Schedule
Preschool for All (PFA) programs are expected to implement research-based, best practices in early childhood education. This includes creating a program with a consistent daily schedule, routines, and learning experiences that support children’s developmental levels, abilities, and interests. Scheduling guidelines are based on All About the ECERS-R recommendations. Whether it is snack time, cleanup time, group time, or a planned learning activity, the program should provide opportunities that optimally promote children’s learning and development.

The program meets a minimum of two and a half hours each day, five days a week. Start and end dates are identified and follow the local district calendar, with children in attendance a minimum of 165 days. Any days beyond 165 in the district calendar may be used for parent/guardian conferences, home visits, and professional development OR attendance days. If the district has regular weekly or monthly planning dismissal times that affect the PFA weekly class time, the district must ensure weekly class time overall equals at least 12.5 hours per week (412 hours per school year).

Schedule Components
The daily schedule needs to include a balance of large group, small group, and individual activities that reflect children’s developmental abilities, interests, and attention spans. There should be a balance of active and quiet play. Children should spend at least one-third of their day in play activities, which consist of a combination of indoor and outdoor, teacher-directed (small group or whole group), and child-directed (self-selected) play. The daily schedule should be posted in each classroom, including words and pictures, so staff and students can access readily. The schedule should allow for flexibility to meet student needs, but overall should be accurate and consistent so students know what to expect.

Greeting/Departing
- Each student should receive an individual greeting upon entry to the room. This should include using the child’s name, providing a greeting in their primary language, giving a smile or physical contact, and asking something personal about them (e.g., How was your dance class?). Students should also be given time to talk informally with the teacher.
- Each student should be given a farewell at departure time.
- Appropriate greeting and farewell practices help students feel welcome, build relationships with parents, and help the transition from school to home and home to school. This also provides a safety component so staff is aware of who dropped off/picked up students and who is present in the classroom.

Interest Centers/Free Play
- The program plans purposeful, high interest, developmentally appropriate learning activities that support all domains of development and emphasize language and higher level thinking skills.
- A substantial portion of the daily schedule (one-third of attendance) is devoted to interest centers. If snack is offered as a choice during this time, an additional five minutes must be added to the time.
- Interest centers allow children to carry out their individual plans and choices, to move freely between centers, and to use materials in open-ended and creative ways.
- Three to five choices of different items within each center are present.
- Adults are actively involved in interest centers, initiating meaningful interactions, asking open-ended questions to prompt thinking, reinforcing vocabulary and concept development, and promoting positive social interactions among children.

Gross Motor
- Gross motor activities are scheduled daily and take place outdoors whenever weather permits. Each school district/program typically has policies relating to temperatures and outdoor play.
- Gross motor activities are provided for 30 (half-day programs) or 60 (full-day programs) minutes daily.
- Gross motor activities include a balance of planned play and spontaneous/free play.
- Children have daily access to both age-appropriate stationary outdoor equipment and portable equipment (tricycles, wagons, sleds, balls, sand/digging toys, garden toys, bubbles, chalk, etc.).
- A variety of gross motor activities are offered to support a range of physical skills such as running,
jumping, skipping, climbing, ball handling, etc.

- Adults supervise and participate in gross motor and outdoor play and support children’s interactions and skill development.

Whole Group
- Whole group time includes when all children are participating in the activity.
- Whole group should be limited to short periods of time with activities that are age appropriate and meet the needs of all children, as whole group settings are not the best way for children of this age to learn.
- Teachers should monitor the length of time of whole group through student engagement. If students appear bored or are not paying attention, the time should be shortened. The amount of time must allow for all students to participate the entire time.
- Refer to the curriculum for guidance on appropriate duration and activities for large group time.

Meals/Snacks
- All programs must offer a snack each day. Full-day programs must also offer a lunch.
- USDA meal guidelines need to be followed.
- Snacks should be considered a time for socializing and building independence in meal/feeding routines. Staff should sit with children to guide these skills.
- Individual dietary restrictions should be respected.

Nap/rest
- A naptime must be offered by programs that are longer than four hours. Students not requiring a nap should have relaxation or quiet activities to participate in.
- Naps should be offered at a regular time each day, with environment set up to accommodate for the period (low lights, quiet environment, and availability of cots/mats).

Transitions
- The number and duration of transitions throughout the day should be kept to a minimum (less than three minutes) and are planned to align with children’s attention spans and developmental abilities.
- Whenever possible, efforts are made to avoid or minimize waiting time (such as waiting in line or waiting for all children to finish an activity) and interactive activities (songs, finger plays, movement) are utilized to support children during transitions. Routines can be completed in small groups to minimize wait time as well.
- Expectations for transitions are clearly communicated in advance and positively reinforced so that children understand the expectations.
- Transition routines and procedures are taught and reviewed regularly so that the process is both smooth and safe.
- Adults support children during transitions, such as cleanup time or moving from one activity to another, with positively stated reminders and guidance.

Toileting
- Children must be able to understand explanations, commands, and responses, and express their own feelings about toilet use in order to learn about using the toilet.
- PFA staff should implement Diapering and Toileting Procedures for the health and safety of both the child and caregiver.

Sample Daily Schedules
2.5 Hour Programs
- 10 minutes: Arrival and quiet centers
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 15 minutes: Whole Group Time
- 65 minutes: Choice Time (includes snack as a center)
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 30 minutes: Gross Motor
15 minutes:  Small Group Time  
5 minutes:  Pack up and Dismissal

3 Hour Programs
20 minutes:  Arrival and Quiet Centers  
5 minutes:  Cleanup Time  
15 minutes:  Whole Group Time  
80 minutes:  Choice Time (includes snack as a center)  
10 minutes:  Cleanup Time  
30 minutes:  Gross Motor  
15 minutes:  Small group time  
5 minutes:  Dismissal

Full Day Program (6 Hour Day)
15 minutes:  Arrival and Quiet Centers  
5 minutes:  Cleanup Time  
15 minutes:  Whole Group Time  
65 minutes:  Choice Time (includes snack as a center)  
5 minutes:  Cleanup Time  
30 minutes:  Gross Motor  
20 minutes:  Small Group Time  
5 minutes:  Prepare for lunch  
30 minutes:  Lunch  
60 minutes:  Rest Time/ Quiet Centers  
5 minutes:  Cleanup Time  
30 minutes:  Gross Motor  
65 minutes:  Choice Time (includes snack as a center)  
10 minutes:  Clean up Time/Prepare for departure/Dismissal

Additional Resources  
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
• 23 ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 235  
Illinois Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR)
• Diapering and Toileting Procedures  
American Academy of Pediatrics – Healthy Children  
• It’s Potty Time!  
• Toilet Training Children with Special Needs  
Environment Rating Scales Institute
• Table Washing Procedure  
United States Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service  
• Nutrition Standards for School Meals  
Zero to Three National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families  
• Learning to Use the Toilet