



Paul Ecke Central Elementary PTA

July, 2025

Dear incoming Paul Ecke Central kindergarten families,

Welcome to Paul Ecke Central! We are Janna Larson and Mary Anne Mendenhall, this year's PEC PTA communications co-chairs, here with a few tips for families new to the school. Mary Anne's oldest was in kindergarten last year, and Janna has incoming twins this year, joining a big brother already at PEC.

In the coming weeks, Principal Wesley Sechrest will e-mail you all the updated PEC handbook. It is the best source for comprehensive information about the school year but, in preparation for the first day of school, we compiled some helpful tips to give you a strong start for the first few weeks. Kindergarten is a year of incredible growth, and we hope that your kiddos have great experiences at PEC just as ours have.

Drop-Off

Keep in mind, you'll get a chance to preview your drop-off at your Kindergarten Orientation on August 11. Drop off happens between 7:45 and 8am. Your child can enter the school as early as 7:30 if they are doing school breakfast or if they are participating in Running Club, which usually starts a few weeks into the school year.

Most kindergartners get dropped off at the west gate that runs along Vulcan (the kids call it the "orange line"), just because that's closest to the kindergarten area. For the first few weeks of school, you may want to park and walk your kindergartener into the inner gate that encloses the kindergarten area. Parking on Coast Hwy and using the new pedestrian underpass is a great option as parking is limited otherwise.

Below is a map of parking options:

Park at one of these locations and walk 3 minutes to PEC to avoid parking troubles.

- 1) Rail corridor parking pod on Hwy 101 and North Court
- 2) Rail corridor parking pod on Hwy 101 and El Portal roundabout
- 3) Rail parking Pod on Hwy 101 and Marcheta
- 4) Orpheus Park



When your kindergartener is ready for a car drop off, you'll drive north on Vulcan, and veer right into the drop-off area and follow the line of cars until you pass the gate where the children enter. You'll soon recognize Ms. Brenda, PEC's longtime crossing guard, who guards that gate. To keep everyone safe, there are a couple rules: (1) No dropping kids off until you are past Ms. Brenda, and (2) no getting out of your car. Ms Brenda will assist if needed and direct them into the school. She is there to keep all the kids safe so follow her instructions and you'll be fine.

You can also drop kids off at the front entrance off Union (the kids call this the "blue line"). Some kindergarteners may feel intimidated by that gate as it's where the "big kids" are dropped off, but kinder students with older siblings might be dropped off there. There's no right or wrong way to do it.

If you decide to walk your child into school, say a quick goodbye at the gate that encloses the kindergarten area and then they will walk by themselves to their classroom.

We both happen to be e-bike moms. Take it from us, biking your kids to school makes drop off smooth and predictable every day so consider biking if you are able. Many people park their

bikes in the open parking space/sidewalk area across from the Vulcan Street school entrance. Ms. Brenda will then direct you when you are safe to cross the cars and enter the school.

Late Arrivals + Absences

Students who arrive between 8:01 and 8:10 will receive tardy slips from the “tardy table” right there at the gate, which they’ll hand off to their teachers. Arrivals after 8:10 must go through the main office with a parent. If your child will be absent, email attendance.pe@eusd.net or call the attendance line at 760-944-4328. It’s a good number to save in your phone. By the way, absence for family travel is not eligible to be an “excused” absence! That was good to learn!

Meals + Snack Time

Did you know all students are offered daily hot lunches from [EUSD’s nutrition services](#) at no charge? The program is district-wide, so menus are posted on the [EUSD website](#) every month in both Spanish and English. We’ll make sure they’re also linked to the PEC PTA page. One of our kids is in it for the daily chocolate milk, but we’re not mad at pretty much never making a school lunch last year and having a happy and well fed child. They also serve free breakfast from 7:30-8 every morning.

When taking the school’s hot lunch, the kindergarteners have to go and get their food from the “big kid” area, so don’t worry if your child initially insists on bringing lunch from home. If you pack a lunch, just keep in mind that lunches aren’t refrigerated so make sure you pack an ice pack.

Kindergarteners have two snacks times per day so make sure you plan accordingly.

Volunteering for “Specials”

For parents whose schedules permit, you’ll really enjoy volunteering for “Specials.” What are “Specials” you ask? Your child’s class will be on a rotation for PE and Yoga, Art, STEAM (science, tech, engineering, art, math), Music, and TRAC (our district’s social/emotional curriculum). They happen on a certain day each week (TBD what day of the week for this year’s kindergarteners) and are a highlight of the kids’ week.

Your room parents will send out the sign-up sheets from time to time. Shifts are usually under an hour, and it’s a great way to see your kindergartener in their element. When you arrive, check in at the front office (you’ll need your ID) and head to the classroom. From there, you’ll probably be walking the whole class to the room where specials take place, maybe toting a bin of water bottles with you. And then you’re there for when the Specials teacher needs some extra hands.

Just a reminder that all parent-volunteers are governed by a code of ethics. We're not there to get intel on other people's kids! You will all review and sign a code of ethics prior to volunteering but one important tip is that volunteers do not use the kids' bathrooms. If you need the bathroom, use the staff bathroom in the main office.

Supplies

No need to get anything special before the first day of school. You will hear from your child's teacher in the first few weeks if any supplies are needed. Most of what your child will use is supplied by the school. Many of the teachers create Amazon Wishlists or similar, and update them throughout the year. That way, parents can contribute to the classroom if the family budget allows.

If you don't already have one, get your child a standard-sized backpack. Hansen's has a large selection if you want to shop local or any of the other big retailers have great options too (Walmart, Target, etc).

All kids need a water bottle with their name on it. You don't need anything fancy. Even writing their name in Sharpie on a water bottle you already have works.

Consider labeling every item that your child brings into the school. You would be surprised how many items of clothing, lunchboxes, and water bottles are lost throughout the school year. While your labeling can be simple as a Sharpie, if you do want to buy labels, Mabel's Labels gives the PTA a cut of the retail price when you order through their fundraising page, [here](#), and list Paul Ecke Central. When things do go missing, you can search through the lost & found racks and bins by the main entrance of the school (the blue line).

What to Expect on the First Day of School

Starting kindergarten is a huge deal. Expect your child to be nervous, and you may be too! Keep in mind, though, that all kids are in the same boat and everyone will be a bundle of nerves and excitement that first day. Do your best to project confidence that your kid has got this and prepare them for a quick drop off at the kinder gate. And be sure to debrief with them when they come home. Hopefully they have great stories to share! We promise that every kid adjusts at their own pace and even if the first day is rough (or even the first few weeks), they will all soon come to see PEC as their home away from home.

All they really need to have with them that first day is their backpack, labeled water bottle, two snacks, lunch (if not doing hot lunch) and maybe a sweatshirt in case it's cold in the classroom. Once your child walks through the kinder gate, they will walk to their classroom and be greeted by their teacher. They will have their own hook to hang their backpack along the kinder building exterior. They pull out their water bottle and take it into the classroom and head to

their desk. The teacher will take it from there. And in case your child (or you!) is curious, each kindergarten classroom has their own bathroom so there is easy access for the kids to use the restroom as they need it.

Pick-Up

If you will not have your child in any afterschool program, you can pick your child up from the orange line gate on Vulcan at 2:20 pm on Monday-Thursday, and 12:45 on Fridays. Just gather outside the gate and they will open the gate and help kids find their grown-ups once the bell rings.

Afterschool Programs

There are several options for school-affiliated afterschool programs. If you have your child in an afterschool program, the program starts early on early dismissal days.

Right at School: RAS provides care directly on the PEC school site starting at 6:30 am and ending at 6 pm. You can register for 1-5 days a week, before-school program, after-school program or both. They also offer a drop-in option, as well as military and sibling discounts. More information including pricing and how to register can be found [here](#).

Farm Lab: At the end of the school day, YMCA staff meet participating children on-site at PEC and transport them via school bus to the EUSD Farm Lab in Encinitas (located on Quail Gardens). Children can be picked up directly from the Farm Lab campus by 6 pm. Families can register for a 3-day or 5-day program and you can choose your days based on availability. Last we heard there was a waitlist for this program, but spaces open throughout the year and they keep a running waitlist. See more info [here](#).

Enrichment programs: Right at School "Discovery Clubs" begin a few weeks after school starts. These are typically one-hour per week after school electives that run 10 to 12 weeks. Courses vary but typically focus on the arts, music, foreign languages, sports, and science and are run by specialized community enrichment vendors. You will receive more information about these electives in the coming weeks. These are optional and you don't have to be registered with the RAS afterschool program to have your child participate. Cost for each elective varies.

YMCA skate: The YMCA bus will pick your child up from school and transport them by bus to the skatepark where they will be supervised by skate park staff. Once at the skate park, there will be a snack, skate tips and free skate. Pick up is by 6 pm. Can sign up for 2 days, 3 days or 5 days. More information can be found [here](#).

PTA Calendar

We will be keeping the PTA's calendar updated. The calendar is available on the PTA's website, [here](#). To subscribe to our google calendar, click on the link that says "Subscribe to Google Calendar" on [this page](#). Note that the first family event, the Fall Social, will be on September 19.

Room Parents and Communications Throughout the Year

Each class will have one or two room parents to help be the liaison between parents and teachers throughout the year. The room parents' weekly emails will include our updates from the PTA. Those same PTA updates are also available at our website, on a page called the "[Weekly Splash](#)." We will update it regularly, so that's the place to check if you feel like you missed an e-mail.

You will also receive regular communications from:

- The EUSD board of trustees for district-wide updates
- Principal Wes Sechrest for all things PEC
- Your child's teacher; some teachers will use an app called Class Dojo and others prefer email. Be on the lookout for messages from your teacher for guidance about how they prefer to communicate.

It can be a lot, and we know it. You'll get the hang of it and we are always here to help.

Most classes end up with a WhatsApp thread which can be very useful for busy parents who need someone to text to make sure you're not missing a spirit day or day off. We also encourage you to build your own kindergarten parents' community. We held a few happy hour meetups last year, inviting parents across all three kinder classes, and it was really the only time many got to know our fellow parents.

Don't forget to follow the PTA's Instagram [@pauleckecentral](#)

And the garden account, too [@pec_garden](#)

You'll see that the PEC Garden needs plenty of hands on deck including weekend volunteers. It's a great way for working parents to feel connected to the school. Stay tuned for more info about that.

Looking Ahead: Upcoming Fundraising by the PTA

We want you to be able to anticipate what's ahead in terms of fundraising for the PTA, so that our periodic asks do not come as a surprise, and so that you can plan ahead for your family's budget. Three times this year, your PTA will ask for financial contributions towards our school. You will learn more about this at the start of the school year and at our regular PTA meetings, if you come. The money we raise goes straight to your children's school lives. We fund many

programs on campus that are not yet budgeted by our district, like the salaries of our two enrichment teachers. We also fund special projects dreamed up by our incredible teachers. Last year, one grade benefitted from a visit from a beekeeper, a highlight for all.

The Best Way to Support Our School: Join the PTA!

Lastly, please join the PTA! Dues are only \$21 for the year and helps support all the wonderful things the PTA does throughout the year. It also gives you a seat at the table whenever the PTA votes on important items. We feel particularly invested in recruiting our fellow lower-grade parents to the PTA. We all need to ensure that our incredible PTA thrives despite changes that inevitably come as longtime PTA members' children move on to middle school. Join at the link [here](#), and we hope to see you at our first PTA general meeting at 8:15 a.m. on September 3, 2025, in the MPR.

Keep in mind that it takes a village and we often need many parents' support to make the kindergarten year as magical as it can be (and it's truly a magical year). Got any other questions? Feel free to reach out. We are happy to help.

Sincerely,

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