

EARLY LEARNING CENTER

**PARENT HANDBOOK
2018-2019**

Be Safe, Kind and Responsible

**HURLBUTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
9 SCHOOL ROAD
WESTON, CONNECTICUT 06883**

Weston's Early Learning Center Program

Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services
Assistant Director of Pupil Services
Principal
Assistant Principal
Special Education Preschool Teacher
Special Education Preschool Teacher
Special Education Preschool Teacher
Speech/Language Pathologist
Speech/Language Pathologist
Occupational Therapist
Physical Therapist
School Psychologist
School Nurse

Michael Rizzo
Monika Edman
Laura Kaddis
Kim Kus
June Miller
Rachel Cross
Holly Kantzas
Rachael Aaron
Dianne Jones
Erin Barlow
Liz Tynan
Emma Tramontana
Suzy Tamallanca

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS EARLY LEARNING CENTER

The mission of the Weston Public Schools, as a caring and supportive community, is to empower each student to achieve success and contribute to our global society by cultivating and developing character, knowledge and creativity through a dynamic learning experience that challenges each student to pursue personal excellence.

School Mission Statement:

The Hurlbutt Elementary School community aspires to educate its students toward the development of foundational skills and conceptual understanding, to cultivate character, self-reflection and thoughtful behavior and to empower them with the tools to discover learning as a process.

Early Learning Center

For the students who begin their school career in Weston, either as a student with identified special needs in the Early Learning Center (ELC) or as a peer model participant, this mission serves as the framework for their beginning education. The ELC is the first contact for both the parents and children within the caring and supportive community of the school district.

There are two unique routes for participation in the ELC. As a student with special needs, a child either transitions from the Birth to Three State Program or is identified through the school district Child Find Program. In either case, significant preliminary contact is made by the ELC staff with the parents and child to ease this first school transition and establish the school-home connection that is a vital element of the program. Due to limited space, peer model students are selected through a lottery program. Parents apply for the program in the fall prior to program entry. Selections occur in December and the same school-home connection is established.

Students with special needs participate in the program, dependent upon their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Peer model students are included in the program on a daily basis.

In addition to the school-home connection, a strength of the ELC is the low student-teacher ratio. Also, specialized support services are provided by a speech/language pathologist, occupational and physical therapists and behavioral consultant. These professionals, along with the Principal, Director of Pupil Services and the teachers, serve as the program team who meet regularly to discuss both the program as a whole and the needs of individual students.

Objective

The Early Learning Center team plans and provides services which enhance each child's social and emotional development, speech/language development, cognitive/pre-academic development, perceptual-motor, play, self-help, and gross and fine motor skills. An individualized education program is designed to address the current strengths and weaknesses of each child with special needs with the goal of increasing the child's ability to learn and function successfully in his/her school, home, and community environments. All of the children who participate in the program are provided with a supportive, nurturing early childhood environment and the opportunity to benefit from the specialized skills that each staff member provides.

Philosophy

The program combines an understanding of each child's developmental level and individual learning style with an opportunity to learn from and interact with peers in a nurturing early childhood environment. A comprehensive language-based approach, in line with the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards and Connecticut Preschool Frameworks, utilizes a developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum, responds to individual needs, and emphasizes developing relationships with adults and peers. By providing developmentally appropriate experiences and activities, children learn to value diversity and interact comfortably with peers despite any differences. The educational environment is designed to acknowledge and respect individual differences, promote positive self-esteem, and encourage children to become active, enthusiastic, and self-confident learners. Intervention strategies may include any one or a combination of the following: ecological (the interaction between the child and his environment, such as using highly motivating play materials), behavioral (changing behavior through specific interventions, including the use of positive reinforcers, physical

proximity to an adult, and/or redirection), and psychoeducational (the social-emotional growth of the child through supportive nurturing relationships with adults and peers).

Curriculum

Daily programming encompasses the following beliefs and benchmark standards:

1. Each session is designed to provide a developmentally appropriate learning experience for all of the children who attend. The curriculum supports growth in the areas of communication, social, emotional, cognitive/pre-academics, self-help, sensory, creativity, and gross and fine motor development. Activities are designed to be individually appropriate for each child. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to develop school readiness skills, such as increasing one's attention, following directions, listening and questioning skills, turn taking, task completion, increasing independence and pre-academic skills as appropriate.
2. A consistent daily classroom routine provides the framework for instruction. The classroom is arranged into organized areas so that children's needs direct the function of each area. These areas include: Dramatic Play, Art, Puzzles-Games-and Table-Top Toys, Books, Play Corner, Sand and Water Play, Blocks and Instructional. Instruction is also provided through whole class activity. In addition to the classroom, children have the opportunity to use the elementary school physical education rooms for P.E., the Learning Resource Center, the music classroom and the appropriate playground areas at the school.
3. Children are systematically and sequentially taught at their own pace within a highly structured learning environment that is positive and nurturing while promoting the mastery of skills. Interactions among peers are encouraged and facilitated when needed. Language facilitation occurs throughout all activities and adults model language that is appropriate to each child's level of understanding.
4. Individual student needs are respected and utilized to program for each child. Where appropriate, one-to-one instruction within the daily routine is used to teach a student new skills utilizing approaches such as discrete trials, task analysis, prompt cues, and consistent instruction and social reinforcement. These skills are also developed during group instruction to promote generalization of skills. Educational goals and objectives are integrated into the school day to teach the whole child and include speech/language/communication, social skills, play, cognitive/pre-academics, appropriate behavior, self-help, gross motor and fine motor skills.
5. Language-based activities are integrated into the school day. Each child's use of self-initiated communication skills and pragmatic language skills are encouraged. Opportunities are created for children to communicate by using strategies such as following the child's lead, modeling appropriate language, elaboration and expansion techniques, creating a need for the child to use his/her language during

- play and structured activities, offering a child choices of objects and/or pictures, and teaching a child acceptable means by which to protest or reject items. Books, short stories, repetitive word stories, props, fingerplays, rhymes, songs, computers, games and other forms of play are utilized to enhance each child's language development. When appropriate, augmentative communication systems, such as signing/total communication, picture exchange, and assistive technology are used to develop effective communication skills for individual children.
6. Highly motivating play materials are utilized to encourage developmentally appropriate play, turn taking language, social interaction and imitation skills. Art projects encourage creativity, language and social interactions.
 7. Adults clarify and help children to reflect their emotions. Staff provides prompts and/or scripts to help each child work through social conflicts. The staff's response to each child's behavior reflects their consideration of each child's developmental level, communication skills, and understanding of the function of the behavior. The staff helps each child to develop acceptable behavior and communication skills based on each child's needs.
 8. Teachers and staff work together with parents and families to facilitate an understanding of the child's needs and to facilitate effective participation in their child's learning, growth and development. Frequent parent-teacher communication helps children to generalize their skills from home to school and vice versa. Various degrees of support are provided on an individualized basis and may include: home visits, school visits, weekly newsletter, scheduled parent conferences twice per year and more often when needed, and intermittent phone calls. Parents are encouraged to participate in on-going communication between school and home.

When do classes meet?

The Early Learning Center Program follows the Weston Public School calendar. Please check the calendar for district-wide holidays and early dismissal days.

The **Early Learning Center** is in session Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Transportation – By Van/Bus

Transportation to and from school is provided for Early Learning Center students with special needs.

- You will be provided with a pick-up and drop-off time by the bus garage.
- It is very important that your child is ready to leave from home on time.
- Parents must secure his/her child in the car seat, booster seat or seat belt on the van/bus.

- No food or drinks may be consumed on the van/bus.
- The school and the bus company must be given the name of responsible adults who will be taking your child off of the van/bus.

Transportation – By Car

Parents of Hand-in-Hand students and other students traveling by car will need to drop off their child between 8:15 and 8:30 and pick up at 1:15. The location of pre-school drop-off in the morning will be **at the front of the school in the main parking lot**. All ELC students who are driven to school should be dropped off with the PreK staff waiting in front of the Senior Center. Kindergarten, first and second grade siblings should be dropped off at this location at the same time. This will allow them to safely walk to the building entrance under the supervision of the Hurlbutt staff. In the interest of safety, please do not park and walk these students through the parking lot. Staff will not be present past 8:30 and we will not allow parents to walk their children to the classroom.

If you arrive after 8:30 a.m., please park and bring your child into the main office to be signed in. Pick-up will be at the **front of the school in the car loop**.

You must provide the names in writing of anyone who you will be allowing to pick up your child from school. Students will not be released to any other individuals.

Delayed Openings

When the Weston Public Schools are on a 3-hour delay, there is no preschool. For all other delays (one hour and two hour) preschool will be open. Please note that when preschool is open, bus service for students who are eligible for special education is available, and students eat lunch in school.

Important Reminders

All visitors must check in at the school office. If your child is late or leaving early, he/she will be met at or escorted to the office by a staff member. Please do not leave children in your car unattended even for brief errands in the school building.

What if your child will be absent?

To report that your child is going to be absent from school please call the Hurlbutt attendance line @ 203 221-6301 and leave a message stating the date, child's full name, teacher and reason for absence.

What if your child rides a van/bus and will be absent?

You will need to make two (2) phone calls:

1. Inform the transportation coordinator by calling 203-221-6574.
2. Call and leave a message on the attendance line at 203-221-6301.

How do I find out about the Peer Model Program?

Information pertaining to applying to the Hand-in-Hand program appears in the elementary school letter from the Principal, The Hurlbutt BUZZ and the Weston Forum (printed newspaper and online) in the fall of each year. Please call Jodi Hanna at 203-

221-6342 to apply. Hand-in-Hand students are selected by a lottery system prior to January 1st. There is an activity fee that is charged for Hand-in-Hand students. Parents provide transportation for their child.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Registration

Parents of Early Learning Center students are provided with registration materials at the P.P.T. Parents of students who are selected as peer models are asked to go the Hurlbutt page of the district website, www.westonps.org, to register their child on Infosnap. State law mandates that a yellow medical form must be completed by your pediatrician and returned to school prior to your child entering the class.

Student Belongings

Please label all personal belongings as clearly as possible to avoid lost items. Please send your child to school with a backpack each day. If your child is not yet toilet trained, please send a package of diapers and wipes with your child's name clearly marked on them. We can keep these items in school for your child's use.

Snacks/Lunch

Snacks provide an opportunity for each child to become skilled in self-help skills. If your child is in the Threes or Fours program, he/she will need two snacks and two drinks per day as well as a lunch with a drink. Please send appropriate utensils, straws, napkins, etc., in your child's lunch/snack bag. We would appreciate your packing your child's snacks separately from his/her lunch.

Please send healthy snacks, such as fruit, crackers with cheese, yogurt, veggies, etc. along with the drinks.

The Early Learning Center classes are all **Allergy Alert** environments. **Please do not send products to school which may contain peanuts, tree nuts or peanut oils.**

Dress

Please send one extra set of underwear, pants, shirt and socks in a clearly marked zip lock bag with your child's name on it in case of an accident. We will send these items home during the December holiday break. Please send an extra new set (larger size) in January for the remainder of the school year.

Birthday Parties

If you wish your child to celebrate his/her birthday at school, please inform the teacher a week prior to the date so that we can accommodate your request. Parents are welcome to schedule a date and time to read a story to his/her child's class on their child's birthday. Parents are also welcome to bring a craft or art project for the children to complete. Please call your child's teacher one week in advance of your child's birthday to schedule

a date and time and to discuss what you would like to do. **School policy does not allow food at birthday celebrations.**

School Pictures

School picture information will be sent home via the school. Everyone is included in the class photograph. Individual photographs can be ordered.

Newsletter

A weekly newsletter will be available on the teacher website which describes some of the activities that we are working on in school along with other relevant information.

Conferences

Conference times in November and March have been set aside so your child's teacher can meet with you to discuss your child's progress. Dismissal time on conference days is 12:35.

Parent Involvement

Many opportunities for parent involvement are anticipated during the current school year. We look forward to meeting with you for individual conferences. We have class parent volunteers who seek the help of other parents to help prepare for special activities and holiday celebrations. We encourage you to share your ideas and suggestions with your child's teacher. Please bear in mind, all information pertaining to individual children is confidential.

Parent to Parent

There are parents whose children have been or are currently involved in the Early Learning Center Program who would be happy to speak with parents of newly enrolled children. Please ask your child's teacher for further information.

Student Health

Suzy Tamallanca is the Hurlbutt Elementary School nurse. She will care for children who become sick or are injured at school. Parents will be called if it becomes necessary for a child to be sent home because of illness, injury, a rash, or any communicable disease or condition.

Please notify the nurse at 203-221-6306 if your child needs medication at school or has one of the following:

- Strep throat
- Lice
- Communicable disease (chicken pox, flu, vomiting, diarrhea, German measles, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, whooping cough, conjunctivitis, common cold, impetigo, ringworm, etc.)
- Frequent ear infections
- Any chronic medical problem

Requests to provide medication must be provided in writing and signed by a physician. Please refer to the Hurlbutt Elementary School Handbook for Health Services Practices.

Procedures for Inclement Weather

Two-Hour Delay

School will start at 10:30 a.m. when there is a two-hour delayed opening. If your child is traveling by van/bus, your child will be picked up two hours later than usual, but will return home at the usual time.

School Closing Announcements

If there is an announced delayed opening for 3 hours, there will be no ELC or Hand-in-Hand that day.

Please sign up for the *School Messenger* on the school district website www.westonps.org. Make sure we have your cell phone number if you wish to receive text messages and your email address to receive email messages.

Announcements regarding school closings are also reported on the school snow line phone number is 203-291-1463.

Early Closings

Early closing time is 12:35 p.m., unless otherwise announced. In cases of students traveling by school van/bus, an adult must be at home to receive the student. In case of a school district decision to close schools early, parents or previously identified adults will need to pick up their children as promptly as is reasonably possible. Please anticipate the possible need for emergency coverage and make appropriate arrangements prior to a weather emergency. In an emergency, the superintendent may adjust an early dismissal time. An email notification will be sent if this becomes necessary.