

**Greenwich Public Schools
Preschool Program**



**Elementary School Handbook Addendum
For Preschool Parents**

Establishing Strong Foundations for Bright Futures

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Preschool Program Office
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Greenwich Public Schools Preschool Program *Establishing Strong Foundations for Bright Futures*

Welcome to the Greenwich Public Schools Preschool Program...

This handbook **addendum** is designed to provide parents/guardians with the information needed when your child starts preschool. This addendum is aligned with the parent handbook for each of our school sites and should be read as a component of the elementary school handbook.

The **GPS Preschool Program** is an inclusive educational model providing an optimal learning environment in which children with identified special needs and their typically developing peers learn and grow together.

Through a structured language and play-based program, every child receives instruction in activities, which address the areas of communication, cognition, self-management, fine/gross motor and social/emotional development. Classes are composed of three and four-year-old children maximizing opportunities for peer interaction and enhancing the learning environment, which provide opportunities for multi aged peer interactive classroom.

The administration and staff including teachers, specialists (a psychologist, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, special education instructional coach, special education teacher), and professional assistants who provide a wealth of experience in the field of early childhood special and general education. Please feel free to contact us at any time. We value your input and look forward to meeting and working with new and returning families in the preschool program.

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Philosophy & Mission Statement

In the Greenwich Public Schools Preschool Program each child's physical, emotional, social, cognitive and communicative individuality is respected throughout his/her stages of development. We recognize that each child develops at his or her own natural pace. In the GPS Preschool we nurture this natural progression of development and provide each child with opportunities for maximum growth at each developmental stage with a personalized learning approach.

Overview of the Program

The Greenwich Public Schools Integrated Preschool Program serves both youngsters with identified special needs and those who are typically developing. Using the project approach and personalized learning each child participates in instructional activities/experiences, which address the domains of communication, cognition, self-help, fine/gross motor and social emotional development.

The Guiding Principles and Curriculum of the Preschool Program

🎬 Early Learning and development are multidimensional: the developmental domains of cognitive, personal and social, physical and creative expression aesthetic development are interrelated and integrated throughout the day.

🎬 Young children are capable and competent.

🎬 There are individual differences in rates of development among children.

🎬 Children will exhibit a range of skills and competencies in any area of development.

🎬 Knowledge of child growth and development and consistent expectations are essential to maximizing educational experiences for children and to developing and implementing programs.

🎬 Families are the primary caregivers and educators of their young children.

🎬 Young children learn through active exploration of their environment through child-initiated and teacher-selected activities.

The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CTELDS) provide core learning standards in the areas of social, motor, cognitive, personal and creative

expression/aesthetic development. The Learning and Developmental Standards inform the development of curriculum themes, units of study, and or learning experiences. The Curriculum Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) and observation information provide baseline data and developmental benchmarks for the youngsters' learning profiles, and is used to monitor growth and progress and inform instructional plans and practices. Fall and spring parent conferences are held to share children's growth and progress and suggestions are shared for home/school support to maximize student achievement.

The Pre K Early Learning and Development Curriculum units were developed to support a transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning; investigations and studies that connect all disciplines through a unifying issue of topic of inquiry. Using the project approach students demonstrate benchmarks on the CTELDS.

The units are as follows:

Unit 1: Individual Development: All About Me

Unit 2: Friendship/Emotions

Unit 3: People and How they Live

Unit 4: Sensory Interactions

Unit 5: Let's Get Physical

Unit 6: The World We Live In

Unit 7: Growth and Change

Preschool Classroom and Support Staff

The current staffing of the Preschool classes includes a teacher certified in special education and early childhood education and three either full/part-time professional assistants in each preschool class. Classroom support teams include: a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a psychologist and a special education instructional family coach. The district behavioral coach is available to address the needs of students on the autism spectrum and to serve as a behavior consultant to the staff and liaison to families.

Program Goals

To provide a high quality program that will meet the individual developmental needs of all students and enhance their self-esteem by:

- providing play and exploration opportunities;
- enhancing verbal and nonverbal communication means;
- developing appropriate fine and gross motor skills;
- developing appropriate social/emotional skills and positive peer interactions;
- developing problem-solving, and imagination skills;
- developing skills of daily living and independence.
- developing thinking skills
- developing creative skills

- To provide a safe, positive, nurturing environment.
- To utilize developmentally appropriate materials.
- To create an environment that supports open communication between school and home.
- To develop cooperative relationships within existing community.
- To provide time for the staff to participate in professional learning opportunities.

Locations and Schedule

For the 2019-2020 school year the location of our preschools will be at the following school locations: Hamilton Avenue, New Lebanon, North Street, Old Greenwich and Parkway.

The locations of the sites are subject to change based on classroom space available at the elementary schools. Please note that classroom sites have been changed as late as the end of August. **

The Preschool Program follows the calendar of the Greenwich Public Schools. Students are expected to bring lunch. Routines for snack are determined by the teachers in each preschool location and are communicated to parents at the beginning of the school year. Arrival and dismissal routines are school based. School hours follow the schools where the children are located.

Age Eligibility for Students

Students who will turn 3 years old but will NOT turn 5 years old by December 31, 2019 are eligible to apply for entrance to the GPS Preschool Program. The Greenwich Public School Preschool follows state guidelines for kindergarten entrance the year that the student reaches their fifth birthday.

Greenwich Preschool Application Process

Preschool Application and Student Selection Process

1. Students currently attending the Greenwich Public Schools Preschool Program who are age eligible to attend preschool for another year do not need to reapply. Information will be sent to the parents in the spring for children returning for the following year with tuition rates and payment information.

2. An application must be completed for all new students whose parents wish to apply to the Greenwich Preschool Program.
3. Parents may indicate up to three preferences for location of a “community” preschool class in priority order. All attempts will be made to honor site preferences. GPS reserves the right to balance preschool classes by age, gender, and youngsters identified as economically disadvantaged.
4. If more than one child in a family is applying to the preschool program, each child must complete a separate application form. ***There is no guarantee that all children applying from one family will be accepted, unless the sibling is a twin.***
5. Parents will receive a written letter stating whether or not their child received a placement in one of the preschool classes. Parents must confirm their acceptance by completing the form that will be attached to the letter of acceptance and returning it to the Preschool Office, by the noted deadline in order to move forward in the registration process.
6. If an applicant is not placed in one of the preschool classes, his/her application will be maintained in the applicant pool wait list until September 30, 2019. A new lottery will be held with children on the current wait list and children of Greenwich Staff and employees of the Town of Greenwich who have applied to the program. This list of students will be used if vacancies occur during the rest of the school year. The wait list is in rank order for each of the age/gender groups (for example, three-year old boys).
7. Parents who refuse an initial placement offer will have their child’s name removed from the wait list.

Children with Identified Special Needs

Parents, pediatricians, community preschools and/or the Connecticut Birth to 3 program may initiate a preschool referral to the special education process. The referrals are directed to the Preschool Evaluation team who initiates and oversees the information gathering process. Referrals to this process may be made throughout the school year.

Team decisions regarding evaluation, eligibility, and recommendations for appropriate educational programming and placement are determined at Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings. Parents are integral members of the PPT process. Once a student is determined eligible to receive Special Education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP), developed and educational programming determined.

Transportation

Children with identified special education needs are eligible for transportation services. Transportation is considered and recommendation is determined at a PPT meeting.

Absences

If your child is going to be *absent, please notify your child's teacher via email/phone. Please follow all school procedures outlined in the elementary school parent handbook for notifying the nurse of health concerns or doctors notes.

**(Parents of children who have access to Greenwich Public School transportation must notify the bus company when your child will be absent. Please call the bus company, Student Transportation of America at 203 967-9100 before 7:00 a.m.)*

*10 consecutive unexcused absences will result in an automatic withdrawal from the Greenwich Public School's Preschool Program.

Parent Involvement

Parents are an integral part of our Preschool program. We believe children benefit from a strong home-school partnership. There are many ways in which your participation is essential to the successful implementation of our program. Newsletters will be sent home weekly to keep parents informed about special events, requests, curriculum and theme related information.

Parent Conferences

A conference is scheduled late November/early December with an additional conference scheduled in the spring for children transitioning to kindergarten. Please understand this is a time for you and your child's teacher to talk without interruption. It is a time to exchange information regarding your child's development, home experiences and progress and growth in the classroom setting. When planning for your conference, please make appropriate child care arrangements.

Communication

Notices/announcements/flyers/letters to be sent home will be placed in your child's backpack. Please check your child's backpack daily to keep up-to-date with all school information. If there are any issues or concerns you would like to address with your child's teacher, please do not hesitate to send the teacher an email/note and/or schedule a meeting time or telephone conference. Ongoing, open, and reciprocal communication between home and school impacts student growth and achievement. Please understand it is difficult for teachers to give you their full attention during arrival and dismissal times. (staff email firstname_lastname@greenwich.k12.ct.us)

Class Parents

Each class will have 1 or 2 class parents who will be designated at the beginning of the year. Class parents' responsibilities may include organizing parties, contacting other parents, assisting in preparation of materials, assisting with special classroom activities and reading with children. The classroom teachers will meet with class parents at the beginning of the year to discuss their roles and responsibilities as a class parent.

Parent Education

Preschool staff members offer Parent Workshops that focus on behavior management, parent – child communication and strategies to assist parents in dealing more effectively with their children in the home environment. Specific information will be provided and sent home to parents when the workshops are scheduled.

Daily Schedule

Each child's individual needs are considered in daily program planning. Classroom schedules will be shared through the preschool teacher at the beginning of each school year.

Snack and Lunch

Snack should be sent in daily. Please follow the allergy awareness precautions and procedures when sending your child snack. Snack can be provided for those students whom receive free and reduced lunch. If snack is provided by the school, staff will maintain an allergen free environment and not serve foods with peanuts/tree nuts. If your child has a food allergy, please consult with the teacher about snacks to ensure that we are providing a safe and respectful environment for all students.

Lunch should be sent in daily. Please send your child's *lunch* (including a beverage) in a lunch box or bag marked with their name. If necessary an icepack should be included. We encourage you to send easy to open containers and include napkins and utensils, as needed. Preschool is a time to encourage healthy choices. *Please* do not send sweet snacks, candy or soda. Please follow the allergy awareness precautions and procedures

when sending you child's lunch. Free and reduced lunch is provided to students who qualify. Free and reduced lunch forms are posted in the district and school websites.

Clothing

Each day children should wear comfortable, washable play clothes to school. Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are recommended for classroom and outdoor play. If your child wears snow boots to school please send shoes in their backpack.

We spend a part of each day outside (weather permitting), running, jumping, and climbing. Please do not send you child with necklaces and sharp jewelry as they may pose a safety hazard during active play. Please dress your child according to weather with appropriate outerwear. Mittens, hats, snow pants, boots and scarves should be clearly labeled with your child's name. For safety please be sure that mittens, hats and jackets do not have hanging strings.

Toys From Home

Please check with your child's teacher regarding policy and practices regarding bringing toys to school from home.

Toileting

We *strongly* urge that children be toilet trained prior to entering our preschool program; however, this is not a prerequisite for participating in the program. If your child is not trained, we will support at-home training efforts. For children who continue to need support in training, we ask that a clearly labeled box of diapers, a box of wipes and disposable non-powdered latex gloves be provided to the teacher.

Starting The School Year

This list is an example of items your child may need for school. Please refer to the list in the welcome letter from your child's teacher in August:

- An extra set of labeled clothes including socks/tights and underwear. Please place in a zip-lock bag with your child's name on it. (These extra clothes should be updated according to season during the school year.)
- A painting smock (or an oversized shirt)
- A towel or small blanket for rest time
- A backpack sent daily to accommodate lunch box, artwork and a two pocket folder for teacher notices (Lunches are not refrigerated so a small ice pack would keep things cool and a small thermos would keep things warm because lunches cannot be heated in a microwave.)
- A family photo
- A roll of paper towels
- A box of tissues