

PRESCHOOL PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Seekonk Public Schools
SCHOOL YEAR 2018-2019

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*An apple for the teacher
Is really nothing new...
Except when you remember...
That **parents are teachers** too!*

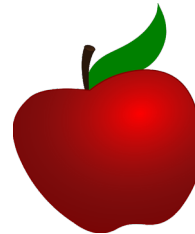


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Preschool Procedures and Guidelines

Seekonk Public Schools

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Seekonk Inclusive Preschool Program is to provide three and four year-old children with and without disabilities, with educational programming and peer experiences to promote social-emotional and creative growth, while supporting development of self-regulation and academic readiness skills. Our preschool program promotes independence across school, home, and community environments in preparation for successful transition into a kindergarten curriculum. Classes are comprised of model students, and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

CURRICULUM <http://toolsofthemind.org/learn/tools-for-parents/>

TOOLS OF THE MIND is a research-based early childhood curriculum that helps young children to develop the cognitive, social-emotional, self-regulatory, and foundational academic skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.

In a Tools preschool classroom, a play theme unifies the room. The year begins with adaptable play themes close to children's lives, and over the course of the year, through make-believe play, **self-regulation** and **executive functions** develop, the play themes develop as well.

Teachers construct themes and vocabulary with children. Children help make the props and signs, and teachers read books to build children's knowledge of what people do and say in different themed settings. Intentional make-believe play is the heart of a Tools of the Mind preschool classroom, but there is a lot more going on in a day! Children engage in activities designed to support the development of literacy, math and science skills at the same time as **self-regulation** and **executive functions** skills are developed. Most learning takes place in small groups and partnered activities, engaging children in interacting with one another to learn, build social relationships and create a positive classroom culture.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION and SELF-REGULATION skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>

PRESCHOOL SCREENING PROTOCOL

Registration for the preschool screenings takes place beginning in January (once school is back in session from holiday vacation), and runs through mid-February (ends the day before February vacation week). The preschool screenings take place in March. The preschool lottery takes place at the beginning of April (prior to April vacation week).

Preschool screenings serve two overall purposes:

1. Child Find - Seekonk strives to locate and identify every disabled student residing in the district and to inform them of the District's obligation to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Activities used to satisfy the IDEA child-find requirements also satisfy the Section 504 child find requirements. The purpose of the district student evaluation shall be to determine eligibility under both IDEA and Section 504. Parent/ Guardian consent is required prior to any initial evaluation for both IDEA and Section 504. The child find process is available to Seekonk residents at any time during the school year, in addition to the large outreach that takes place at the beginning of each year.

2. Models for Integrated Preschool Program – School districts are required to provide special education services for eligible students beginning at the age of three. Seekonk provides preschool programming for those students in need of special educational services within a school setting with peer models. Seekonk identifies models for the integrated preschool program through the Child Find process, and then fills those openings through a lottery system.

In a given school year, the timeline is as follows:

- **December** – The Seekonk School District advertises preschool screening/child find in local papers, at community sites (eg: library, schools), and to local Early Intervention and other early learning community programs.
- **January/February** – Parents may begin registration for preschool screenings by contacting the Seekonk School District during elementary school hours. Registrations for the annual screenings are accepted through February ending the Friday prior to February school vacation week. Completed registration packets are required prior to scheduling s screening time.
- **March** – Screenings take place on three pre-determined days in March and typically take approximately 30 minutes per child. Screenings include cognitive readiness, social functioning, and speech development by trained staff.
- **April** – Students identified as models are placed in a preschool lottery for slots as models in the Seekonk preschool program beginning the following school year. Students identified as having possible delays in development are either referred for further assessment, or further recommendations are provided to parents.

Preschool Students as Models

MODEL STUDENTS

Students qualify as “models” if they are residents of Seekonk, will be either three or four years old prior to the beginning of the upcoming school year, and participate in and score within age-expectations on the annual preschool screening. Potential model students are then drawn by lottery (*see PRESCHOOL SCREENING PROTOCOL on page 2*).

“Model” preschool placements are tuitioned placements, and the number of slots available varies from year to year. Once included as a model, students are eligible to remain in a preschool model slot until they transition to kindergarten unless there is a reduction in preschool programming within the district. If a reduction does occur, the preschool will hold an alternate lottery of existing eligible students for available model slots. Students cannot be considered as “models” if they require an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or if they demonstrated significant areas of developmental concern during the screening.

MODEL PLACEMENTS

Entrance Criteria

Students serving as models in our preschool program are required to pass the preschool screening (*see above*).

Students entering our preschool program as a three-year old models will be given priority for four-year old model slots available in the following year. It is noted that there is no guarantee that there will be model slots available in any given year.

Exit Criteria

Students may be exited as a model in our preschool program at any time throughout the school year at the parent’s request. Student models may also be exited if at any time during the school year the student requires Special Education services through provision of an IEP. In the case of a student requiring an IEP mid-year, the student may complete the current school year in the preschool, but may not be considered as a model for the following school year.

Tuition and Transportation

Model student placements are tuitioned, and families must pay the Town of Seekonk at scheduled times throughout the school year (*rates and schedule will be provided each year*). Model student transportation is provided by the students’ families. Bussing is not available for model students.

Preschool Students with Individualized Education Programs

STUDENTS with INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPs)

Students with IEPs require specialized attention and planning in order to learn due to either a developmental delay or disorder. Although students with IEPs have many qualities to share with their peers, they do not qualify as “model” students because they require specialized instruction in one or more areas in order to access preschool curriculum. Students on IEPs may receive related services only (eg: speech-language therapy; occupational therapy), or may be recommended to participate in a “*Special Education*” *Preschool Placement* to address more significant delays or disorders.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENTS

Entrance Criteria – Special Education Placement

Students will be considered for a preschool placement as a Special Education student (versus receiving a related service only) given any one or more of the following conditions:

- Two or more documented areas of developmental delay (may include receptive language, expressive language, sensory integration, cognition, social-emotional development, gross motor, fine motor), *and TEAM recommendation* for Individualized Education Program with preschool placement in addition to related service(s).
- Documented diagnosis of a Developmental Disorder, *and TEAM recommendation* for Individualized Education Program with preschool placement in addition to related service(s).
- Documented delay in any one area of development that is 12 months or more different from same-age peer group or clinical judgement of licensed evaluator.

Exit Criteria – Special Education Placement

Students may be exited from a Special Education placement if a student is re-assessed and is no longer eligible for Special Education Services. In such cases, given the student no longer requires Special Education services, the student may complete the current school year as a model in the preschool, and will be given priority for available tuitioned model slots in the following year.

Tuition and Transportation

Special Education placements within the preschool program are provided free of charge to students in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Families may provide their own transportation, or the Seekonk Schools will provide bussing to and from preschool from any location within the town of Seekonk to ensure students are accessing their Individualized Educational Program.

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS SPEECH CLINIC?

Students who do not qualify for Special Education services, *may* be recommended for Speech Clinic at the discretion of the evaluating Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP). Speech Clinic occurs in 8-week cycles, and involves walk-in services with the SLP focusing on the specific areas of need for the student's speech development. Families are expected to follow through with home programming to continue the process with the student.

Most students in Speech Clinic demonstrate significant improvement in the initial 8-weeks, however some students may require a second 8-week cycle. After two cycles of clinic if issues remain, the TEAM may reconvene to decide most effective next steps for the student and family.

WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?

Students found to have a disability (through assessments and the TEAM process) are eligible for Special Education services. The IEP is the legal document outlining the plan to deliver these services, including strengths and needs of the student, how the disability affects the student's learning, what accommodations are necessary for the student to effectively access curriculum in a school setting, and the individual goals to be addressed.

The IEP remains in effect for one year, and the family receives progress reports on the student's progress toward the goals outlined within. The TEAM reconvenes annually to review progress and update goals. At least every three years, the student must be re-evaluated to re-determine eligibility for Special Education services, although students may be re-evaluated sooner with parent permission. Re-evaluation sooner than the required three years may be requested if it is expected that the has closed gaps in development and may no longer require the accommodations or services outlined in the IEP to successfully access curriculum.

