip is intended to serve an educational purpose and extend students' learning beyond the classroom.

How will I know about field trips?

Families are informed about field trips in advance. Parents/guardians provide permission through the school's enrollment/registration process and required field-trip forms.



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Can parents chaperone field trips?

Yes. Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate when volunteers are needed.

Transportation: Spectrum's policy does not have teachers serve as field-trip drivers. Parent/guardian drivers may therefore be needed for field trips. If there are not enough drivers, a field trip may need to be canceled.

Car seats: Parents who provide transportation for children who require car seats are responsible for ensuring the appropriate car seat is available and properly installed. Families should arrive early enough to install car seats before the trip.

Teachers will coordinate student seating and transportation assignments in advance. This arrangement allows teachers to focus on supervising students, managing the educational experience, and responding to emergencies.

Birthdays & Classroom Celebrations

How are birthdays celebrated at Spectrum?

Spectrum recognizes each child's birthday in age-appropriate ways. Celebrations may include:

- Singing special songs
- Reading birthday stories
- Giving the birthday child opportunities to choose meaningful activities

Classroom birthday celebrations generally recognize children who have birthdays during that month.

Summer birthdays may be recognized as half-birthdays.

Preschool and Early Elementary groups may celebrate birthdays on or near the child's actual birthday.

Can families send treats?

Families are welcome to provide a small treat for their child's class to celebrate their special day.

Please keep treats **simple and easy to serve** and be mindful of any classroom allergy or dietary restrictions. If you have questions about an appropriate treat, please check with your child's teacher ahead of time.

Can my child hand out birthday party invitations at school?

Home-party invitations should not be distributed at school unless **all children in the class are invited**. The school celebration is intended to be part of the regular school day and is not intended to replace an at-home birthday party.



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Can another parent pick up my child for an after-school birthday party?

Transportation to after-school parties is the responsibility of parents/guardians. The school will not release a child to another parent for a party unless written permission has been provided by the child's parent/guardian. Email consent is acceptable. Please use the same consideration for after-school party transportation as you would for invitation distribution.

Family Involvement

Are there volunteer opportunities?

Yes! Spectrum values family involvement while recognizing that families have different schedules, skills, and capacities.

Families may be able to participate by:

- Helping with classroom activities
- Chaperoning field trips
- Sharing a special skill, talent, or interest
- Helping with school events
- Serving on a committee
- Serving on the Board
- Supporting other school or community activities

The school has a volunteer form that lists opportunities and also welcomes families to suggest skills or interests that are not already listed.

How do I get more involved?

Contact Marci, the main office, or any Board member to learn more about current opportunities. Spectrum appreciated whatever level of involvement works for your family.

Final Note to Families

Thank you for choosing Spectrum Progressive School of Rockford.

We recognize that starting at a new school comes with questions, both large and small. Please don't hesitate to ask. Our goal is to build strong relationships among students, families, teachers, and staff and to create a school community where children feel known, supported, challenged, and excited to learn.

Welcome to Spectrum!