



**A Foundation
for Lifelong Learning**

Leap Early Education Program Parent Handbook

web.dusd.net/leap



Dear Leap Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Downey Unified School District's Leap family! This handbook will provide insights about our program and define the crucial role that you play in partnering with us during this special time in your child's development. We want you to remain informed and comfortable communicating with our staff regarding your child's needs. In Downey Unified School District, we believe that *"Our Kids Deserve the Best!"* and we are committed to providing a quality educational program which enhances the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of each child.

We appreciate that each individual student and family contributes value and diversity to our program. We recognize the importance of building lasting relationships to create a positive experience for all children. In this Handbook, you will find useful information regarding our Early Education Program, our goals and philosophy, as well as the roles and responsibilities of both families and staff in establishing a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

We believe that it takes a village to raise a child and understand that families are the first and most important educators for their children. It is essential that you take time to read the contents of this handbook and maintain current contact information throughout the year to remain informed about our Early Education Program. As we grow our program, we will continue to add information to serve as helpful guide in answering many of your questions.

We look forward to providing a quality program for your child and hope that you continue to experience success and pride in being part of our Downey Unified family!

Respectfully,

Charlene Shimada, Ed.D.

Coordinator, Early Education

The purpose of this Handbook is to inform you of the policies and procedures set forth by the Downey Unified School District's Leap Early Education Program.

Leap is designed to provide the best possible care and educational opportunity for your child. Downey Unified School District reserves the right to change or supplement these policies/procedures at any time. By registering your child for Leap, you understand that upon enrollment, you agree and will comply with the policies outlined in this handbook.

Leap operates from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, in alignment with the Downey Unified School District calendar. This program is self-supporting; tuition is collected to pay for staff salaries, classroom materials and supplies, and upkeep of classrooms. Extended Care is also available for an additional cost, please see the appropriate section in this Handbook for more information.

Tuition is based on a monthly rate for the entire school year and paid electronically in automatic monthly installments billed on the first of each month. The full fee schedule is located on the following page for the whole school year.

Children must be 3 years of age and fully potty trained. Students age-eligible for TK, which would be turning 4-years-old on or before September 1st, may enroll in a school age program at one of our elementary schools.

All our classes have one Instructor with one assistant throughout the day. There are always two adults within each classroom of children.

Registration and enrollment procedures as well as tuition payments are handled online through Q Parent Connect. Questions and assistance with registration, enrollment or payments can be provided by the Leap Office at (562) 904-3571.

Registration and Tuition

There is a \$125 registration fee per child, due upon enrollment each school year along with tuition for the first month. Monthly fees for the 2026-2027 school year are based upon a monthly tuition rate. Fees will be collected electronically in automatic monthly installments due on the first of each month prior to providing services. Please see the chart on the following page for a breakdown of dates.

Leap Fee Schedule 2026-2027

Failure to pay by the 3rd of the month will initiate a \$10.00 per day late fee. Tuition and late fees are required in full each month by the 7th to avoid termination of your child's Leap contract services. There is no fee adjustment made for any absences. Failure to pay required fees, even though a child does not attend during the month, will automatically result in termination of Leap services.

 Fee Schedule 			
Month	Tuition per Month	# of Lunches per Month	Monthly Cost for Lunch (\$6.50/day)
August	\$525	12	FREE
September	\$825	21	\$136.50
October	\$825	21	\$136.50
November	\$825	15	\$97.50
December	\$525	14	\$91.00
January	\$825	18	\$117.00
February	\$825	15	\$97.50
March	\$825	19	\$123.50
April	\$825	20	\$130.00
May	\$825	20	\$130.00
June	FREE	3	\$19.50

A 10% discount is available for any additional siblings enrolled in the program. Siblings must be enrolled in the same household account to qualify.

All payments are non-refundable.

If you are withdrawing your child from the Leap program, a written notice must be received two weeks prior to your child's last day of attendance or you may be charged tuition for the entire month.

Important Dates and Holidays

August 13 – (Minimum Day) Meet and Greet at 9am

August 14 – First full day

August 21 – Opt-in of School Lunches though ParentConnect (Sept. - Dec. 20)

September 7 – Labor Day Holiday

October 12 – Student Free Day/Staff Development Day

November 11 – Veterans Day Holiday

November 23-27 – Thanksgiving Break

December 1 – Opt-in/Opt-out of School Lunches & Extended Care (AM, PM or Both) through ParentConnect (Jan. - June 4)

December 21-January 1– Winter Break

January 4 – Student Free Day

January 18 – Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday

February 15-19 – President's Week Break

March 26-April 2 – Spring Break

May 31 – Memorial Day

June 4 – Last day of School

Attendance Procedures

Regular daily attendance is encouraged to maximize the instructional benefits of the program. It is also good practice for families when your child starts TK at the elementary school. Please notify Leap staff if your child will be absent for any reason or if there are any changes in your child's schedule.

Drop Off and Pick Up without Before/After School Care

Dropping students off at school:

Please park in the back lot. Families will walk students to the arrival/dismissal gate. Staff will be at the gate to greet students. Students will walk themselves to the classroom with their backpack, water bottle, snack bag, and other items they bring to school. Staff are there for safety and support. We start the day playing on the playground or in the classroom.

Picking up students from the back parking lot:

Until staff get to know you, all people picking up a student need to bring a valid identification card (driver's license or id card). Students will only be released to persons authorized on the emergency card/authorization form by the enrolling parent/guardian. If someone other than the authorized person must pick up your child, they must have prior permission by the parent/guardian that is communicated with Leap staff. Legal documents delineating a child's custody or release must be on file and updated as needed. It is very important that you notify your child's teacher of any changes related to the release of your child. No child will be released to anyone under the age of 18.

Again, it is imperative that anyone picking up your child must have a valid id and is on the emergency contact list.

We encourage parents/guardians to avoid late drop-offs or early pick-ups to maximize instructional time and limit classroom interruptions. In the event of a late drop-off or

early pick-up, parents/guardians will use the Leap main office to take the student to or from the classroom. **We strongly encourage good attendance habits now. These will carry-over to TK and Kinder in elementary school.**

Extended Before and After School Care

Leap will provide Extended Before School and/or After School Care for an additional fee. Our Leap Assistants will be the daily caretakers. Before School Care is from 7:30-8:00 a.m. and After School Care is from 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Additional Fees:

\$12.50/week for morning (30 minutes)

\$25.00/week for afternoon (1 hour)

\$37.50/week for both (1.5 hours)

Families must log in to **Q Parent Connect** to opt-in for Extended School Care (AM, PM or Both) **upon Registration** for the first portion of the school year, August 14 through December 20. You will then have a second opportunity to adjust this selection on **December 1**, allowing families to opt-in or opt-out of Extended School Care (AM, PM or Both) for the remainder of the school year through **June 4, 2026**.

Please note, no changes to your child's Extended School Care (AM, PM or Both) participation will be accepted other than the dates above.

Late Pick Up Policy

Children attending the regular school day, must be picked up by 4:00 pm. Children enrolled in the Extended Care program, must be picked up by 5:00 pm. **A \$20 late pick up fee** may be assessed for pick up beyond the designated times above, for each additional 15-minute period or portion thereof your child is still on campus. Downey Unified School District reserves the right to terminate services after 3 late pick-ups.

Curriculum

The Early Education Program uses The California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF), best practices, and Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum for Preschool. These are all developmentally appropriate for three and four-year-old children.

Nutrition

Nutritionally balanced lunches are available for purchase for all Leap students whose families have selected that option. Any necessary meal payments will be collected in advance. Families are asked to complete a Supplemental Benefit Form prior to or soon after school begins. This form is part of the on-line verification process. Monthly menus

created by Downey Unified Food Services Department will be sent to families electronically and made available in the Leap office and classrooms. Upon enrollment, parents/guardians must notify Leap staff of any food allergies or restrictions. Following district protocols, appropriate documentation will be gathered to make necessary arrangements for any specialized meals required.

Lunch Cost and Sign-up

Downey Unified's Food Services Department prepares and packages nutritious, balanced lunches for those Leap students who would like to participate in the meal program.

Lunches are available for an additional cost of \$6.50 per day and will be billed on the first of each month along with tuition. As with tuition payments, meal charges can be paid through Q Parent Connect.

To help families determine whether the program is a good fit for their child, lunches will be provided at no cost during the month of August. Families may then choose whether their child will continue receiving school lunches through December 2026.

Families must log in to **Q Parent Connect by August 21** to either opt in for lunch service for the first portion of the school year. A second opportunity to make a meal selection will be available on **December 1**, allowing families to opt in or opt out of lunch service for the remainder of the school year through **June 4, 2026**.

Please note, similar to Extended Before and After School Care, **these dates are the only opportunities to change your child's lunch participation for the school year.**

Nut Free Notification

In the event any individuals possess a nut allergy, classrooms and eating areas will be deemed "nut free zones". This means that all necessary precautions will be taken to ensure the health and safety of children who may be allergic to nuts and nut products of any kind. Leap staff will comply with the request for a "nut free" environment by avoiding the use of nuts and peanut butter in a craft and/or cooking project.

If necessary, we would appreciate your cooperation in providing a "nut free" environment in our Early Education classes through the following:

- Please do not send snacks for your child or treats for the classroom that contain any kind of nuts or peanut butter
- Reinforce with your child that there is to be no sharing of food or drink

Restroom/Toileting

Leap students must be completely potty-trained.

This includes the awareness to ask and use the bathroom without reminders, ability to manage clothing independently, wipe appropriately, flush, and wash hands without assistance. Please do not send children to school in diapers, pull ups, or training pants. To ensure safety, children are always supervised including in the restroom.

Clothing

Please encourage your child to dress in appropriate clothing to match the weather conditions. Young children are very active indoors and outdoors. Your child will be climbing, painting, digging, sitting in sand, playing with water, and demonstrating independence when toileting. Closed toe shoes are required with tennis shoes being highly recommended. Crocs may be worn but must be in “sports mode”, strap secured behind the heel. Flip-Flops and open toe sandals are not permitted at school due to safety concerns. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to bring a change of clothing (and shoes if possible) to be placed in the child’s cubby in case of any toileting or other accidents. Clothes with many buttons, buckles, belts, and straps are difficult for little hands to maneuver when using the restroom independently. Please help your child gain independence with dressing by selecting clothing he/she can easily manage. Dresses and skirts can be worn with shorts underneath them. Please refrain from sending children to school with expensive items of any kind. Please label ALL personal belongings and clothing with your child’s name.

Being Healthy Everyday

Keeping your child healthy is important to us. We will continue to follow the most current guidance set forth by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

To ensure that the health of other children is protected, and additional infection does not develop in your child, we ask you to **keep your child home** when he or she exhibits one or more of the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 100.4 or higher*
- Seems nauseated
- An undetermined rash
- Excessive runny nose and/or accompanied with other symptoms (other than allergies)
- Possible infection
- Head lice **
- Sore throat
- Vomiting*
- Diarrhea*
- Red or watery eyes
- Earache

You will be called to pick up your child within 1 hour if any of these symptoms are present while your child is at school. Please have a plan in place to guarantee that your child can be promptly picked up in the event that you receive such a call. In accordance with local regulatory guidelines, to help prevent the spread of disease, your child will be removed from the classroom and kept comfortable (e.g. at the front office) while he or she is waiting to be picked up.

*After an illness, your child must remain at home with no fever, vomiting, or diarrhea (without the aid of any medication) for **at least one full school day** before he or she may return to school.

**In the case of head lice, your child must have received a full head lice removal treatment and be free of head lice and eggs before returning to school. Precautions will be taken to ensure that lice do not spread among the students.

Birthday Recognition

We understand that not all families recognize birthdays or celebrate in the same manner and we strive to respect individual differences. For those who do celebrate, birthdays are important events children love to share with their friends. We are always eager to build your child's self-esteem and birthday recognition at school creates a moment to remember. Please communicate with your child's Instructor regarding any classroom plans for birthday recognition.

Lost and Found

Please label all personal belongings with your child's first and last name. If necessary, check with the teacher and assistant teachers for help in locating any lost items. Periodically over the school year, our staff will collect any unclaimed items (sweaters, jackets, toys, etc.) and donate them to a local organization. Every effort will be made to notify students and family members to check for lost items (without a label) prior to such a donation.

Communication, ParentSquare and Family Partnerships

Our goal is to create a partnership with each family. Studies have shown that children make greater gains in their education when parents/guardians and family members participate in school activities. The teaching staff will use regular opportunities to communicate with families to strengthen partnerships between the school and home.

It is in the best interest of your child that parents/guardians and teachers communicate freely with one another. It is important for the staff to understand situations at home which may influence the typical behavior of the child. Please feel comfortable in discussing with the Instructor and/or the assistant, anything which will help to make your child's time with us the best possible experience. When talking informally with an

Instructor about your child, please be sensitive to what your child hears. Sometimes a phone call or email between adults is best.

We want school to be a warm, loving, and accepting place for you and your child. If you have any concerns, please discuss it with your child's Instructor as soon as possible. If you need additional information or assistance resolving a situation, feel free to reach out to the Coordinator.

ParentSquare is the district's communication tool for families. Parents and guardians can use ParentSquare to receive important school information, communicate with teachers and staff, and stay informed about events, programs, and activities throughout. You will find more information during the Verification process on how to sign up and download ParentSquare.

Custody

We encourage adult caregivers to provide us with a copy of the most current custodial information and documentation to keep on file. In the event of a dispute, our policy is to honor any written court dictated arrangements regarding drop-off and or pick-up of your child to and from school.

First Day of School

The first day of school is a short day on Thursday, August 13th where we will be having a Meet & Greet beginning at 9:00 a.m. (lunch will not be provided), when you and your child come to school together to learn about your child's classroom, Instructor, and staff. The first full day of school will be Friday, August 14th.