

PS 198
The Isidor and Ida Straus School
Parent Handbook
2023-2024



General Information

School Contact Information

PS198M
Isidor and Ida Straus School
1700 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10128
Main Entrance on 95th Street between Lexington & Third Avenue

School Telephone (Main Office) (212) 289-3702 ext.2 or 01
School FAX (212) 410-1731
School Website www.ps198m.org

Administration

Principal Katharine DeBenedictis
kdebenedictis@schools.nyc.gov
Assistant Principal Linda Shkreli
lshkreli@schools.nyc.gov

Main Office Staff

The office staff will be available from 8:00am to 3:30pm, Monday – Friday to assist families. Please also visit our website <https://www.ps198m.org/> for contact information of additional staff members.

Secretary Danielle Santana
dsantana10@schools.nyc.gov
Parent Coordinator Raychel Manko
rmanko@schools.nyc.gov
School Aides Emily Rivera
erivera35@schools.nyc.gov
Manny Quezada
Mquezada3@schools.nyc.gov

School-Based Support Team

Psychologist Anita Radovic
aradovic@schools.nyc.gov
Guidance Counselors Alison Harvazinski
aharvazinski@schools.nyc.gov
Keisha Ballard
kballard@schools.nyc.gov
Social Worker Iris Lugo-Becker
ilugoBe@schools.nyc.gov
IEP Teacher Karen Bugden
kbugden@schools.nyc.gov

NYC Public Schools General Website & Calendar

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/>
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/news/2023-2024-school-year-calendar>

School Mascot & Colors

Our mascots are Bulldogs, Izzie and Ida, named after Isidor and Ida Straus.
Blue and yellow are our school colors. All adults and children are encouraged to wear these colors or PS 198 clothing on school spirit days, which are usually the first Friday of every month.

SCHOOL ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL INFORMATION

General Information

Our official school hours are 8:15-2:30pm. In order to ensure a safe arrival experience for all students and families, please review the details below and adhere to our school procedures.

Grade	Official Arrival Time/Location	Dismissal Time/Location
Pre-K	8:15am/large yard at class signs	2:20pm/classroom doors
Kindergarten	8:15am/large yard at class signs	2:25pm/large yard at class signs
1 st grade	8:15am/large yard at class signs	2:25pm/large yard at class signs
2 nd grade	8:15am/small L yard at class signs	2:30pm/small L yard at class signs
3 rd grade	8:15am/small L yard at class signs	2:30pm/small L yard at class signs
4 th grade	8:15am/small L yard at class signs	2:30pm/small L yard at class signs
5 th grade	8:15am/small L yard at class signs	2:30pm/small L yard at class signs

Arrival Details

- Our arrival takes place at the 95th street entrance of our building, between Lexington and 3rd Avenue.
- All students and families must wait **OUTSIDE** the black gates at arrival until invited into the school yard. There will be no supervision of students by school staff prior to the opening of the gates.
- If the Samuel Seabury Park gate is open for cleaning, **please do not enter and play in the large yard before arrival.**
- Breakfast supervision is available beginning at 7:45am via the cafeteria doors on 95th street (Door closest to 3rd Avenue by the stairs).
- Arrival takes place outdoors, rain or shine! **NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE.** We urge you to keep an umbrella in your child's backpack.
- There is no need to arrive early! Your child will not be allowed into the building before their official arrival time. Please encourage your child to use the bathroom before leaving the house!
- Teachers in all grades will greet students outside by class signs at their official arrival time and escort classes inside. Families will say goodbye outdoors for all grades.
- Staff is stationed inside the building to assist students who arrive after their class has left the school yard. However, all families are encouraged to be on time so that children can walk in with their peers.

Grades 2-5 Specifics:

- Line up **OUTSIDE** of the black gate on 95th street at 8:10am.
- Line up heading **DOWN** the hill towards Third Avenue. Tuck into the Citibikes and building as best you can to keep the sidewalks clear and safe.
- Only after a staff member has opened the black gate will students be permitted into the small L-shaped yard to line up by grade. Only students are permitted to enter the yard, no parents/guardians.
- Staff will escort students into the building to their classrooms at 8:15am.

Grades Pre-K, Kindergarten & 1st Grade Specifics:

- Line up **OUTSIDE** of the black gate on 95th street no earlier than 8:10am.
- Line up heading **UP** the hill towards Lexington Avenue. Tuck in as best you can in order to leave the sidewalk clear and safe.
- You will enter after grades 2-5. Pre-K – 1ST grade will head into the large yard (Samuel Seabury Park) where you will line up with your child by your class sign. Parents/guardians should escort and wait with their child until a teacher arrives, then you may leave your child.
- Teachers in all grades will greet students outside by class signs at their official arrival time and escort classes inside. Families will say goodbye outdoors for all grades.
- Staff is stationed inside the building to assist students who arrive after their class has left the school yard. However, all families are encouraged to be on time so that children can walk in with their peers.

Dismissal Details

Please reference the chart on the previous page for specific dismissal timing for each grade.

- **Only adults (18 yrs. and older) who you have authorized on the Blue Emergency Card will be allowed to pick up a student. This includes their older siblings.**
- Students (K - 5th grade) will be dismissed at their same arrival spot either in the large yard or the small L shaped yard. Please be on time for pick up and wait for your child by their class sign.
- Pre-K dismisses at the door of the classroom. The Safety Agent will invite families inside at 2:20pm. Please be sure to carry your orange dismissal card for quick and easy access to the classroom. These cards will be distributed on the first day of school.
- Students in after school will be escorted to various after school pick up locations by school staff. Evening pickup at the end of after school programs is always via the 3rd Avenue exit, unless otherwise specified.

Self-Dismiss Procedures (5th Grade)

5th graders are permitted to self-dismiss from school provided we have written consent on file. An email or phone call is NOT sufficient. Parents or legal guardians are required to submit a signed letter to give consent for their child to leave school on their own, ONLY at dismissal. Students may not self-dismiss early to attend appointments outside of school or when they get sick at school and must go home. **Students who self-dismiss are not permitted to walk a younger sibling or family member home from school.** They do not replace a parent or guardian picking up another student. Exceptions will not be made. Families are encouraged to consider the readiness of your child as it pertains to self-dismissing and are encouraged to come up with a plan for when they leave school (i.e. go straight home, go to a neighbor's home). It is not advisable to allow your child to hang out on the playground unattended after school.

Early Release from School

Early dismissal is discouraged as it is disruptive to instructional time. However, if you must pick your child up early, please do so by 2pm. Let both the office and teacher know via email one day prior. To pick up, check in with School Safety on 95th Street and come to the main office to sign out your child in the early release book.

Changes to Daily Dismissal

Families should let school staff know of your child's regular dismissal plans. Teachers will be collecting this information at the start of the year. Should you have to change your child's plan, you must alert the teacher. Emailing on the day of the change is not guaranteed to get the message to the teacher on time, as teachers do not always have the flexibility to check email before dismissal. For same day dismissal changes, please call the main office. However, same day dismissal changes are discouraged whenever possible.

Transportation

Danielle Santana, our secretary, is the contact for questions regarding transportation, including busing and MetroCards. She can be reached by calling the main office (212-289-3702) or by email at dsantana10@schools.nyc.gov.

Playing in the School Yard After School

PS 198's playground is not open to students before or after school. Samuel Seabury Park becomes open to the public following school dismissal. The gate to enter the school yard from the park will be locked at 2:35pm. As with any playground, all children should be supervised by a responsible adult. **The school is not responsible for children playing in the yard after school is dismissed.** Only children attending after school programs are permitted inside the building after the regular school day.

ATTENDANCE

Tracking and follow up of student attendance and chronic absenteeism is one of the school's most important responsibilities as it relates to the safety, welfare, and educational success of all students. It is mandated that each student attend school every day and arrive on time. Families should always reach out to the classroom teacher and main office to report an absence. If a student is absent for three consecutive days due to illness or health concerns, families must submit a doctor's note upon return to school. If your child is traveling outside of a vacation week, please provide documentation, such as a plane ticket to assist us in accounting for your child's whereabouts. Letters from the main office will be sent to families to help track their child's

attendance and to maintain accurate school records. **Please review these letters in a timely manner and report any discrepancies to the main office within 24 hours.**

If a student exhibits a pattern of absences or lateness, the family will be contacted to offer support and assistance to improve attendance. After such attempts, if the attendance record does not improve, we are required to report the case to our Attendance Coordinator for follow up and to make a home visit if necessary. If attempts at contacting and supporting the family are unsuccessful, we are mandated to report suspected cases of educational neglect to the appropriate authorities.

SCHOOL FOODS

Breakfast and Lunch

Both breakfast and lunch are free and available for all students, however, families are asked to complete the [family income inquiry form](#) in order to ensure that NYC receives the federal aid needed to sustain the program. Please refer to the [NYC Public Schools](#) website for monthly menus, noting that at times, the kitchen has to make last minute changes based on food supply.

Students are not required to take or eat breakfast in school, however, it is provided free for all students. Pre-K students will have breakfast delivered to their classroom at regular arrival. **For students in K-5, breakfast will be served from 7:45-8:15am. Students should enter at the side door on 95th street by the cafeteria.**

All students will have the option of receiving a school lunch but can always bring a lunch from home if that is their preference. **The school cannot heat up a child's lunch from home.**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Nursing Staff

Our building has two nurses on staff. They can be contacted by dialing the main office (212-289-3702) and asking to be connected. Our nurses handle day to day wellness assessments when children visit because they are feeling ill, and assess and provide the medical attention that may be needed to treat an injury. They manage medication and student health forms. The school nurses do not replace a doctor's follow up. Families should always follow up by calling your physician to report any illness, allergy, or serious injury.

Health Accommodations and Medication (including asthma and allergies)

NYC Public Schools work with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to make certain that all students with special health needs are provided services to ensure their full participation in the educational setting. Parents/guardians must provide the appropriate documentation to request in-school direct health services and/or accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These forms must be returned to the school for processing and approval by the 504 team or nurse. A new request and authorization form is required at the beginning of each school year if the child continues to require the requested services in school. Please visit the [NYC Public Schools website](#) for necessary forms and more information. Our nurse and office staff are also happy to assist you.

In order for the school nurse to administer any medication in school, a physician must complete a Medication Administration Form (MAF). This includes asthma pumps, an EpiPen, Benadryl, etc. Students are not permitted to carry their own medication in their backpacks unless it is indicated on their MAF. If these items are found, parents will be required to pick them up from school. In the event of an emergency, should there not be a MAF on file, the nurse is required to call 911. **MAFs should be completed by the first day of school. Additional procedures for keeping students with asthma, allergies, or other health needs safe at school are student specific. It is important that a family reaches out to administration before the first day of school to communicate the child's needs and discuss individualized plans.**

Student Pickup

If a student shows symptoms of any illness, the student will be assessed by the nurse on site. A guardian of the student must be immediately contacted to pick up the child. If the guardian cannot be reached, the school must contact the emergency

contacts on the student's Blue Card. Children will not be sent back to class if the nurse feels as though it would put others at risk.

Blue Emergency Cards

All students will receive a Blue Emergency Card. **It is imperative that it is filled out completely and returned to school immediately.** It is extremely important that a parent/guardian provides a working telephone number in case of an emergency. **These cards MUST be updated whenever contact information changes and a new card must be submitted annually.**

Emergency Cards should indicate any person who should not have contact with your child. It is important for you to clearly communicate any orders of protection. Pictures of those individuals restricted from contact with your child will be placed on the back of the card and the Safety Agent will be informed.

Immunization Requirements

All families of students in grades PreK-12 attending New York City Public Schools must demonstrate that students have received specific vaccinations. We are required by law to follow up with families who cannot show proof of vaccination and **exclusion from school is possible.** These records are audited yearly, so up to date records are imperative. **Please see the NYCDOH guidelines for further information and a list of specific requirements per grade/age.**

SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

Ladder of Assistance

PS198 is a cooperative community where the expectation is that teachers are always communicating with other staff members in the building, including the administration. The first point of contact for a family is typically the teacher, Guidance Counselor or Parent Coordinator. It is often best to speak with the child's teacher first, as they most often can provide detailed and accurate information as it relates to the daily performance and activities of a student. Student to student conflict is always first handled by classroom staff. If necessary, the Guidance Counselor, Principal or Assistant Principal will be brought in for consultation.

Communication with School

Students thrive when the connection between the family and the school is present and strong. Our PTA works to bring together the parent body as a community and to keep you informed of daily events at PS198. The school's website, www.ps198m.org is one resource for staying up to date on school events. Our school-wide communication system, "Snap! Connect" is the platform that most easily connects families with the school. All families are encouraged to sign up to stay connected with their child's classroom teacher, the main office, and the PTA. Once "Snap! Connect" has been updated for the 2023-2024 school year, new families will receive an invitation. You should also expect to receive frequent communication via email and should make sure your settings allow for you to receive emails from all @schools.nyc.gov email addresses. Please reference page 1 for email contacts for administration and main office staff.

PS 198 is committed to creating a welcoming and accessible environment for all children and families. The Office of Language Access supports schools in providing written translation services and over-the-phone interpretation services. Should you need school documents provided in a preferred language, please communicate this with the main office and your child's classroom teacher. We will do our best to provide access to translated documents wherever possible.

Meetings with Staff

In the event that a parent would like to speak or meet with a staff member, they should call or email that person to schedule a meeting. Families should expect a response within 48 hours. Should you be called regarding an incident at school that involves your child, we kindly ask that you do not show up to the building unexpectedly. We cannot guarantee that an administrator or teacher can meet with you without an appointment. However, we are always willing to meet with families and will make scheduling and other follow up a priority. Please allow us the opportunity to schedule at a time that will not compromise other responsibilities that require our attention.

Special Education/IEP Meetings

We attempt to have a comprehensive team available for every child's IEP review. We appreciate your flexibility and willingness to make yourself available at the requested time we coordinate for school staff. School staff will schedule in advance in order to assist you in arranging your schedule. An annual review of an IEP is required once per year, with additional reviews held on

an as needed basis. For more information regarding special education services, please contact a member of our School-Based Support Team (SBST) or your child's classroom teacher.

Communication Between Families

Families are encouraged to establish relationships with other families in our community. Children can get to know each other through their homeroom class, after school programs, other community events and celebrations, or at the park after school. Growing a relationship with other children and families often involves contact outside of school. School staff is not permitted to share any personal information for a child or their family, thus we cannot distribute a class list with emails, telephone numbers, etc. A class parent/s is the best point person to coordinate consent and the collection and sharing of this type of information.

Should an incident take place at school between children, the school cannot share any personal details of the student/s involved, except your own. At times families may feel frustrated by interactions between children, but parents/guardians are never permitted to address another student in a manner that could cause them to feel threatened, intimidated or uncomfortable. Should you have concerns about an interaction your child had with another student, we expect that you will bring these concerns to the attention of school staff, and allow us to investigate and do the necessary follow up with that child and family. Families that fail to adhere to this protocol and address another child in an inappropriate manner may be issued limited access to the school building. Please be advised that whereas parents/guardians often feel it is helpful to address another parent directly, you are encouraged to consider whether this is the best course of action. Behaving in a manner that sets an inappropriate example for children while on school grounds or when participating in any school related activities is unacceptable, and may also result in limited access to school.

NYC Schools Account

All families need to register for their child's NYC Schools Account (NYCSA). Your NYC Schools Account is your gateway to family-facing technology to support and track your children's progress in NYC Public Schools. Opening a NYC Schools Account is the first step towards becoming more involved in your student's education. Receive updates via text messages or email about school closures, emergencies, and upcoming events. Link your children and start monitoring things like grades, test scores, attendance. <https://www.schoolsaccount.nyc/> New families will receive an account creation code within the first few weeks of school.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Every PS198 parent is automatically a member of the PTA. We encourage all families to become active members as connecting with other families can often be a helpful support when navigating school matters. PS198 strongly encourages that each parent takes an active role in their child's school life. Both in-person and virtual events will be coordinated throughout the year and families are encouraged to attend to the fullest extent possible.

PTA meetings offer families an opportunity to become actively involved in their child's education and in the PS198 community. Meetings inform families as to what is going on in the school, allow you to share their ideas, solve problems, make PTA budget decisions, and help direct the school's future. Financial contributions are NOT required for participation in PTA meetings. Every vote is weighted equally and the voices of all families in our community are encouraged to speak and be heard. The PTA can be reached by email at 02M198PA@schools.nyc.gov. PTA meetings will be held on Zoom, once monthly on Thursdays at 6pm. Please reference our Events Calendar on the PTA website for the full schedule of monthly meetings.

Our PTA also coordinates class parents who serve as a liaison between classroom teachers and the families in each classroom. They may assist with a variety of responsibilities, such as family communication, coordination of supplies, special events or other matters that arise during the school year.

IMPORTANT REGULATIONS OF THE CHANCELLOR

Policy for Use of Cell Phones, Smartwatches & Other Electronic Devices

Although not advisable, students can bring cell phones and other electronic devices to school, however neither the Citywide Discipline Code, nor the PS198 Electronic Device Policy allows students to use these personal items when on school grounds, unless the teacher requests the use for educational purposes only. This includes no taking pictures, reading E-Books, playing

games, making phone calls or texting from a smartwatch, etc. When the student arrives at school all electronic devices must be turned off and placed in their school bag. Smartwatches may be worn but used solely as a traditional watch. “Smart” features, such as texting, calling, etc. may not be accessed during the school day. Families should not reach out to students on their watch or phone during school day hours. If students access their watch or phone to communicate with you, they could be subject to disciplinary action. If you need to communicate with your child while they are in school, kindly call the school at (212) 289-3702.

The school is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of any electronic devices. **The full electronic device policy is included as an addendum to this handbook.**

When it is reported to the school that a student engaged in inappropriate photographing, texting or postings on social media, the incident may be subject to investigation by the local police. Families are strongly encouraged to restrict smart phone capabilities and monitor cell phone use carefully.

Discipline Policy

The school follows the NYC Public Schools Citywide Behavioral Expectations to identify infractions and apply appropriate consequences. Please note, teachers have the authority to implement guidance interventions and disciplinary responses when a student disrupts the instruction of other students. In an effort to create a positive, strong, home-school relationship, please review the citywide discipline code with your child (<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/know-your-rights/discipline-code>)

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING AND CURRICULUM

Curriculum

PS198 uses a variety of curricula that is aligned with state standards. In grades K-3 students learn phonics through *FUNdations* and phonemic awareness through *Heggerty*. These grades also receive instruction in comprehension during independent reaching, read aloud and other shared literacy experiences. Grades 4 & 5 engage in similar comprehension work, and also get vocabulary, spelling and grammar instruction using *REWARDS*. For math, teachers use the Eureka² curriculum. Additionally, teachers pull from other resources to enhance their instruction and differentiate their lessons to reach the wide range of learners that exist in any New York City public school classroom. Various web resources will also be accessed in order to enhance instruction.

All NYC Public School early childhood programs are required to adopt The Creative Curriculum in the 2023-2024 school year. Families can expect Pre-K students to engage in short whole group and small group activities, choice time where they are able to work with a variety of materials, outdoor playtime, a nap/rest time, and community meal time.

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE)

NYC Public Schools commit to culturally responsive-sustaining education (CR-SE), a cultural view of learning and human development in which multiple forms of diversity (e.g. race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ability) are recognized, understood, and regarded as indispensable sources of knowledge for rigorous teaching and learning. CR-SE involves using educational strategies that reference the various aspects of students’ identities to connect across cultures.

Reporting Progress to Families

Teachers and families are encouraged to communicate frequently throughout the school year, using methods that are convenient for both parties (email, telephone, virtual conferences, etc.). Families will receive two official report cards, one midyear, and one on the last day of school. Conferences will be held in September, November, and March. In addition to report cards, families in K-5 will receive unit newsletters that identify skills a child is working on in a unit and their level of proficiency with those skills by the end of the classroom study. Unit newsletters should provide families with a snapshot of how students are progressing towards end of semester/year standards. Families are encouraged to follow up if they feel they need more detail or clarity on anything reported.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dress Code

There is no formal dress code at PS198, however clothing must be appropriate and take weather and temperature into account. Flip flops, other backless shoes or heels are not safe nor comfortable options for school. Clothing that suggests negative bias or inappropriate messages for young children is not permitted. Families will be called and expected to come to school with a change of clothing, if necessary. Students should always wear sneakers for PE class. Certain activities may not allow for students to participate safely without sneakers.

Cold Weather Play

Children benefit from vigorous exercise and should be given the opportunity to play outside whenever possible. Temperature alone should not be a barrier to outdoor play. Our Chancellor directs schools to allow children outside unless it is snowing, there is ice on the playground, or the wind chill factor produces an effective temperature below zero degrees Fahrenheit. PS198 takes precautions to keep students warm and to ensure that they are appropriately dressed on very cold days. We modify the duration of time they spend outdoors and provide protective clothing, such as gloves, to children in need. However, please make sure that you send your child to school with the appropriate items including gloves, a hat, a scarf, and multiple layers throughout the winter. If you need assistance securing these items, please reach out to your classroom teacher or our Parent Coordinator, Raychel Manko. We will not allow any PS 198 child or other members of their family to go without the necessary clothing to stay safe and healthy during the winter.

Birthdays

In order to preserve valuable class time, large birthday celebrations with specialty food items should be reserved for a family's personal time. Teachers will acknowledge a child's birthday by singing happy birthday, reading a favorite book, making a special crown, etc., however we will not be sharing birthday snacks in the classroom. As an alternative, **families may send a small goodie bag or single serving, pre-packaged treat to be distributed at dismissal.** Please be mindful that food allergies may exist for some students.

Toys, Cash and Other Valuables

Children should not bring any items of value, nor cash to school. It is against the discipline code to sell or buy items from other students at school. **The school will not be responsible for replacing cash or items from home that are lost, stolen or broken.** It is the parent's responsibility that their child adheres to this school policy. Bringing toys/games/electronic devices may lead to conflicts between students ending in items lost or damaged. Therefore, students who bring these items may be asked to keep them in their backpack. Additionally, the school is not the place for students to wear valuable jewelry. Teachers and staff will not be held responsible for any jewelry children remove during the day.

School Supplies

PS 198 has budgeted to support the purchase of most school supplies needed for all children, making it a priority to reduce the financial burden families often feel securing the necessary supplies each fall. For remaining supplies, which are unique to your child's grade, see the supply list on our school website. Please purchase these items and bring them to class the first week of school. The PTA is collecting a suggested donation of \$25 per student to replenish any depleted supplies throughout the year. You can contribute here: <https://www.ps198m.org/> Any extra funds donated will be used to cover supplies for families in need. Should any family find that purchasing the items on the grade's supply list presents a hardship, please contact our Parent Coordinator, Raychel Manko (rmanko@schools.nyc.gov).