

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Early Childhood Program provides special education services for preschool children who have attained the age of 3 years.

-The Highly Individualized classroom at Gallup Hill School serves children who need highly structured and individualized instruction in a full day model. The first part of their day, they participate with typical peers. The second part of their day, they follow individual schedules. This class is located in Room 1.

-The reverse mainstream classroom at Gallup Hill School includes children with special needs and an equal number of children who serve as peer models. Children are enrolled in half-day morning or afternoon classes. This class is located in Room 2.

PROGRAM HOURS and DAILY ROUTINE

Mrs. Yonush's (Room 1):

Mon. through Fri. 8:40 AM - 2:00 PM (Special Needs hours)
9:00 AM - 11:30 AM (Peer program hours)

Mrs. Blacker's (Room 2):

Mon. through Fri. 8:40 AM - 11:00 AM or
Mon. through Thurs. 12:15 - 3:00 PM

The program follows the Ledyard Public School calendar, with a few exceptions. A copy of the calendar is included in the back of this handbook.

The classes have daily routines that provide predictability and structure to the day. The children may participate in table activities, circle time, play choice time, snack, book time, "language group", outdoor time, and music/movement activities. Children may also participate in art, music, physical education and library with the Gallup Hill teaching staff, as scheduled, weekly.

Licensing Requirements:

The preschool program at Gallup Hill School is licensed-exempt. The program is in voluntary compliance with the State of Connecticut's childcare licensing requirements. A copy of these requirements can be found at www.ct.gov/dph or are available by request from Mrs. Whipple.

NAEYC Accreditation:

The Ledyard Preschool Programs attained NAEYC accreditation in February, 2009. Throughout the year, you may be asked to participate in activities that will help us maintain our status as an accredited program.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The Early Childhood Program philosophy is that all children learn best through active participation in a variety of developmentally appropriate experiences. It is essential that these experiences be provided in a safe environment staffed by adults who are sensitive and responsive to children's needs. The program uses an integrated model that allows typical and special needs children to learn from each other and develop relationships to the greatest extent possible. The program acknowledges the family's vital role in early childhood education and encourages family involvement.

The goals of the Early Childhood Program are:

1. To facilitate cognitive and language development through play and a variety of active learning experiences.
2. To develop positive self-esteem and appropriate personal and social skills.
3. To promote physical development, including large and small muscle skills.
4. To encourage increased independence and appropriate self-help skills.
5. To encourage creative expression through art, sensory experiences, music and movement, and pretend play.
6. To promote positive health, safety, and nutritional practices.
7. To support families and provide information to them through ongoing home/school communication.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of student records is an essential component of the legal rights granted to students by education law. All personal information, evaluations and special education records are kept in locked cabinets. Please be aware that staff cannot discuss information about other students in the program with you. Any written records that are shared with other agencies require the parent's written consent.

CURRICULUM

The Early Childhood Program uses **Connecticut's Preschool Curriculum Framework** (1999), which outlines the skills children should be demonstrating when they enter kindergarten. It also uses the **Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework** (2002), which enables teachers to plan and implement curriculum activities that address specific learning standards, and to observe and assess children's progress on these same standards. Both frameworks can be located at the State Department of Education website (www.sde.ct.gov)

The classrooms are set up in interest centers to support curricular goals. Areas include Library (books, computer, writing, listening), Dramatic Play, Blocks, Art, Discovery, Sand/Water, Math/Manipulatives, and Music/Movement.

Skill development is fostered throughout the day as follows:

Cognitive and Language Skills:

Activities are planned to address cognitive performance standards. Science and math goals include engaging in inquiry, solving problems, sorting, patterning, comparing & ordering and quantifying. We implement the district Math curriculum using the pre-kindergarten level of **Math Connects**. Language & literacy standards include expanding vocabulary, language concepts, and sentence complexity, participating in conversations, and understanding stories. Children also learn about books and print, rhyming and recognizing similar beginning sounds. They may learn to recognize some printed words and begin to write to convey meaning. Components of the **Wright Skills Pre-K Program** are used to promote language & literacy skills.

Personal-Social Skills:

Interpersonal experiences with peers and adults occur throughout the daily routine. Staff encourage students to work on self-direction, following routines, sustaining attention to task, participating appropriately in group activities, and managing transitions throughout the school day. Children are encouraged to express their emotions in acceptable ways, and to show empathy for others. They work on cooperating with peers and resolving conflicts, with teacher guidance. They also learn to appreciate individual differences and diversity.

Children are expected to follow basic classroom rules to maintain a safe learning environment. The staff uses positive methods of discipline that encourage self-control, decision making, problem solving, cooperation and positive self-esteem. Techniques include praise, modeling, redirection, individual staff support, and planned alternative activities. Individualized behavior management programs are developed, as needed, with family consent and ongoing communication.

Physical Skills:

Gross Motor Skills

Developmentally appropriate activities and equipment are provided to promote large muscle development and coordination. During outside time children may use riding toys, swings, a slide, sand, balls, and other materials. During inclement weather, indoor motor activities are planned, including music, movement and dance. Phys. Ed. is taught on a weekly basis, encouraging exploration of equipment, such as balls, scooter boards, and beanbags. Activities are provided to develop loco-motor skills such as running, hopping, and jumping; object control skills such as throwing and catching; and motor planning skills.

Fine Motor Skills:

The fine motor area includes a variety of manipulative toys, puzzles, games and tactile materials which promote small muscle development. Children are encouraged to take things apart, rearrange, sort, match, compare and experiment with different materials. The art area exposes children to a wide variety of art materials. Children explore a variety of tactile materials (sand, water, rice, etc.) in our sensory tables. A writing center encourages early pre-writing experiences. Multisensory materials and activities from the **Pre-K Handwriting Without Tears Program** are used to develop fine motor/pre-writing skills.

Self-Help Skills:

Children work on increasing their levels of independence in eating, dressing, toileting and grooming skills as they occur in daily preschool activities. They are encouraged to care for their own possessions, and to participate in classroom jobs and clean up time.

Creative Expression:

Children are given opportunities to explore with building and sensory materials. They have time to draw and paint and to explore and create with various media. They can participate in pretend play alone or with peers. Frequent opportunities to be actively involved in music and movement activities are also included in the Early Childhood daily routine.

Communication with Families

The Early Childhood staff strives to maintain close communication between home and school. A parent orientation and an open house are held at the beginning of the school year to introduce families to the program. The staff maintains contact with families through phone conversations, and conferences. Staff newsletters are sent home regularly reviewing classroom activities, providing home suggestions, and information about upcoming events. Home visits, PPTs and home/school notebooks are additional program components for children with special needs. Individual peer conferences are offered twice a year in the fall and in the spring. Family members are welcome to visit their child's class, and/or volunteer for a planned activity. Families are also invited to attend school parties, Field Day, and other school events. Early Childhood families are invited to join and participate in the activities sponsored by the Gallup Hill PTO.

The Highly Individualized Program (HI)

This program is designed to teach children who have moderate to severe delays in communication, difficulty integrating information in a cohesive and flexible manner, and difficulty responding to the social communication and emotional behaviors of others. The ratio of adults to children is high, and a great deal of time is spent in structured activities. An important aspect of the program is one on one teaching of specific skills that include attending, information processing, imitation, nonverbal interaction, functional communication, and pre-academic skills. There is also an emphasis on increasing social and self-help skills. The daily activities are organized to follow a routine that provides the children with a secure and reliable environment. Careful attention is paid to each child's need for sensory stimulation, which may include "a sensory diet" that helps the child by increasing attention and helping to neurologically organize the child for better availability for learning. The program includes professional therapists who work as an interdisciplinary team sharing information, observing classroom strategies and techniques. The classroom itself is designed to be "low impact" with attention paid to organization of materials, visual supports, as well as removal of excess sensory information that may overwhelm or distract the child. Both verbal and nonverbal communication are priorities. A picture exchange communication system may be used to help a child make choices, and to more easily make his/her wants and needs known. Opportunities are provided for learning with typical peers who provide social and language models through the Peer Program which meets daily from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM.

Children may be referred to the Early Childhood Program by parents, pediatricians, preschool teachers, Birth-to-three programs, and others. When a child is referred, an initial screening may be conducted and follow-up evaluations are completed as necessary. A Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting is held to determine eligibility and plan an appropriate program. A PPT meeting is held at least once a year to review a child's progress. A parent may request a PPT at any time. All children who receive special education have an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) that includes specific goals and objectives. Parents of children receiving special education have rights, which are described in Procedural Safeguards of Children in Special Education. A copy of this document is available at each PPT.

Each year several children participate in the Early Childhood classes as typical peer models for one school year. Peer applicants must pass Early Childhood screening and are selected by lottery to complement the needs of the program.

The Early Childhood Program is funded by the Ledyard Public Schools. There is no tuition charge for Ledyard/Gales Ferry families. Transportation is also provided within the district at no charge, for students with special needs only.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Prior to enrollment, the following forms are needed:

1. The **Health Assessment Record**-completed by you and your child's physician and reviewed by the school nurse prior to attendance.
2. An **Emergency Card** updated each September.
3. **Gallup Hill School Registration Form**.
4. A copy of your child's **Birth Certificate**.

Additional forms may also be requested throughout the year as needed.

HEALTH INFORMATION

HEALTH STATUS

The school nurse and E.C. staff should be notified of any child with a medical condition that may require immediate attention or emergency medication. Such conditions may include food or insect sting allergies.

Medications and epipens must be delivered to the nurse directly by a parent or guardian. Please do not send them to school in your child's backpack.

The school nurse provides health services to children in the Early Childhood Program. She reviews the Health Assessment Record, completes annual vision screening, and administers all medications to students at school. In addition, she contacts families if a child becomes ill at school. She serves as a consultant to staff and families regarding medical concerns, and may be reached at 860-536-8029.

ILLNESS

If your child has a communicable illness such as a virus, cold with fever or excessive coughing, pink eye, strep throat, or chicken pox, he or she must remain home until he or she is no longer contagious. For specific questions, you may contact the school nurse.

If your child will not be attending school on a given day due to illness or any other reason, please let the staff know. You may call Early Childhood (860-572-0259) or email us: mbblacker@ledyard.net or dyonush@ledyard.net. Attendance is recorded daily, and if your child is absent, someone will call you if you have not yet notified us.

If your child becomes ill at school, the school nurse or a staff member will contact you. If you cannot be reached, one of the individuals listed on the emergency card will be contacted.

TRANSPORTATION

The Ledyard Transport Company provides mini-bus transportation for children identified with special needs. If your child will not be riding the mini-bus for any reason, please contact the bus company directly at **860-464-8346**. Transportation can be provided only within Ledyard and Gales Ferry.

Children who are peers in the program are transported by their families or other authorized adults.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Arrival:

Please park in the parking lot, or pull up in front of the school to drop off your child. Do not leave your vehicle if you pull up and please do not block the bus unloading area. Early Childhood staff will be waiting outside (or inside the front door in inclement weather). If you are late, you should park in the parking lot, sign in at the office, obtain a visitor's pass, and walk your child downstairs to the classroom.

Dismissal:

Please park in the parking lots and walk to the front of the school to meet your child, who will be with staff members. If you want to pick up your child from his/her classroom, please sign in at the office and get a visitor's pass. **Please use the crosswalk when parking in the auxiliary lot.**

Each child not transported by bus must be accompanied out of school by a parent or authorized adult. Staff may ask for identification (e.g. driver's license) of authorized adults. Please be sure that a staff member sees you and knows of your child's departure.

CLOTHES AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Your child should come to school in comfortable, easy-to-fasten play clothes and safe, non-skid shoes. Please make sure that your child is dressed properly for the weather or season, since outside time is scheduled whenever possible.

Children should carry a backpack large enough to carry a 9 x 12" folder to school each day. Backpacks with wheels are discouraged. Please label all possessions sent to school. It is especially helpful if your child's name is on the outside of his/her backpack and lunch/snack containers.

Children with special needs, who are not yet toilet trained, are asked to bring disposable diapers, wipes, and an extra set of clothes to school. The staff will assist children with toileting as needed.

Children in Mrs. Blacker's classes should bring a daily snack and drink. Special needs students in Mrs. Yonush's class should bring a snack, lunch and drinks daily. Peers in Mrs. Yonush's class will need a snack and drink daily. A list of healthy snacks and lunch suggestions will be provided, as well as information about the school milk program and lunch program. Please notify us if your child has any special dietary restrictions.

"Hotdogs, whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of peanut butter, chunks of raw carrot, and large chunks of meat" are not to be served to children under age 4, according to the most recent NAEYC accreditation criteria.

Please label your child's lunch bag/box, and all food containers. Please include an ice pack, gel pack, or frozen juice box if you are sending in foods that need to be kept cold (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, fresh fruits, vegetables.)

BIRTHDAYS:

Birthdays are special! If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, please let E.C. staff know. Because one of our program goals is to promote positive nutritional practices, we encourage alternatives to store-bought cupcakes and other sweets.

TRANSITIONS TO AND FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Early Childhood staff strives to make transitions to and from the program as smooth as possible. For special needs students transitioning from another program, Early Childhood staff may visit your child's program, and will have you and your child visit the Early Childhood Program prior to enrollment. When students leave Early Childhood, staff will help to arrange visits to other programs, if needed, and will transfer information regarding your child's progress and educational needs. A signed release form is necessary when records are shared with another agency or district.

Summer school is provided during the month of July for eligible students who are in need of special education. The need for summer services is determined individually at each child's PPT meeting.

Early Childhood Coordinator/
Community Support

Mrs. Cyndi Whipple
cwhipple@ledyard.net

Reverse Mainstream Program
Special Education Teacher

Mrs. Mary Beth Blacker
mbblacker@ledyard.net

Paraprofessionals:

Mrs. Katie Whitney
Ms. Jaime Kelley

Highly Individualized Program
Special Education Teacher

Mrs. Dawn Yonush
dyonush@ledyard.net

Paraprofessionals:

Mrs. Rose Anne Wolfe
Mrs. Dale Bartolucci
Mrs. Andrea LaPointe

Speech/language Pathologist

Mrs. Anne Sicard
asicard@ledyard.net

District Psychologist

Mrs. Robin Lipman
rlipman@ledyard.net

Administrative support staff:

Principal, Gallup Hill School

Mrs. Jennifer Byars
jbyars@ledyard.net

Director of Special Services

Mr. Philip Genova
pgenova@ledyard.net

Other Gallup Hill School staff work with the E.C. program, including art, music, library, computer, and physical education teachers. The school nurse and school psychologist also provide services to the program.

Occupational therapy and physical therapy services are contracted privately, and are provided on site for eligible students.

SUPPORT SERVICES

A variety of support services are available to children in the Early Childhood Program. The services that a child receives depend on his or her needs and are determined at a PPT meeting. When possible, support services are provided within the classroom setting. A brief explanation of each service follows.

The **Speech and Language Pathologist** identifies children who have speech and language delays and disorders, and provides services to facilitate speech and language development. Children may have difficulty with speech intelligibility, understanding and/or expressive use of language, speech fluency, voice, and general communication skills. Services may be provided in individual as well as group sessions. The Speech and Language Pathologist is also responsible for periodic hearing screenings as determined by the PPT. Children who are unable to participate in the hearing screenings offered at school are referred to an audiologist for testing.

The **Occupational Therapist** provides services to children that help promote development in the areas fine motor skills, sensory motor integration, and independence in life skills. Therapy may be provided in a small group or individually for those children who have been evaluated and are eligible for services.

The **Physical Therapist** provides services to children with delays or disabilities in the areas of gross motor development such as walking, running, skipping, balance, and motor planning. Services include evaluation, direct therapy, and consultation to family and staff members. Children may be seen in a small group or individually, depending on their needs.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

If weather conditions or other emergency situations indicate that schools will be closed or have a delayed opening, announcements will be made by 6:30 am. Announcements can be heard on FM 105.5, 102.3, 104.7, 97.7, 98.7, 100.9 and 106.5 - AM 1310 - and TV WTNH-8, WVIT-30, and WFSB-3. Postings are also available on www.ledyard.net. During emergencies that impact a select few schools in the district, the Reverse 911 system will be used to notify parents of changes to the school schedule. It is extremely important that parents update home phone numbers, work phone numbers, cell phone numbers, and emergency contact numbers.

DELAYED OPENINGS

At times, weather conditions may indicate the need to delay the starting time of school rather than close for the entire school day. In such cases, delayed opening announcements will be made on the above stations by 6:30 am. The delayed schedule is as follows:

90 minute	Mrs. Blackers's AM class	10:10 - 12:00
delay	Mrs. Blacker's PM class	1:14 - 3:00
	Mrs. Yonush's special needs class	10:10 - 2:00
	Mrs. Yonush's Peer Program	10:10 - 12:00

Special education bus times will be adjusted accordingly.

HALF-DAY SCHEDULES

Children in the Early Childhood programs will follow the schedule below on half days:

Mrs. Blacker's AM class	8:40 - 10:45
Mrs. Blacker's PM class	10:45 - 12:50
Mrs. Yonush's special needs class	8:40 - 12:50
Mrs. Yonush's Peer Program	8:40 - 10:45

EARLY CLOSING

It is sometimes necessary to close schools earlier than usual because of emergency situations such as storms, loss of heat, etc. Parents who may not be home at this time should make arrangements to ensure that a responsible adult is available to care for their child in these cases.

In the event of an emergency early dismissal, the school will follow the schedule listed below:

AM Kindergarten and Early Childhood - 12:50 PM dismissal

PM Kindergarten and Early Childhood - Cancelled