



HANDBOOK

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OFFICE

HAVEMEYER BUILDING
290 GREENWICH AVENUE
GREENWICH, CT 06830
(203) 698-7796

WELCOME

Greenwich Public Schools Integrated Preschool Program
August 2023

Establishing Strong Foundations for Bright Futures

Welcome to the Greenwich Public Schools (GPS) Integrated Preschool Program.

This handbook is designed to provide families with information about the GPS Preschool Program. This handbook is also aligned with the parent handbook for each of our school sites. The preschool handbook should be read as a component of the elementary school handbook.

Greenwich Public Schools Integrated Preschool Program is an inclusive educational program. The program provides a learning environment in which children with identified special needs and their typically developing peers learn, develop, and grow together. The Preschool Program encapsulates our “P3” students who are two years away from kindergarten, as well as our “PK” students who transition to kindergarten the following school year.

Through a structured language and play based program, every child receives appropriate instruction. Greenwich Public Schools Integrated Preschool classes provide instruction for students who are three and four years old. The multi-age environment provides opportunities for peer modeling, interactions, and problem-solving opportunities.

The administration and staff in our schools provide a wealth of experience in the field of early childhood special and general education. The classroom teachers are certified in both general education and special education, and work closely with specialists to develop a comprehensive program for all students.

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.

The GPS Preschool Team

Mission Statement

In the Greenwich Public Schools Preschool Program, we recognize that each child develops at his or her own natural pace. We nurture this natural progression of development and provide each child with opportunities for growth at each developmental stage.

Overview of the Program

The Greenwich Public Schools (GPS) Integrated Preschool Program provides instruction to children with identified special needs alongside their typically developing peers. The program was developed in alignment with special education laws to provide free and appropriate public education for preschool students with identified disabilities (FAPE). Best practice in early childhood education tells us that children with special education needs learn best from their typically developing peers. Our experience working in an inclusive setting tells us that all children benefit from learning together! The teachers in the GPS preschool classes are dually certified by the State of Connecticut in both Special Education and General Education.

Preschool Classroom and Support Team

Each preschool classroom has a lead teacher certified in both Special Education and Early Childhood Education as well as three professional assistants.

Our team of specialists which include:

- ✎ Psychologists
- ✎ Speech Language Pathologists
- ✎ Occupational Therapists
- ✎ Physical Therapists
- ✎ Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)

work collaboratively with our classroom staff.



The Guiding Principles of the Preschool Program

The GPS Integrated preschool program adheres to the Connecticut Early Learning Development Standards that promote:

- ✎ Equity for all children through setting high, but appropriate, expectations;
- ✎ High quality early learning experiences by providing clear goals and trajectories for learning;
- ✎ Provision of individual support based on each child's growth and development;
- ✎ Families' understanding of what their children are learning and how to provide support in their learning;
- ✎ Teachers' understanding of age-appropriate content and approaches to children's learning, and;
- ✎ Communication across sectors, based upon these common goals for children.

Curriculum

In an effort to ensure we are providing our students with the most up-to-date research-based instruction, we are excited to announce the implementation of a new curriculum for the 2023-24 school year and beyond. During September of 2022, the preschool program began a year-long curriculum vetting process that started with 16 of the most well-respected preschool curriculum programs. With specific goals in mind such as increasing family engagement, consistency across all of our buildings, and several others, we decided on the [Creative Curriculum for Preschool](#). Feel free to take a look at our [presentation to the Board of Education](#). Creative Curriculum is designed to inspire children through project based and investigative learning. The daily components of the Creative Curriculum include a morning meeting, interactive read-alouds, play based learning experiences embedded in classroom centers, and individualized small group learning. The curriculum is infused with phonological and phonemic awareness activities, mathematical skill building, and related material to the individual child and the world around them. Embedded within the design of Creative Curriculum is ongoing family engagement that teachers can access to increase home partnership within the curriculum.

The Units are as follows:

- ✎ *Balls study*
- ✎ *Buildings study*
- ✎ *Clothes study*
- ✎ *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle study*
- ✎ *Trees study*
- ✎ *Water study*
- ✎ *Wheels study*
- ✎ *Exercise study*



To help build a foundation of literacy for our students, we began to implement the [Foundations Reading Program](#) from Wilson during the 2022-2023 school year. Foundations is research based & utilizes a multisensory approach to reading, writing, & spelling instruction. Foundations lessons are brief & engaging and are delivered in whole group instruction as well as small groups. Utilizing the Foundations program increases alignment with our kindergarten curriculum.






The Preschool Program also implements Second Step which is a social-emotional curriculum. The elementary years are the ideal time to nurture social-emotional competence & develop foundational learning skills. Second Step® Elementary offers an [evidence-based](#) approach to social-emotional learning (SEL), with age-appropriate lessons. The lessons are provided in whole group and small group settings.

Assessment

The (DOTS) Documentation and Observations for Teaching System, aligned with the CT-ELDS provides baseline data and developmental benchmarks for the children's learning profiles. It is used to monitor growth and progress and inform instructional plans and practices. Fall and spring conferences provide teachers and caregivers an opportunity to collaborate and support children's growth and progress.

Locations

At this time, our preschools will be at the following locations:

-  Hamilton Avenue School
-  Julian Curtiss School
-  New Lebanon School
-  North Street School
-  Old Greenwich School



*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.
Arrival and dismissal times and routines are school based.

Student Information

Age Eligibility for Students

The GPS Preschool follows state guidelines for kindergarten entrance the year that the student reaches their fifth birthday.

To enter the preschool program, your child must be 3 by September 1, 2024.

As of 2024, a student must turn five years old by September 1, 2024 to be eligible for Kindergarten.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent, please notify your child's teacher via email or phone. Please follow all school procedures outlined in the elementary school parent handbook for notifying the nurse of health concerns or doctors notes. Ten consecutive absences may result in withdrawal from the GPS Preschool Program. Notification will be sent as a result of excessive absences.

Tardiness

An important aspect of your child's learning involves routines. It is important that your child arrives on time each day in order to effectively support their social-emotional and academic learning.

Health/Illness

Determining whether a child will be sent home due to illness will be at the discretion of the school nurse at each site. Refer to the Greenwich Public School's website for details regarding when a child is required to stay home due to illness. Children may return to school when:

- ✍ Temperature is normal for 24 hours after stopping Tylenol or Ibuprofen
- ✍ Diarrhea &/or vomiting has stopped for 24 hours
- ✍ Rash has been seen by M.D. (must bring note to school nurse)
- ✍ 24 hours after starting antibiotics

Based on the Connecticut Department of Public Health guidelines, children enrolled in a preschool program are required to receive a flu shot by December 31 or they may not return to school for the duration of the flu season.

Communication & General Information

Home/School Communication

Email is the primary route to share information between home and school. Digital newsletters containing updates and information about your child's classroom will be sent out weekly. Additionally, the main office may send home updates in your child's backpack. Please check daily to stay 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 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)

Preschool's Approach to Behavior

Fighting over toys, concerns with sharing, tantrums, disputes on the playground or in the classroom, and troubles keeping their hands to themselves are all behaviors in preschool that are developmentally appropriate. Between ages 2-5, children are experiencing many developmental changes and learning how to navigate in the world around them. With guidance, preschool students will move through these developmental stages, each at their own pace. In the GPS preschool, we have students with a variety of learning needs. We work closely with members of our staff as well as with our families in order to ensure personal safety and consistent behavioral expectations for all children. Utilizing the GPS preschool social emotional curriculum (Second Step), students are taught behavioral expectations. Sometimes preschoolers have big reactions and require explicit behavioral instruction. As a program, we work to ensure that everyone is safe and supported. In the event that we have a behavioral incident, we work to make sure that all parties are informed and behavioral interventions are implemented with fidelity. It is our practice to work with both parties to resolve difficult scenarios and inform parents of the steps taken to come to a resolution without naming/implicating the other party involved.

Conferences

A conference is scheduled in 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.

Family Involvement

Parents/Caregivers are an integral part of the 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 the program.

Each class will have one or two class parents who will be designated at the beginning of the year. Class parents' responsibilities may include organizing activities, 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.

Join the PTA to help raise school funds, & participate in school-wide events.

Celebrations are an important part of the preschool experience. Several times a year parents/caregiver will be invited into the classroom for various activities/and or celebrations.

The following is the GPS policy on classroom celebrations:

Celebration:

- ✎ Parents or Guardians will confer with classroom teachers to determine the date and time of an in-class celebration. The time may not interfere with instructional time (examples of appropriate times during the school day include: snack time, inside recess, lunch period, etc.). School personnel will determine the appropriate time of the celebration.
- ✎ Celebrations will be limited to 10 minutes.
- ✎ Although parents may attend such celebrations, it is strongly encouraged that parents drop off non-food celebration items at the main office prior to the start of the school day, avoiding any disturbance to classroom instruction. Parents must adhere to the 10-minute limit for their birthday celebration visitation due to the impact extending this time would have on instructional time.

Policies and regulations on birthday & classroom celebrations can be found on the [GPS website](#).

Children with Identified Special Needs

Parents, pediatricians, community preschools and/or the Connecticut Birth-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 important 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.

Parent/Caregiver Workshops

Preschool staff members offer Family Workshops and Parent Chats that focus on behavior management, caregiver/child communication and strategies to assist caregivers to more effectively support their child's learning within the home environment. Specific information will be provided and sent home to caregivers when the workshops and parent chats are scheduled.

Toileting

Independent toileting and self-help skills are strongly encouraged when entering the preschool program. When entering our program, it is important to communicate your child's level of training in order to ensure carry over of skills from home to school. If your child is not toilet trained, pull ups, wipes, and gloves will need to be provided to the school.

Clothing

Each day, children should wear comfortable, washable play clothes to school. Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are recommended for classroom & 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 your child with necklaces or sharp jewelry as they may pose a safety hazard during active play. Please dress your child according to the 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.

Supplies

Before the school year begins, your child's teacher will communicate the supplies they will need for the school year. This may include a change of clothing, diaper and wipes if applicable, daily snack, a backpack large enough for a lunch box and folder, and/or various school supplies. At that time, the teacher will communicate arrival and dismissal routines specific to the school your child will be attending.