

**Windsor Southwest
Preschool Collaborative**

**Parent
Handbook**

2011-2012

89 Route 103 South

Chester VT 05143

802-875-2146 ext. 255

dhouk@wswsu.org

www.wswsu.org/Preschool/

<http://preschoolcollaborative.blogspot.com>

ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE:

The Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative is the early education partnership between the Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union and qualified preschool programs. The Collaborative has been serving district preschool aged children since 2005. The Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative is committed to working with high quality, community based providers of early education that meet high accountability standards where they are available within the school district. Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union member schools and towns have agreed to allocate a portion of their operating budget into early education services for local preschoolers.

All three and four year olds in Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, and Weston are offered an opportunity to attend one of our member programs for ten hours a week, 35 weeks a year, at no charge to the parents.

All public and private programs participating in the Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative must:

1. Sign an agreement with Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union.
2. Be a licensed or registered provider through the Vermont Child Care Services Division of the Department for Children and Families and have no substantiated violations within the past 12 months.
3. Provide a teacher who has a Vermont teaching license and an endorsement in early childhood or early childhood special education.

OR

- Provide a teacher who is eligible for a two year provisional license in the endorsement areas above.
4. Be nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children accredited through the Vermont Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS). Some programs may also qualify for partnership if they have achieved 3 STARS and have a plan for achieving 4 STARS approved through the DOE and DCF Commissioners.
 5. Submit a Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative enrollment form for every eligible child on the roster and submit monthly attendance reports to the Collaborative Director.
 6. Agree to the Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative Mission Statement and Philosophy.

Belief Statement/Mission Statement:

We believe that when children participate in quality preschool programs, they are better prepared for entrance into elementary school. The mission of the Windsor-Southwest Supervisory Union Preschool Collaborative is to create opportunities for all families to have access to quality preschool programs to prepare children for their future educational experiences.

Program Philosophy

The Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative is dedicated to our district's preschool students, their families, and the teachers who serve them. We work together to make decisions that will have positive implications for all. The Preschool Collaborative has a Director who is responsible for making sure that the decisions of the Collaborative are carried out.

Operation and Services

General Program Operations and Services Information

Purpose

The purpose of the Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative is to provide at least 10 hours of appropriate educational/instructional services per week, for at least 35 weeks per year to eligible three and four-year-old children, as well as five-year-olds who have not yet enrolled in kindergarten. Some weeks may be short a session or two because of holidays and vacations. This still counts as a week, so long as children attend at least one day.

Child/Family Eligibility

Age Requirement

Children must be at least three years of age on or before September 1. Proof-of-age eligibility (a copy of the child's birth certificate, passport, official medical documents, or official documents from other countries) may be requested.

Residency Requirement

The child must be a resident of the Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union (WSWSU). For purposes of this program, a WSWSU resident is defined as a child who lives in Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish/Proctorsville, Chester, Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, or Weston. The term "residency" refers to the town where the child lives the majority of the time.

Parent Requirement

A parent must agree to send the child to a Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative Program for 10 hours of instructional time per week, 35 weeks per year. Parents must sign a student enrollment form for their child, to be kept on file with the Preschool Collaborative director.

Ineligible Children

Providers may choose to enroll children younger or older than children who meet the eligibility requirements of the Collaborative program or those residing out of district at the parent's expense.

Note: Non-eligible children cannot be submitted for reimbursement on School Attendance rosters.

Enrollment

Open Enrollment

Enrollment for **Publicly Funded Pre-K** is open to all resident three and four year olds living in the towns of Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru and Weston. The WSWSU Preschool Collaborative will post notices in local newspapers, send enrollment forms home with current preschool students, and place notices in elementary school newsletters no later than April 1. Collaborative enrollment forms can also be downloaded from the Preschool Collaborative website. Although the Preschool Collaborative offers rolling admissions throughout the year, we ask that Collaborative enrollment forms be returned to the Preschool Collaborative office by April 30 of the year prior to preschool in order for programs to prepare adequately. Parents will be notified of their child's qualification for public preschool funds by May 15. Enrollment in Publicly Funded Pre-K does not mean enrollment in any specific preschool program. Additional forms will need to be submitted with the family's chosen partnering preschool.

NOTE: Any resident may request that WSWSU contract with a qualified preschool program if their child will be attending preschool in the fall and their preschool program is not currently partnering with the district. According to Act 62 guidelines, neither the district nor programs can make such requests. Such requests must be made in writing and submitted to the Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative Director at 89 Route 103 S., Chester VT 05143 or via email at dhouk@wswsu.org by June 1. All requests for partnership will be considered.

Children cannot be denied participation on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Title II of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs.

Health Services

Children shall be immunized appropriately for their age, unless they have religious, philosophical or medical exceptions as is required in the Vermont Early Childhood Programs Licensing Regulations. All such documentation will remain with the preschool partner for 3 years.

Children with Disabilities

A child who is eligible for the Preschool Collaborative Program and is identified as eligible for special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) shall not be denied access to the program by a private provider. Appropriate special education and related services placement is determined by the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Supports will be provided by Essential Early Education for children placed in private settings.

If a teacher or parent suspects a child of having disabilities, they should refer that child to the Essential Early Education office.

Instructional Services/Curriculum

Curriculum

The preschool provider shall provide a complete educational program in accordance with age-appropriate instructional practice. Many of our partner preschools use Creative Curriculum or Montessori, but many other curricula are in accordance with the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Assessment

The preschool provider shall ensure that child assessment procedures reflect appropriate practices for young children. Instructional staff shall maintain and update a portfolio for each child in the Collaborative Program. This type of assessment for young children involves teachers documenting specific skills learned by students through the use of anecdotal observations, portfolio artifacts, and curriculum assessment tools. These observations will reflect the child's ongoing growth and development in all domains (Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language, Literacy and Communication, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Creative Expression, and Physical Health and Development). The Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative partners use the Teaching Strategies GOLD developmental assessment to record this information. All providers are required to report progress checkpoints twice a year to the Collaborative Director for state reporting. The Collaborative provides online portfolios for each preschool student. This allows programs to enter observations, create lesson plans, generate reports, and house student portfolios online. This information is password protected but can be accessed by families if they request access through their preschool program. Checkpoint data should also be shared with families at their parent-teacher conferences as well as with the appropriate kindergarten staff as part of kindergarten transition planning.

Parent Participation

The preschool provider shall make opportunities available for parents to participate in their child's educational experience. Parents should be encouraged to volunteer their time, talents, and experiences in the classroom. Additionally, the preschool provider shall offer parent meetings. At least two documented individual conferences per year between the teachers and parent/guardian shall be held to discuss the child's growth and development. Documentation of these conferences will be kept in each child's on-site file.

Student Discipline

No employee shall use any form of corporal punishment (including, but not limited to, paddling, striking, or hitting) as a method of discipline in the Collaborative Programs.

Record Keeping

The private provider shall retain copies of the following records for a minimum of three years:

- Daily child attendance records
- Class enrollment roster
- Assessment information
- Parent orientation and conference documentation
- Lesson plans

Current year records should be maintained on site at the private preschool.

Delivery of Services

Classroom Delivery

Each classroom shall meet child care licensing requirements for space, maximum child enrollment, and staff/child ratio.

Program Delivery

The Pre-K program shall provide 10 hours of instructional time for at least 35 week per year for eligible children. A calendar or list of program holidays and closings shall be given to each family at enrollment.

Licensing

The preschool facility shall meet the licensing requirements of the appropriate licensing agencies. At a minimum, the license shall cover the 10-hour per week instructional program.

Substitutes

The private provider shall ensure that a substitute lead teacher and/or substitute teacher assistant is present and working in the Pre-K classroom for each day that a lead teacher and/or teacher assistant is absent, whether due to illness, required training, personal leave, etc.

Rest Time

In order to maximize instructional activities, rest time should not be scheduled during the 10 hours of instructional time per week except as necessary to address specific needs of individual children.

Other Program Components

Snacks, up to one meal and supervised outdoor play are considered to be a component of the Pre-K program. No part of the Pre-K day may be religious in nature.

Program/Staff Hours

The 10 hours of instructional time shall begin no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and conclude no later than 4:30 p.m.

Transportation

Transportation services are optional and may be provided for any Collaborative children at the discretion of the provider. The Pre-K provider may establish reasonable transportation zones. Transportation will not be reimbursed by the school district.

Extended Day (Before and After School Care)

The Preschool Collaborative does not require or provide extended day services. Extended day services for Collaborative children may be provided at the parent's expense and choice. Income eligible families may receive services through the Child Care Service Division subsidy programs. These arrangements should be made between the center, parents, and local child care resource and referral agency office.

Resource Coordination and Support Services

Objectives

Support services are a vital component to the success of the Pre-K program. Providers accepting Collaborative children should do their best to ensure:

- Health-No child should exit the Pre-K program with an undetected condition that could impede his/her ability to learn. Any child with identified needs will be referred to the proper agency for access to, and coordination of, services.
- Child Development-Family knowledge of the child's development and involvement in their educational experience will be enhanced through a variety of informational seminars, volunteer opportunities at the center/school, parent, center conferences, etc. Families are encouraged to read to their children daily and complete activities with their children at home.
- Community Resources-Upon request, families will be provided information about community resources such as Dr. Dynasaur, Children's Integrated Services (including Early Childhood Mental Health), help in obtaining services, etc.
- Kindergarten Readiness Initiative-Help will be provided to obtain all necessary documentation and health related requirements for kindergarten registration before the end of the Pre-K school year.

Support Services to All Children

Services/information that will be offered to all children and their families by Pre-K providers include:

- Child Development Information
- Kindergarten Readiness Activities
- Transition Activities

Program Fees

Instructional Program Fees

Sites that offer more than 10 hours per week of care to children may set their own tuition but the 10 hours a week from September through May of preschool program must be provided at no charge to the parents. All children must receive the same instructional opportunities during the 10 hour instruction program week. Providers may charge activity fees for field trips, snack fees, and special events if they choose.

Technical Assistance

Pre-K Consultant Support

The WSWSU Preschool Collaborative administration and staff will work closely with providers throughout the year and are available for consultation purposes regarding questions about the program, questions about individual children, problems with maintaining enrollment, training needs, support during the NAEYC accreditation process, etc.

On-Site Evaluation

The WSWSU Preschool Collaborative administration and staff will be on-site to monitor and evaluate program progress making a combination of unannounced and scheduled visits throughout the year. Professional development and mentoring to programs is offered as needed and desired by the partner program.

Appeals Process

Programs that continue to have unresolved probation issues or ongoing child care licensing issues, despite technical assistance, may have their Collaborative program contract denied or cancelled. In such circumstances, providers may appeal the decision before the Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union Executive Board. The Appeals Process is not available to Pre-K programs identified with fraudulent rosters, fraudulent teacher credentials, and/or repeated issues with insufficient teacher credentials.

Personnel and Training

General Personnel and Training Information

Criminal Background Checks

All Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative personnel in licensed or registered child care learning centers must have completed a satisfactory criminal background check with documentation on file with the preschool provider. All preschool personnel in public schools must comply with public school regulations concerning background checks.

Employees

All Preschool Program personnel are employees of the preschool provider, not Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative or the Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union.

Lead Teachers

Credential/Certification Requirements

A lead teacher must have a four year degree and one of the following valid and current certifications or credentials:

Vermont teaching license issued by the Vermont Department of Education with endorsements in either

- Early Childhood (0-36)
- Early Childhood Special Education/EEE (0-80)

A two year provisional license in these endorsement areas is also acceptable.

Teacher Assistants

Employment Requirements

A teacher assistant must meet ALL of the following minimum requirements:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Possess a high school diploma or its equivalent
- Have experience working with children younger than five years of age
- Possess proficient communication skills
- Completed the 45 hour course required by the Child Development Division (such as the course offered through Springfield Area Parent Child Center)

Substitute Teacher Employment Requirements

The preschool provider shall ensure that a substitute lead teacher and/or substitute teacher assistant is present and working in the preschool classroom for each day that a lead teacher and/or teacher assistant is absent, whether due to illness, required training or personal leave, etc. A substitute teacher must meet ALL of the following minimum requirements:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Possess a high school diploma or its equivalent
- Have experience working with children younger than five years of age
- Possess proficient communication skills
- Completed the 45 hour course described under Teacher Assistant criteria

Long-term Lead Teacher substitutes (i.e.: the lead teacher is on maternity leave or extended leave longer than 10 consecutive days) should have a credential equivalent to the original lead teacher. If this is not possible, the credential of the long-term substitute must meet minimum requirements of a substitute and be reported to the Collaborative Director.

Training Information

Purpose of Teacher Training

The Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative offers multiple training opportunities for preschool teachers. This training is not designed or intended to prepare personnel to become pre-K teachers. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that all teaching staff are qualified and able to deliver quality instruction on the date they are hired. Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative trainings are intended to enhance the skills and knowledge of teaching staff already prepared to teach in the Pre-K program.

Funding for Teacher Training

The Preschool Collaborative will ensure that all partner providers and administrators have access to Collaborative sponsored professional development or coursework at no cost to the providers. In the event that Windsor Southwest Preschool Collaborative offers coursework contracted through Higher Education Institutions, the providers will only be responsible for the cost of their course required books.

Preschool Specific Trainings

Preschool Specific Trainings can be offered through the Preschool Collaborative in a variety of ways. Member schools are encouraged to inform the Collaborative Director of their program's specific needs and interests.

District-Wide Training Opportunities

Occasionally, district-wide training opportunities will be offered to Preschool Collaborative members. When that is the case, these trainings are provided at no cost to the participants.