



NEW LONDON PUBLIC SCHOOLS BIRTH TO AGE 8 (B-8) CENTER PLAYBOOK

**A -Student, Family-, and Community-Centered Approach
to Supporting Our Youngest Learners**



**NEW LONDON
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



INTRODUCTION

At New London Public Schools' (NLPS') Birth to Age 8 Early Childhood Center, we believe that high-quality early childhood education can play a key role in uplifting our students, their families, and our entire community. This belief is supported by research[1] and by our decades of experience working with children, and so, it animates everything that we do.

We also believe that the best way to provide high-quality early childhood education is through multifaceted supports, which leverage the strengths of our diverse New London community. That's why we're partnered with a coalition of community members, local organizations, and city agencies to support our students' educations with wraparound services extending far beyond the classroom.

Our work is further motivated by three specific areas of focus:

First, we aim to create a welcoming, inclusive environment in which all students and families feel a sense of belonging and support that begins early, with opportunities for partnerships beginning at birth. We provide bilingual outreach, with an emphasis on personal calls and in-person home visits to build our relationships, maintain a consistent presence of familiar faces during our onsite family/community events, serve freshly cooked meals at every event, and offer childcare services.

Second, we facilitate opportunities for meaningful family-to-family engagement and relationship-building. Our onsite community events enable families to not only know NLPS staff and community providers, as well as each other through fun, hands-on activities, alongside their children.

Third, we support the attainment of academic, social-emotional, and family learning goals. Our onsite community learning events include informational and skill-building workshops for participants of all ages. During such gatherings, families interact directly with NLPS staff and community providers, practice supporting their children's skill development, and gain access to take-home activities to ensure that learning continues at home. Our staff solicit and act upon ongoing family feedback to strengthen our programming. Parent voice, parent assets, and parents' knowledge of their child's strengths and needs matter greatly.

15+

B-8 community
events conducted
since our inception

850+

attendees across all
events

225+

attendees across all
events

[1] See e.g., Andres S. Bustamante, Eric Dearing, Henrik Daae Zachrisson, Deborah Lowe Vandell and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, "High-quality early child care and education: The gift that lasts a lifetime," *Brookings*, November 4, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2021/10/05/invest-in-programs-that-boost-childrens-learning-and-development/>; Robert Pianta, Jessica Whittaker, Virginia Vitiello, and Arya Ansari, "Invest in programs that boost children's learning and development," *Brookings*, October 5, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2021/10/05/invest-in-programs-that-boost-childrens-learning-and-development/>.

As a part of NLPS' Birth to 8 vision, we believe in parental choice and therefore make it our mission to continually offer innovative approaches to schooling, for both the family and children, in grades PreK-5.

Our full day preschool programming uses a research-backed curriculum to engage students and facilitate their physical, emotional, and academic development. We use Creative Curriculum to support our students to thrive. This multifaceted curriculum, which focuses on the whole child and directly aligns to the CT ELDS (Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards), utilizes a child's natural curiosity to build early math, literacy, social emotional, cognitive, and physical skills.

"When you are here, you really feel like there are a lot of people in the school district who really care about your kids and want your kids to succeed not just in school but in life."

New London Preschool Educator

Our elementary year-round model is based on an innovative approach to schooling. We provide the same number of instructional days per school calendar, as the 10-month traditional schooling model, but structure in-person learning to be six weeks of teaching, interspersed with two-week breaks year-round. This innovative cycle of learning eliminates the months-long summer break, where students often lose ground in mastery of skills and concepts. We place a team of two teachers in every multi-aged, multi-year classroom so that every student can engage in differentiated instruction based on their needs. Our innovative elementary instructional model is a choice for families and is a multi-year commitment. Year-round schooling is offered at NLPS for grades K/1, 2/3, and 4/5.

"My hope for kids who participate in our programming here in New London is that we are teaching them to become problem solvers – kids who, when something happens, can figure out next steps and actively find solutions. I also hope we are teaching them to be kind, to be inclusive, and to be lifelong readers."

**New London Preschool
Educator**





We host regular family and community engagement events at our school/community Birth to 8 Center.

We organize events for families and community members targeting the academic and socio-emotional development of children from birth to age 8. Our partnerships with local organizations provide wraparound services at these events. Families have the opportunity to try out new strategies and learn about how they can co-support their child's learning when at home. Through a generous private donor, we are able to provide free books, in both English and Spanish, and offer families generous, fun and useful raffle prizes.

A typical B-8 community event at the Center has a wide variety of offerings for children and families. Hands-on, play-based activities are set up throughout the building that target certain aspects of children's development. Community partners have tables set up to help families access resources for themselves and their children in both English and Spanish. A warm meal is provided to everyone present. Between the free books, diapers, raffles, and other items from our partners like handmade winter hats, children and families have the opportunity to walk out with something new and often have bags filled with learning resources to practice with at home.

Beyond goods and services, we also provide opportunities for adult learning. Learning seminars, community conversations, and paid Parent Ambassador positions keep several parents/caregivers busy partnering with the school community to ensure all young children are on track for success. We hope to engage families in two-way learning so that they can take new ideas and resources home to support their children's learning and growth and school/City personnel can learn more from families about their child's unique strengths and learning style.

We hope that our community events also serve as a place for families and children to bond with one another and experience the vibrance of our New London community.





“It’s a great community event where you get to meet lots of other families, get access to exciting resources, and pick up some new tips on how to support learning at home.”

New London Parent

“There are so many great resources here – my favorite is the free books. I love that we can expand our home library and just keep the reading going at home.”

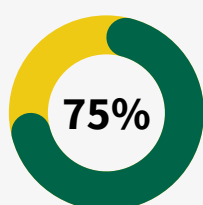
New London Parent



We partner with a range of community organizations and volunteers to engage and empower families to support their young children's success.

Through community events and frequent school-family communication, we empower families to support their young child's success and continue their learning outside of the classroom. We provide families with ideas on how to engage their children at home, and help get kids excited about learning. The Family Resource Center (FRC) has been an integral vehicle in offering additional support to families. The FRC offers services such as playgroups, parent education, after school care, and referral to other services for assistance with a variety of needs. Our TVCCA Liaison also coordinates access to community resources and tracks student development. We also have a social worker on-site who facilitates a social skills group for 1-2 hours a week for students identified as requiring additional support. The City of New London has engaged a Mental Health consultant to be of support to early childhood teachers and families. Families are able to utilize district technology to learn and connect to additional resources.

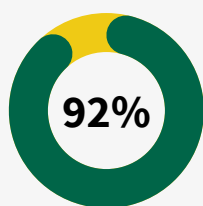
Additionally, we partner with Latinos in Action, a group of 8th grade students who come to the Center to read, chat, and play with kids to support early literacy skills. The support is conducted in Spanish and English, which is essential for students' oral language and literacy development.



Percentage of families who consistently return to participate in B-8 events/programming

18+

Community Partners who co-support the B-8 Center



Percentage of preschool students who join NLPS' K-12 programs after graduating from the BP Preschool Center

We partner with a range of community organizations and volunteers to engage and empower families to support their young children's success.

Partnerships with volunteers and local organizations enable us to provide a variety of wraparound services to the community. We work with the [New London Youth Affairs Diaper Bank](#) to hand out free diapers to families at events. We also partner with [Birth, Support, Education, and Beyond](#) to provide comprehensive perinatal support services with particular attention to pregnant and/or parenting young adults. We also work with volunteers like Barbara Timken (i.e., The Book Lady), a long-time New London resident, who donates books in English and Spanish each month for children to take home. All of our partners are passionate about supporting young children and providing essential services to further their overall growth and development.

Additional partnerships include:

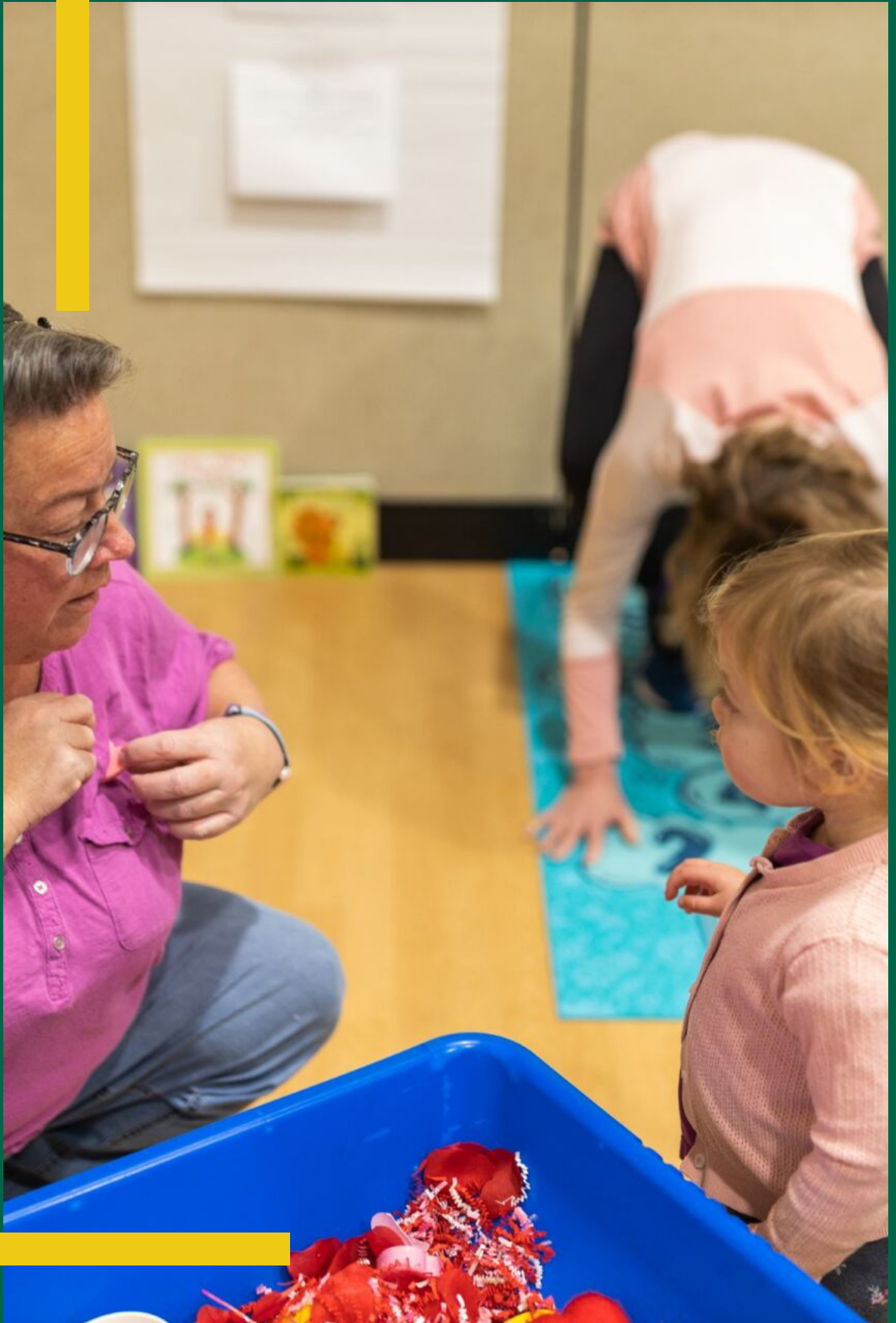
- [Creative Dance with L'ana](#);
- [Performances by local musician Steve Elci](#);
- [Connecticut Storytellers](#), who visit to tell stories seven times per school year;
- Puppet shows through the [Hispanic Health Council](#) focused on health and nutrition;
- Visits by the Fire and Police departments to read aloud, show students their vehicles, and discuss safety;
- [New London Adult Education](#);
- New London Public Schools' Board of Education, Administration, Early Childhood Teachers, Nurse, and Support Staff;
- Child and Family Agency; and
- Community Health Centers.

"When families come to the center, they know that people are not going to be talking to you –instead, you are doing it together. Kids are experiencing and families are given the resources they need."

New London Youth Affairs Diaper Bank

"I am extremely proud of the launch of our Birth to Age 8 Community Resource Center. It is wonderful to see a shared vision brought to life, that is supporting the City's most valuable resource . . . it's amazing children!"

Dr. Cynthia Ritchie, Superintendent



We put Parent Ambassadors in leadership roles to support our parent community.

Working with Parent Ambassadors allows us to directly incorporate parent voices into our work in supporting early childhood education. Parent Ambassadors serve as liaisons between NLPS and the community. They facilitate two-way communication by advocating on behalf of the community, contributing ideas that inform our strategy, and promoting the services and programming available to families.

We partner with the New London School Readiness Council to support our children's K-12 preparedness.

The [New London School Readiness Council](#) (NLSRC) is an organization dedicated to supporting children from birth to age 8 in everything from high quality preschool education to safe neighborhoods for children to play outside. We serve as a member of the NLSRC to strengthen support for early childhood education and development.

We are partnering with Columbia University and UCLA to strengthen our ongoing early childhood education work.

In partnership with UCLA, we have implemented the Early Development Inventory (EDI) Survey to gain further data and information about the healthy trajectories of our young students through geocoded data that is based on housing locations throughout the community. In collaboration with Columbia University's Center for Public Research & Leadership (CPRL), we have strengthened our B-8 strategy and are better communicating the link to learning of our various Birth to 8 events and programming. Our district's EDI results can be found on our district's [website](#).

