

Williamson Central School



Universal Prekindergarten Program Plan 2026–2027

Adopted by the WCSD BOE: 9/2/2026

Program Purpose

Williamson Central School District provides a Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) program designed to support the development and learning of eligible four-year-old children and prepare them for a successful transition to kindergarten.

The program is operated in accordance with New York State Education Law §3602-e, Commissioner's Regulations Parts 100, 117 and Subpart 151-1, and applicable guidance from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Office of Early Learning.

Williamson's UPK program provides a developmentally appropriate, student-centered learning environment that supports the whole child through intentional instruction, exploration, play, social interaction and active learning.

Eligibility and Enrollment

Children are eligible for Williamson's four-year-old UPK program when they:

- reside within the Williamson Central School District; and
- are four years old on or before December 1 of the school year in which they are enrolled.

UPK is a voluntary program and enrollment is based on available space. Williamson CSD uses a lottery system when the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of available placements. In that event, students are selected through the district's established random lottery process, consistent with NYSED requirements. Students who are not selected for an available placement are placed on a waitlist based on their lottery order.

In March, UPK applications are sent to eligible Williamson families. To be included in the lottery, families must submit a complete application with all required documentation by the established deadline.

If the number of eligible applicants does not exceed the available UPK slots, all students are placed and no lottery is necessary. If applications exceed available slots, each completed, on-time application is assigned a random lottery number. Students are then placed in available classes according to lottery order and family preference until all spaces are filled. Remaining students are placed on a waitlist in lottery order.

Applications received after the deadline are considered based on remaining availability or added to the waitlist. Siblings participating in the same lottery are placed together when space permits. Slots are not reserved and lottery results are not adjusted for individual circumstances.

Three-year-old students may participate in a UPK classroom when placement is determined through the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) process as part of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). These placements are based on the student's identified special education needs and are separate from the district's general UPK application and lottery process.

Program Structure

The Williamson UPK program is operated at Williamson Elementary School and provides full-day and half-day programming based on available State-funded placements.

The program operates five days per week for a minimum of 180 days.

Class size, staffing ratios and teacher qualifications will meet all applicable NYSED requirements. The maximum UPK class size is 20 students unless a variance is approved. Classes of up to 18 students will have at least one teacher and one paraprofessional; classes of 19 or 20 students will have one teacher and two paraprofessionals.

Curriculum and Learning Environment

The district will implement a curriculum aligned with the New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards and designed to provide continuity with kindergarten and the early elementary grades.

The UPK instructional program will address all New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards domains, including:

- Approaches to Learning
- Physical Development and Health
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Cognition and Knowledge of the World, including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and the Arts

Instruction will be responsive to children's ages, interests, strengths, developmental levels, language backgrounds and individual needs. Children will have opportunities for differentiated instruction, active and quiet learning experiences, indoor and outdoor learning, inquiry, social interaction, and fine- and gross-motor development.

Williamson's UPK classrooms will provide a balance of intentional teacher-guided and child-initiated learning. Play, exploration, conversation, movement, learning centers and hands-on experiences will serve as important vehicles for children's learning and development. Children will have regular opportunities to make choices, create, investigate, problem-solve and collaborate.

Early Literacy Expectations

Williamson will provide developmentally appropriate early literacy instruction consistent with New York State expectations for Prekindergarten through Grade 3.

Early literacy experiences will support the development of:

- oral language;
- background knowledge;
- phonological and phonemic awareness;
- vocabulary;
- comprehension; and
- emergent reading and writing.

Literacy Program

Williamson's UPK program uses *World of Wonders* as its core early literacy resource and *Heggerty Pre-Kindergarten Phonemic Awareness* to provide systematic, developmentally appropriate phonological and phonemic awareness instruction. Literacy development is integrated throughout the UPK day through read-alouds, oral language and vocabulary development, emergent reading and writing, conversation, learning centers and play. Instruction is aligned with the New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards and emphasizes developmentally appropriate, evidence-based early literacy practices.

Mathematics Program

Williamson's UPK program uses Everyday Mathematics to support the development of early mathematical understanding. Children develop number sense, counting, patterns, measurement, geometry and mathematical thinking through hands-on exploration, manipulatives, problem-solving, learning centers and play. Mathematics instruction is aligned with the New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards and provides meaningful opportunities for children to apply mathematical thinking within authentic, developmentally appropriate experiences.

Screening, Assessment and Student Progress

Williamson will use valid and reliable screening and progress-monitoring measures consistent with NYSED requirements.

New entrants will participate in required developmental screening in accordance with Part 117. The district will also use valid and reliable, developmentally appropriate assessment measures to establish baseline information and monitor children's progress throughout the school year.

For 2026–27, Brigance Early Childhood Screens will be used for developmental screening, and the Teaching Strategies GOLD Developmental Continuum will be used for ongoing progress monitoring across developmental domains.

Assessment will be developmentally appropriate and may include observation, student work, performance-based activities and teacher documentation. Assessment information will be used to inform instruction, identify individual student needs, monitor growth and communicate progress with families. Traditional standardized tests will not be used to measure achievement in the UPK program.

Families will receive regular information regarding their child's development and progress through teacher communication, progress reporting, and parent-teacher conferences.

Meeting the Needs of All Learners

Williamson is committed to an inclusive UPK program in which every child has meaningful access to learning and participation. Instruction will be differentiated based on individual developmental needs, strengths, abilities, language backgrounds and learning characteristics.

When developmental, academic, behavioral or social-emotional concerns arise, UPK staff will collaborate with families and appropriate school-based support staff to identify strategies, monitor progress and connect children with additional support when needed.

Students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations, modifications, services and supports in accordance with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and applicable special education requirements. Williamson's UPK program includes access to a special education teacher dedicated to supporting UPK students, as well as access to related services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other specialized supports as determined by individual student needs and IEPs. UPK general and special education staff will collaborate with families, related service providers and other appropriate school personnel to support each child's meaningful participation, development and progress within the UPK program.

Three-year-old students may participate in a UPK classroom when placement is determined through the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) process as part of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). These placements are based on the student's identified special education needs and are separate from the district's general UPK application and lottery process.

Emergent Multilingual Learners will receive developmentally appropriate language supports. The district is committed to supporting children's home languages and cultures and communicating with families in their preferred language or mode of communication. The district's multilingual family supports, including Home-School Liaison and Intercultural supports, will be available to assist UPK families with communication, access to school information, and connection to district resources.

Health, Nutrition and Physical Development

Williamson will provide a safe and healthy learning environment and comply with all applicable health and safety requirements.

UPK students will have opportunities for nutritious meals and snacks, physical activity, gross- and fine-motor development, recess, movement and indoor and outdoor play as appropriate to the program schedule.

Family Engagement

Families are essential partners in the education of young children.

Williamson will provide families with ongoing opportunities to learn about the UPK program, communicate with teachers and staff, participate in school activities, receive information about their child's learning and development, and access available school and community support.

Family engagement will include multiple opportunities such as informational meetings, classroom visits, conferences, regular written and electronic communication, family activities and individualized outreach. The district will strive to ensure that family engagement opportunities are accessible and responsive to the needs of participating families.

Community Schools Support

Williamson's Community Schools program provides an additional layer of support for UPK students and families by helping connect them with school and community-based resources. Community Schools staff work collaboratively with families and district staff to identify and address barriers that may affect a child's participation, attendance, learning, or well-being. Supports may include connections to food and clothing resources, health and wellness services, family assistance, community programs, and other resources based on individual family needs. Through outreach and relationship-building, Community Schools helps ensure that UPK families have an accessible point of connection to the broader supports available throughout the Williamson Central School District.

Attendance

Although UPK is voluntary and non-compulsory, consistent attendance supports children's learning, development and successful participation in the program.

The district will maintain attendance records and communicate with families when attendance patterns may interfere with a child's participation or progress. The district will work collaboratively with families to identify and address barriers to regular participation when appropriate.

Transportation

Transportation will be provided to eligible UPK students in accordance with district transportation procedures and applicable New York State requirements. When the district provides transportation to UPK students, transportation will be offered equitably in accordance with Education Law §3635 and NYSED requirements.

UPK students who are under four years of age must be transported using an appropriate Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS) that meets applicable safety requirements and is appropriate for the child's size. A standard seat belt alone does not meet this requirement for a child under age four on a school bus. The district will ensure that required child safety restraint systems are properly provided and used when transporting three-year-old UPK students.

Transition to Kindergarten

Williamson will support a coordinated transition from UPK to kindergarten. Because UPK and kindergarten are located within Williamson Elementary School, students benefit from opportunities to become familiar with the school environment, staff, routines and learning spaces prior to entering kindergarten.

The transition process will support continuity of learning and help children and families enter kindergarten with familiarity, confidence and appropriate support. UPK and kindergarten staff will collaborate to support continuity in curriculum, instructional practices, student supports and expectations as children transition into kindergarten.

Transition activities will include opportunities for children and families to become familiar with kindergarten, collaboration between UPK and kindergarten educators, family transition activities, and the appropriate sharing of student information with receiving teachers.

Program Oversight and Continuous Improvement

Williamson Central School District will provide ongoing oversight of its UPK program to ensure compliance with NYSED requirements and promote high-quality early learning experiences.

Program oversight will include review of:

- instructional practices and learning environments;
- curriculum implementation;
- screening, assessment and student progress;
- staff qualifications;
- health and safety requirements;
- professional learning; and
- family engagement.

UPK staff will participate in professional learning and collaborative planning opportunities designed to support developmentally appropriate instruction, alignment with New York State expectations and continuous program improvement.

Annual Program Review

The district will review the Universal Prekindergarten Program annually and make revisions as necessary to maintain alignment with New York State requirements, district priorities and the developmental needs of participating children.