

Stepping Stones Preschool

Our Philosophy

Stepping Stones Preschool has been an established program through the Westport Public School System for over twenty years. At the center of our philosophy is our commitment to prepare all students to reach their full potential as life-long learners.

Our belief is that by providing developmentally appropriate experiences and activities to the children at Stepping Stones Preschool, we will foster and enhance their growth and development. Since we believe that children "learn by doing," our goal is to provide activities throughout the day that challenge and stimulate each child's natural curiosity and sense of wonder. Our philosophy is that children need to be provided with the opportunity to learn about the world, themselves, and others through play and discovery.

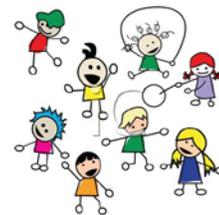
We believe that *all* children benefit from the opportunity to learn from one another. It is important that children be provided with an opportunity to learn within an environment that is respectful of each student's learning style, strengths, and needs. The formulation of inclusive classes that respect and acknowledge differences will teach all of the children to value diversity despite any differences based on gender, race, ethnicity or exceptional educational need. We encourage each child to take risks while exploring new learning so that a child becomes confident in a variety of educational environments.

All teachers and service providers are certified with the Connecticut State Department of Education and/or Department of Health. Staff members hold a minimum of a Bachelors degree and in most cases have a Masters and/or Sixth year degree in a specific area of educational specialization. All paraprofessionals meet the standards and requirements established with the State Department of Education.

When educating a young child, collaboration between home and school is essential to the learning process. We recognize the importance of parents as their children's first teachers, and we work to create successful partnerships with families in a climate of communication and mutual respect. Our program offers diverse opportunities for parent participation, including individual parent-teacher conferences, parent groups and workshops, and classroom experiences, such as guest readers, projects, and celebrations. When teachers and parents work together to nurture children's growth and development, this continuity between home and school enables children to flourish both in and out of the classroom, supporting even the youngest learners to build the confidence and skills to start successfully on the path toward lifelong learning

Curriculum

Our curriculum is inquiry based and focuses on the interest and discussions generated by our students. We utilize the Early Learning and Development Standards as the basis for our instruction. Problem solving and discovery are essential components to learning. These skills are facilitated and encouraged throughout a child's day. There is a strong emphasis on language, communication, literacy, social and emotional development, physical development and health. As part of the Stepping Stones program, Art, Music, Library and Physical Education



classes are scheduled on a weekly basis. Our curriculum will provide opportunities for students to develop school readiness skills.

Instruction is focused on the prerequisite skills needed to participate at the kindergarten level.

Children learn to attend and actively listen to instruction in a group setting, follow verbal directions take turns and inquire. Child-directed exploration and learning is fundamental.

The classrooms are organized into a number of distinct interest areas, each of which teaches certain essential skills. These centers are designed to be engaging and fun for your child.

They include: blocks, dramatic play, sensory tables for exploration of differing textures and consistencies, art activities, table toys and student projects, books and science discovery. Areas are designed to promote child-centered inquiry and engagement with materials and with peers.

School Year Calendar

Stepping Stones Preschool is part of the Westport Public School System and therefore follows the Westport Public School Calendar. Please refer to this calendar for school holidays, vacations and any planned early dismissals.

Program Hours

Stepping Stones holds classes **Monday through Friday**. Drop-Off begins for both the morning and the full day program at **8:45 am in the Coleytown Elementary School Cafeteria**. (Please refer to Drop-Off Procedures

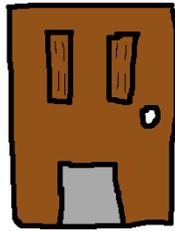
Morning Program (First Year Students)

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Full-Day Program (Second Year Students)

9:00 am to 1:45 pm

Security



We welcome your participation in your child's educational experience at Stepping Stones. We are located in Coleytown Elementary School and adhere to the security procedures outlined by all of the Westport Public Schools.

We practice Fire and Safety drills throughout the year. We explain the drills in an age appropriate manner to our preschoolers so that they are best prepared.

If you need to come into school to visit, drop-off or pick-up your child, you are required to sign in and out at the main office, at which time you will receive a visitor's sticker. **You will then need to report to the Preschool Office to sign your child in or out.**

You must provide the names, in writing, of anyone who you will be allowing to pick-up your child from school. **Staff is advised not to release any student to an unfamiliar adult. Proper identification will be required in the form of a picture I.D or License.**

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

WHAT IF YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABSENT?

To report that your child is going to be absent from school, *please be sure to call the school* and leave a message for your child's teacher.

"This is _____ . My child _____ will not be in school on _____." Please leave a brief explanation for the absence. This helps us to monitor the spread of illness.

Transportation by Van

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

- 1. Inform the transportation provider - Dattco - 226-4884*
- 2. Call and leave a message for the teacher.*

PROCEDURES FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER, EARLY DISMISSAL OR OTHER EMERGENCIES

THE WESTPORT SCHOOL SYSTEM OPERATES A SPECIAL PHONE LINE TO COMMUNICATE INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL OPENINGS, CLOSINGS AND OTHER EMERGENCIES. THE SPECIAL PHONE LINE IS ACTIVATED WITH A MESSAGE NO LATER THAN 6:00 A.M. THIS INFORMATION WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE ON THE DISTRICT WEB SITE www.westport.k12.ct.us

SPECIAL PHONE LINE: 341-1766

ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR EARLY DISMISSAL

It is the responsibility of parents TO CALL THE SPECIAL PHONE LINE for information in case of a school district decision to close schools early. Parents or previously identified adults are expected to pick-up their children as promptly as is reasonably possible. In cases of students traveling by school van, an adult must be home to receive the student. *Please anticipate the possible need for emergency coverage and make appropriate arrangements prior to a weather emergency.*

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Student Belongings

All personal belongings must be labeled as clearly as possible to avoid lost items.

Snacks

Snack time provides an opportunity for each child to become skilled in self-help. For example, we encourage pouring and attending to spills.

Your child's teacher may ask you to contribute snacks to share with the children in class. A list will be provided indicating specific types of snack items for parents to choose from, e.g., fruit, vegetables, pretzels, crackers, juice, etc.

It is possible that your child may have classmates who have food allergies. If this occurs, you will be notified of any food restrictions needed to make the classroom as safe an environment as possible for all students.

We stress nutritious snacks and ask that you help us by minimizing "junk foods". *Please do not send candy or gum to school.*

Dress

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather and comfortably for play. Please place your child's name in all jackets, boots, hats, mittens, sweaters, etc.

At the start of school, please send in at least one extra set of underwear, pants, shirt and socks in a *shoebox or plastic container*. Mark the container and clothing clearly with your child's name. These items will be sent home at the December holiday break. Please send a new set of clothing (larger size) in January for the remainder of the school year.

Please send your child to school with a backpack every day. This will allow your child to transport items from home to school and to carry items such as school announcements, books and school projects from school to home safely.

Birthday Parties

If you wish your child to celebrate his/her birthday at school, please send in a note or call a week or more prior to the date. Please be sure to talk to the teacher regarding any dietary restrictions.

School Pictures

School pictures are usually taken in October, and more information will follow. Everyone is included in the class photograph. Individual photographs can also be ordered.

Newsletter

At the beginning of each unit, a classroom newsletter describing some of the activities and special events of that month will be sent home.

Classroom Visitations

If you are interested in observing your child in the classroom, an appointment must be made with the program coordinator.

Conferences

Parent conferences will be offered to you twice each year. This is an opportunity to discuss your child's progress. You will receive advance notice of parent meetings in order to schedule meetings at mutually convenient times. Of course, staff members will also be available for conferences at other times upon parent request.

Parent Involvement

Many opportunities for parent involvement are anticipated during the school year. We look forward to actively involving parents in individual conferences, hands on workshops and educational parent groups. We seek parent input to develop goals and plans for our programs in the future.

Student Health

Please keep your child home when they are ill. Jean Lane school nurse is assigned to work at the Preschool on a daily basis. Her telephone number is **341-1715**. When the nurse is not available, the Coleytown Elementary School nurse will be the nurse for the Preschool. Her telephone number is **341-1730**. The school nurses will care for children who become sick or injured at school. Parents will be called if it becomes necessary for a child to be sent home. Parents will be contacted by the school nurse in case of a child's illness, injury or other health related issue.

The nurse will test your child's vision and hearing during the course of the school year. If there is a need for further examination by a physician, you will be notified by the nurse.

Requests to administer medication must be provided in writing on the appropriate Westport Public Schools Medication Administration form. The form is available at the Preschool Nurse's Office, and the Coleytown Elementary School nurse's office. All medications are stored in the preschool health office. Please carefully review the district's health policy for further information.

Suspicion of Child Abuse

School Personnel are mandated by the State Of Connecticut to report any suspicion of neglect, abuse or endangerment.

School Records

Stepping Stones is part of the Westport Public schools. Any documents that are generated by staff, regarding your child, become your child's educational record. These records will be forwarded to your child's district home school upon entry to kindergarten.

Classroom Telephones

Classroom telephones will be turned off during the school day. Teachers will check their messages before and after the school day. However, if you need to get a message to the classroom teacher during school hours, please call the Preschool office secretary at **341-1712**.

Some Suggestions for Promoting Your Child's Development:

You can ask your child about his/her day. However at this young age, they developmentally may not have the ability to go into detail. Rather than say "What did you do today?" Lead your child into a short discussion. For example, "Did you have music or P.E today?" "What did you play outside with your friends?" Also use the class lists, daily activity sheets and schedule to elicit responses from your child.



Engage in meaningful literacy activities. Point out common signs/print in the environment. For example "stop signs", "restaurant symbols" a child's favorite place or store. Read often to your child. Nothing can take the place of a favorite book and snuggling up before bedtime or **ANYTIME!**



Try to limit screen time. Preschoolers need active involvement for optimal growth and development. Research supports that motor movement reinforces recall and learning. They need to play, explore

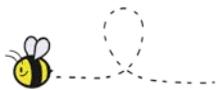
and interact. Try to spend some time viewing a favorite show with your child so that you have a basis for conversation.



Use everyday activities together to promote basic concepts. A trip to the grocery store or baking together can be an opportunity to introduce concepts of math, science, vocabulary and literacy!



**If you have a special interest....cooking, drawing, carpentry, music, storytelling, etc. ... let your child's teacher know. We welcome you to participate in your child's experience at Stepping Stones!
Come and share your interests and talents with the class!**



According to the laws of aerodynamics the bumble bee cannot fly; its body is too heavy for its wings and that's the simple reason why. But the bumble bee doesn't know this fact, and so it flies anyway for all to see. Remember this when you need to know that the impossible can be.