

The Early Childhood Family Handbook 2023-2024



Shutesbury Elementary School

<http://www.shutesburyschool.org>

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Please refer to the Shutesbury Family Handbook for more information on:

Student Records	Physical Restraint Policies
Full Discipline Policy	Health Policies and Information Parent
Bus Policies	Conferences
School Map	Volunteer and Visitor Policies Assessments
Discrimination and Harassment Policies	

Shutesbury Elementary provides services to all families regardless of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, economic standing, national origin, disability, or marital status or sexual orientation of parents.

Letter from the Principal

Dear Preschool and Kindergarten families:

Welcome to Shutesbury Elementary School!

The preschool or kindergarten experience launches the school career for your child – a career that we anticipate will be very successful. The staff is committed to providing a comprehensive program to help build a strong foundation for learning that we hope will last a lifetime. That program includes the full range of academic areas, a social curriculum as well as the arts and physical education. One of the most important keys to a positive school experience is the school / home partnership. Our ability to create a strong relationship with each family is an important feature of this school and I welcome you to the Shutesbury Elementary School family.

This handbook provides a great deal of information and combined with the Family Handbook will answer most if not all of your questions. There are however, many, many things that happen at school that are unique to this community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or call me. We are always happy to answer your questions, or find the answer if we do not have an immediate reply. Your input regarding the information contained in this handbook (clarity, missing info, etc.) is important in making this a useful document. Please feel free to communicate those comments to us.

There are many opportunities for people to get involved at school. The PTO is an active group that raises funds that allow for every class to enjoy activities and programs that are complementary to the school curriculum. There is also a Learning Partner program that pairs children with an adult who has been trained to assist a particular child with a unique interest. There is also the School Council that works with school staff and administration to create a plan to build upon the school's strengths to make an even better program.

I am thrilled that you are here and are part of the Shutesbury Elementary School and look forward to meeting you and getting to know your family.

Sincerely,

Jackie Mendonsa Principal

Visiting Day Preschool and Kindergarten

Tuesday, August 27, 2023

8:30 to 9:30 am

Drop in and visit during this hour

First scheduled week for Preschool ONLY

Wednesday, August 30, preschool will run from 8:30 to 11:30am

**Thursday, August 31st and Friday, September 1st preschool will run for a
HALF DAY only from 8:30am to 12:30pm**

**Starting on Tuesday, September 4th
Preschool will run the regular hours.**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday

Full Day = 8:25-2:45

Half Day = 8:25 am to 12:25pm

Wednesday = 8:30 to 11:30 am.

Welcome to the Shutesbury Early Childhood Program

The Kindergarten and Preschool staff wish to welcome you to the Shutesbury Early Childhood Program. In this handbook we will introduce you to our school and share some of our thoughts about the education of young children. We look forward to sharing in the delight and wonder of your child's (children's) growth.

The Preschool Staff

Grace Griecci is the lead preschool teacher. Grace has a BA in Psychology from UMass/Boston and an M.Ed in Early Childhood Education from UMass/Amherst. Grace has been working with children over the last thirty years. Grace was a mentor teacher at the UMass Laboratory School working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers. She lectured and supervised practicum students in the School of Education. In 1993, Grace established her own home-based preschool in Amherst. When Grace closed her program in 2006, she worked at the Union 38 Preschool, a Reggio Emilia-inspired program located in the Deerfield Elementary School. Grace began at the Shutesbury Elementary School in the fall of 2007. She continues to enjoy learning about, and sharing with children her interests in drama, music, movement, the visual arts, cooking, gardening and the outdoors.

Marianna Mannino is a preschool Educational Support Professional. Marianna has a BS in Speech, Language and Hearing Science from UMass Amherst, and is a licensed Speech Language Pathology Assistant. Marianna started her role as an ESP at Shutesbury Elementary School in the fall of 2023, prior she began subbing at SES in 2021. Marianna joined the Shutesbury Moose Lodge afterschool staff in 2018. She hopes to further her education, while continuing her role here at SES.

Rory is in her 7th year as a paraprofessional and enjoys bringing her background in art and design to the classroom. She lives in Shutesbury with her family that includes her partner, two children, two cats, one dog and five chickens.

The Kindergarten Staff

Layla Hazen teaches kindergarten at Shutesbury Elementary School. She holds a BS in Plant, Soil and Insect Science from UMASS Amherst, and a M.Ed in Elementary and Early Childhood Education, with a concentration in Science and Environmental Education, from Antioch New England. Layla has taught children of all ages across a variety of settings including gardens, forests, and classrooms. She has been a kindergarten teacher for seven years and hopes to continue doing so for many years to come.

Bryant Liimatainen is an Esp in kindergarten. This will be his third year at SES with a previous thirteen years of experience within the early childhood education field. He is also part of the after school school program and runs a STEM style workshop during it. He is an avid model builder, and enjoys mechanical tinkering, gardening, and enjoys bringing this knowledge into the classroom.

Program Philosophy

The Shutesbury Elementary School Community believes that opportunities for early childhood education are essential components of a good education system. Early experiences in an environment rich in hands-on materials and activities provide children varied opportunities to grow emotionally, physically, socially, and cognitively.

The programs at Shutesbury Elementary School follow a developmental approach to learning defined by Piaget and recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This approach acknowledges that there are universal, predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in children during the first nine years of life. At the same time, we recognize that each child is an individual and that the timing of this growth, a child's learning style, personality and family background all affect who they are. The early childhood environment must be responsive to each child's individual differences. Experiences in the early childhood program are designed to match each child's developing abilities, while challenging his or her interest and understanding.

John Dewey's work teaches us that young children learn through experience, active participation and play. Children need opportunities to touch, manipulate and experiment; and they need opportunities to interact with people. A balance of child directed and teacher directed activities allows opportunities for new information to be presented to children in an organized and sequential way, while allowing the major portion of a child's day to be child initiated and child directed. Adults support children's play and encourage extensions of their play. The process of learning, rather than the product, is what is truly important in the early childhood curriculum.

We believe that young children are served best in an integrated setting where children, regardless of their special needs, work together in the classroom. Cultural diversity is respected and celebrated. It is in this setting that children develop life-long attitudes of acceptance and friendship as they learn to recognize their own and each other's strengths and uniqueness.

We believe that a trans-disciplinary team approach, in which all adults working with children are responsible for a child's learning, is the most effective way of teaching. In this team approach, we encourage specialists in our school (speech and language teacher, occupational therapist, special education teachers and others) to work within the classroom setting as much as possible. Children work individually and in small groups with specialists. Small groups often involve children with typical needs as well as those with special needs. On occasion, due to the structure of the specific activity or the need for a more appropriate space, children may go with specialists to another part of the school.

We believe that parents are the most important teachers of their children and that their involvement in their child's education is essential.

Goals for the Early Childhood Program

The curriculum will provide opportunities for children to:

****Build healthy and positive self-concepts:***

- Understand and express their feelings
- Build trusting relationships with adults and peers
- Make decisions, compromise, and accept limits
- Be responsible for personal hygiene
- Accept successes and failures
- React to change in a positive way
- Recognize that they are part of a family and a community
- Follow home/school safety rules

****Enhance social/emotional skills:***

- Respect property of others
- Express strong emotions safely
- Recognize that he/she is one of many in a group
- Accept school routines and expectations
- Participate in leadership as well as follower roles
- Recognize that each person is part of a family and that families differ
- Know good nutritional practices
- Encourage the appreciation and nurturing of others

****Develop cognitive skills:***

- Identify (match, count, name; awareness of self, family, community/ use senses to gain information)
- Compare and contrast (use of vocabulary to describe same different, over-under, big-small)
- Classify (size, shape, color/ his, her, mine)
- Sequence and order (make patterns, count, orally retell a story in order of events)
- Predict (what will happen if?)

****Develop language skills (listening, speaking):***

- Respond to simple directions, commands, and questions
- Recognize and compare unfamiliar sounds
- Acquire new vocabulary
- Listen to a variety of types of literature
- Respond to storytelling by recalling facts, sequencing events
- Focus attention on speaker without interruptions

-Participate in non-verbal communication through gesture, pantomime and facial expression

-Use a variety of words to express thoughts and feelings

-Engage in conversation by sharing ideas with others

-Use language in a variety of settings and situations

****Develop motor skills:***

- Promote physical fitness development
- Develop positive body image and confidence
- Develop coordination, self-expression, creativity and endurance
 - Relate to games and sports
 - Develop self-help skills (buttoning, lacing, zipping)
 - Develop pincer grasp and control (puzzles, folding paper)
 - Participate in cooperative games
 - Develop preliminary gymnastics skills (creeping, crawling, rolling, balancing, working with balls & bean bags)
 - Develop movement skills (walking, running, jumping, hopping, bending, stretching, pushing, pulling)
 - Participate in singing and rhythm games
 - Develop a sense of body awareness in space

****Develop skills in the area of Fine Arts (art, music, movement, theater arts:)***

- Discover line, color, shape and texture
- Experiment with simple media
- Express individual thoughts and feelings
- Imitate vocal and other sounds
- Singsongs
- Hear different kinds of music and respond to it
- Dramatize
- Imitate simple clapping rhythms

Program Information & Policies

Age Eligibility

Children entering the Preschool Program must be three years old on or before September 1st of the school year they wish to attend. Kindergarten must be five on or before September 1st of the year they wish to attend.

Preschool Program for Three and Four-Year-Olds

The preschool program is staffed by one head teacher and two paraeducators. There are both half and full day placements. Half days meet from 8:25-12:25. Full days meet from 8:25-2:45. Wednesdays meet from 8:30-11:30. We strongly recommend that a child attend preschool for at least three half-days or two full days each week. This would minimize the weekly transitions and create a more constructive pre-school experience.

Kindergarten Program

The Kindergarten Program is a full day program and follows the school's daily schedule for arrivals and departures. A teacher and two para-educators currently staff the kindergarten.

Preschool Registration

Registration will happen in April. We will advertise in local newspapers, the *Roadtown News*, and *Our Town*. Families on the census and school lists will be sent packets including all forms to be filled out for the next school year. All forms will be due by the stated dates to secure a slot in the preschool program. Families will fill out a Needs Assessment Form for the days they would like their child to attend preschool. If there are more requests for slots than we can provide, we will use the second and third choices made by families. Families that have been previously enrolled will have priority in enrollment choices. Families will receive a confirmation letter with a contract to sign at the beginning of March. The preschool will be open, by appointment, for families to visit in the spring.

Kindergarten Registration

Registration will happen in the spring. We will advertise in local newspapers, the *Roadtown News*, and *Our Town*. Families on the census and school lists will be sent packets including all forms to be filled out for the next school year. The Kindergarten will have an Open House during the month of March for families to come visit and see our program.

Visiting Day

Both the Preschool & Kindergarten have a Visiting Day just before school begins. This will be a time for your child to meet other students and their teachers as well as see their classroom. We hope this makes for a smooth transition for your child to begin school for the year.

Child Abuse and Neglect

In accordance with The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, and Massachusetts General Laws, chapter 119, Section 51A the Shutesbury Elementary School reports all cases of suspected child maltreatment to the Department of Children and Families.

Preschool Fees

The Preschool Program receives limited funding from the School Budget, in addition to the physical space and utilities. It is currently supported in part by a Massachusetts Department of Early Education & Care's *Community Partnerships for Children's* grant and the tuition fees paid by preschool parents. Charging tuition is crucial for the program as it pays for the bulk of the program expenses and staff salaries, which is not fully covered by the grant. Parent initiated fund raising is an important revenue source and we welcome donations of any kind.

Fees are set on a yearly basis, based on the number of Full/Half day and the number of days per week that the child attends. Once accepted to the program, a deposit of one months' tuition will be due. This will be applied to your last month's tuition payment. It is expected that your child will be enrolled for the entire academic year, unless prior arrangements are made. If you withdraw early, your deposit is non-refundable. Bills for fees are sent out monthly. Tuition is due by the 15th of the current month, or twice yearly: at the beginning of September and the beginning of January.

The total amount for the year will be divided by ten months to get a monthly amount. Full payment is required before a child

Fees for the 10 Month Program 2013-2014

	<u>HALF DAY</u> (8:25-12:25)	<u>WED. MORNING</u> (8:30-11:30)	<u>FULL DAY</u> (8:25-2:45)
1 day	\$810	\$540	\$1080
2 days	\$1620	XXX	\$2160
3 days	\$2430	XXX	\$3240
4 days	\$3240	XXX	\$4320
5 days	XXX	XXX	XXX
Based on rate of	\$22.50/day	\$15.00	\$30.00

Monthly tuition bills will reflect 1/10 of the total cost for the year. Payments are due by the 15th of the current month.

Withdrawing from the Program

Any withdrawal from the Preschool Program after August 1st will result in the withdrawing family being held responsible for the tuition for the month of September unless a matching replacement enrollment can be arranged before the first day of school. (If a replacement occurs during the month of September the withdrawing family will only be charged on a prorated basis.)

Changing Days

When a family decides to increase the number of days their child attends preschool if space should become available, the family will be charged the increased amount for the whole month that their child starts attending the additional days. When a family decides to decrease the number of days that their child attends preschool, the family will continue to pay the contracted amount from the first of the month in which the change was made, then pay the new amount for the months after that.

Subsidies

Families can apply for a subsidy to help lower the cost of the preschool fees. Families may be eligible to apply for a subsidy or reduction in tuition according to the state sliding scale. This scale is based on the gross monthly wage of a family and the number of family members. Families wanting to apply should fill out a subsidy form **before September 1st** of the current school year, have both parents working and have an income less than 100% of the state's median income. Because of this, we do ask families that apply to provide proof, from both parents, of one month's income. We will accept subsidy forms throughout the year, but the subsidized fee would begin after receipt of the Application form and proof of income and not from the start of the school year. We want our services to be accessible and affordable to everyone in the community, so please contact the coordinator if you have concerns about paying the fees.

Contracts

Once an enrollment schedule contract has been signed, a family is responsible for the fees related to that contract for the rest of the school year. If there are any changes in the number of days a child attends, the contract will be modified and signed again.

Late Bill Payments

After the first month the bill is past due, it will be reflected as a balance forward on the next bill. **If a family hasn't paid fees for two months or more and has not contacted the school, the child will no longer be able to attend preschool until the family contacts the school to arrange a payment plan.**

Transportation, Arrival and Departure

Kindergarten students ride the regular school buses to school. Transportation is provided for preschoolers on a limited basis.

Pre-school parents interested in having their child ride the school bus must send a letter to the Principal requesting the service. Pre school students may be transported by school bus if: there is room available on the bus, the stop is on an already existing bus route, there is an older sibling available to ride with the child, the child is four years old, the child has the ability to sit in a seat without a seat belt and there is an adult available to meet the bus each day when the child comes home from school. There is no afternoon bus service for pre school students on half days. This is not a typical service as we encourage parents to provide transportation as a means to have daily contact with the staff and program. This service is generally for students who would otherwise be unable to attend the program.

Please refer to the Shutesbury Elementary School Family Handbook: “General Information” section for details for transportation for kindergarten students.

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Preschool Arrival

Arrival is at 8:25 am. Children are dropped off at the front of the school and greeted by their teachers. Teachers escort preschoolers to the classroom.

Preschool Departure at 12:25 for Half Days & 11:30 on Wednesdays

As the weather permits, we will be playing outdoors at departure time. Parents should check in with a teacher before leaving with their child so we can say goodbye and keep track of who is picking up your child.

Preschool Departure at 2:45

Children are picked up in the parking lot, beyond the designated bus parking.

When Other People Pick Up Your Child

Each family is required to fill out a form at the beginning of the year that authorizes other specific adults who can pick up your child. For day-to-day changes, please make sure to write it on the “Release for Pick Up” clipboard located in your child’s classroom and on the yellow slips provided by the school office. For any long term changes or plans, please write us a note with the details of who will be bringing or picking up your child.

Pre-School Busing

In order to assist resident families with children in the Shutesbury Elementary Preschool program, the School Committee allows for limited school-sponsored transportation of pre-school children. Unless a written request is made and written approval granted, it should be presumed that transportation for Preschool students is not provided by the school. Transportation services may be extended to families based on eligibility determined by guidelines developed by the administration and approved by the School Committee. The principal on a case-by-case basis in accordance with School Committee Policy will approve transportation for Preschool students. Typically, approval will be granted for situations in which children could not otherwise attend school.

All Pre-School children being transported on school-owned or contracted vehicles to attend Shutesbury Elementary:

- > Are allowed on space available basis;
- > Are allowed to ride on a traditional bus (aka “yellow bus”) as well as a van;
- > Must be at least four years of age;
- > Must have signed written consent of the Principal and the parent/guardian;
- > Pick up and drop off locations need to correspond with existing bus routes;
- > An adult must be present for pick up and drop off; and
- > Receiving such transportation services is contingent upon appropriate bus behavior of the student and family circumstances, among other factors.
- > Must have a sibling to escort onto and sit with on the bus.

Shutesbury Elementary is not responsible for midday pickups of Preschool students or other program-related transportation of Preschool students that would incur costs to the district beyond those required for transporting students in grades K-6. (School Committee Policy EEAB)

Snacks and Lunch – Please note that due to student allergies we are asking families to avoid sending certain products to school (No peanuts and tree nuts)

We ask that families provide a snack for preschoolers and kindergarten students. Families of full day students will also need to provide lunch. Please bring a cold pack on the days that you send in items that require refrigeration. Lunch from the cafeteria is also available.

We do engage in some cooking activities at times that are related to a theme. Occasionally, we also have special treats, such as cake and cookies for birthdays and other special occasions. **If there are foods your child cannot have due to allergies or special diets, please inform your teacher and the school nurse so we can arrange an alternative.**

We encourage families to send snacks and lunches for their child to help promote success in learning and support children's well being. We also encourage small portions that are easy for children to manage by themselves. Below you will find some ideas for healthy snacks:

Sliced up fruit
Crackers
Raisins
Cut up vegetables
Granola
Muffins
Bagels
Rice cakes
Yogurt
Cheese

Other Hints

- Make sure your child can open their snack containers and packages
- Send small portions in a container
- Provide a spoon if needed
- Put your child's name on his or her lunch bag



Daily Schedules

This schedule is what a typical day would look like.

Preschool Morning

8:30 Arrival – Free choice

9:00 Constructive play //Drama Time

10:00 Clean-up

10:30 Snack

10:45 Independent Book Reading

11:00 Circle meeting time – songs, movement, drama, discussions, storytelling

11:30 Outside time

(Wednesday, Pick-up @ 11:30)

Preschool Afternoon

12:25 Pick-up time for half-day children

Lunch for full-time children

1:00 Clean-up; story time and songs

1:30 Rest time

2:00 Quiet play for children who are not sleeping; books, drawing, puzzles

2:30 Wake-up; outside play

2:45 Dismissal



Kindergarten Program

8:15 Arrival and Free Choice

9:00 Morning Meeting

9:15 Language Arts/Specials

10:15 Snack

10:40 Recess

11:00 Math/Specials

12:00 Lunch/Recess

1:00 Rest

1:30 Language Arts

2:15 Unit Study

3:45 Get Ready for Dismissal

A more detailed schedule of the Kindergarten week will come home in September.

Some activities may not happen every day and on Wednesday there is early dismissal at 11:30 a.m. for Preschool, and 1:00 p.m. for Kindergarten.

All schedules may change to accommodate special events.

Dressing for Outdoor Time

We plan to play outdoors each day unless it is raining or unseasonably cold. Please assume we will be outdoors when dressing your child. Check the weather daily and send your child with appropriate outdoor clothing. When there is snow on the ground or excessive mud, children will need snow pants and boots.

Please send in a complete, extra set of clothes for unforeseen circumstances such as water play, cooking, painting, etc. Label all items or keep them in your child's cubby to avoid confusion. Feel free to send in slippers for your child.

We encourage you to have your children wear comfortable clothing with sneakers or other shoes that allow for activity. Kindergarten children will need to wear or have sneakers for days that they have physical education class (**Tuesday and Thursday**). We request that children NOT wear flip-flops to school, as climbing and running are more difficult with shoes that come off easily. In addition, there is a greater chance of foot and/or toe injury when wearing flip-flops. Close-toed shoes that are securely attached to the foot are our strong recommendation.

We do not provide sunscreen or insect repellent to any child prior to going outside. Parents are required to provide and/or apply sunscreen and insect repellent themselves. If sunscreen or insect repellent is sent to school, it will be applied to the child by staff.

Helpful Hints about Winter Clothes

- Snow pants that have a bib with straps and zip up are easier for children to manage
- Mittens rather than gloves are easier to manage, mittens made of yarn often get wet quickly and don't dry easily (Kindergarteners may want gloves for more mobility)
- Mittens can be attached to jacket with a string or clips
- Boots that slip on and have Velcro can be put on and taken off easier
- You can have your children practice dressing at home to see how they can manage independently

School Cancellations

The Shutesbury Preschool and Kindergarten follow the schedule of the Shutesbury Elementary School. Snow days are announced on the radio, the TV and are available on local TV station websites. Cancellations and delays are also noted on the school website (www.shutesburyschool.org), and the telephone message machine. We also utilize the town-wide emergency telephone system to notify each family of delays and cancellations. Any delay that is announced on a Wednesday (half-day) will be a cancellation for the pre-school. Please note that the media sources may be announcing the delays and cancellations prior to an announcement on the school's website.

The Preschool Setting

Curriculum

The Massachusetts Early Childhood Program Standards and Guidelines For Early Learning Experiences inform our preschool programs. The following principles serve as a guide and are cited in the introduction to these standards: • All young children are capable of learning.

- Children show individual differences in development.
- Knowledge of child growth and development is essential for program development and implementation. • Children's language skills are one of several predictors of academic success.
- Developmental domains are highly interrelated. For example, children's mathematical understanding may occur on the playground, in dramatic play, or while using sensory materials.
- Young children learn by doing and observing.
- Families are the primary caregivers and educators of their children.

The Standards also state that the physical environment will have "indoor and outdoor space that is safe and accessible to all children.... And will reflect children's interests and offer opportunities for varied play experiences, exploration, and learning." The Standards further state "There is a structure that supports a variety of learning needs of children. Daily routines are flexible but predictable. The daily schedule provides a balance of activities on the following dimensions:

- indoor/outdoor including both small and large muscle activities
- quiet/active

- individual/small group/large group
- child initiated/staff directed.”

In preschool the physical arrangement of the room is an important part of our curriculum. Learning areas encourage the development of skills associated with a young child’s developmental growth. The space is arranged to provide clear pathways for movement from one area to another and to separate noisy activities from quiet ones. The materials are carefully selected to meet a wide range of developmental abilities; and the activities are designed to be open-ended to foster individual expression and to allow for individual differences, abilities and rates of development. Materials are also organized on low, open shelves or in bins to promote independent use by the children.

In the classroom you will find dramatic play areas where children can engage in role-playing as they make sense of the world around them. You will see block-building areas, where children can experiment and begin to develop basic understanding of concepts such as gravity and balance and units of measure. You will see sensory exploration areas such as sand and water tables. You will also see art areas where children can explore their creativity and self-expression, fine and large motor areas where children can begin to develop strength and coordination, and areas that promote language and math skills, such as concept and vocabulary building, and letter, number and print awareness. In preschool we often explore on the school’s “nature trail” and encourage activities that foster curiosity and a sense of wonder and appreciation for the varied and amazing world we share.

The preschool setting offers a balance between child-initiated and teacher-directed activities. The daily schedule is organized to include choice times as well as large and small group activities. Even snack time offers opportunities for learning of social skills, and math and science skills such as comparing and contrasting, predicting, etc. In other words, the preschool setting offers unlimited possibilities for learning through play. Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” And there is plenty of imagination in preschool! Finally, we encourage parents and family members to join us in the classroom as we embrace the knowledge that “families are the primary caregivers and educators of their children.”

Themes

The preschool uses one of two criteria when determining themes. Themes must be relevant to the lives of young children and/or they must be highly preferred child topics. For example, the theme “construction” meets both criteria. Some children have observed building equipment and vehicles. In addition, many children love trucks, tools, etc. On the other hand, dinosaurs are highly preferred, but not relevant to the child’s daily lives. Once a theme is introduced, teachers observe children carefully and rely on their response and level of engagement in activities to determine how in-depth the study of a theme will be. Teachers may shorten or extend the length of time a theme is studied in response to the children. The length of time spent on a theme may vary from two to six weeks. Since all of the children do not attend preschool every day, they may not participate in all activities though we do our best to have children experience the full range of activities. Some themes that may be studied are as follows

Things That Grow Water
Jungle Animals
Farm Animals
Animals in the Woods Pets
Vehicles
Exploring Space
The Sky
Transportation

The Five Senses Numbers
Measurement
Color
Buildings
Insects and Spiders Food
Clothing
Machines

Dinosaurs
Seasons (throughout the year) Nursery
Rhymes
Animals in Winter
Apples
Sunflowers
Celebration of Holidays Oceans
Spring Flowers

Skill Areas

The preschool use integrated approach to curriculum. This means that although some activities emphasize certain developmental areas, all areas of development are involved in activities. For example, although snack time is a great time to focus on self-help skills, many other areas of learning can be emphasized. Social and communication development can be facilitated through teachers’ prompts for conversation. In addition, cognitive skills can be addressed by discussing age-appropriate concepts such as color, size, etc. within the context of requesting snack. (i.e., “Do you want a square cracker or a round cracker.”)?

Social and emotional development is high priorities in the preschool. Getting along with others, developing friendships, sharing, taking turns, being a helper, negotiating conflicts, exhibiting self-control, focusing during story and group times, and dealing with disappointments, are some of the social skills that are facilitated. Language skills such as vocabulary development, expressive skills, articulation and conversational skills are also emphasized. Motor and perceptual skills are addressed through a variety of activities including use of manipulatives, art, and outdoor play. Cognitive skills are also addressed throughout the day during typical preschool

Support Staff & Specialists

In an effort to continually provide for all aspects of our children's education, we have a number of special services available. Sometimes the above list changes to accommodate specific needs of our students.

School Nurse (Katie Harrington): Our school nurse is at school for five days per week. She performs general nursing responsibilities, serves as our health educator and confers with parents as necessary. She encourages parents who may have health related questions to contact her.

Speech Therapist (Lauren Sullivan): The role of the speech language pathologist is to provide direct services in the areas of articulation, language, and phonemic awareness. If a child is not communicating as well as they should be, they are evaluated for their production of sounds, and their structure of language. In the preschool classroom the SLP comes in to the class once a week to provide a whole class language lesson. Many lessons focus on learning certain sounds through stories, and production and discrimination activities. Lessons also focus on following directions, speaking in complete sentences, learning new vocabulary words, and social language skills. The SLP is available to consult with the kindergarten teacher, and provides direct services in both individual and small groups to children found eligible for speech language services through evaluation procedures.

Special Education Teacher (Nicole Sutka): The special education teacher consults with the classroom teachers about any academic, social, or behavioral questions or concerns they have about the children and may observe students in class. This teacher also attends some Team meetings and contacts parents regarding their children's needs. The special education teacher, at times, administers academic evaluations, and screens all children. In addition, she may provide special education services to individuals or small groups of children.

School Counselor (Amadee Meyer): The school psychologist is available to support children and parents as needed and to consult with their teachers. At times, the school psychologist co-facilitates social skills groups.

Occupational Therapist (Margaret Simmons): The Occupational Therapist works in the Pre-School leading groups that focus on learning spatial terms, body awareness, fine motor skills needed for handwriting, and sensory awareness. The Occupational Therapist works in the Kindergarten leading groups that focus on learning left and right, sensory awareness and energy control, appropriate pencil grasp, and eye-hand coordination in relation to letter formation.

Commitment to Inclusion

The Shutesbury Elementary School is committed to providing special services, whenever appropriate, in the student's regular classroom and within the student's regular classroom program. These actions enhance students' feelings of inclusion and success.

Preschool & Kindergarten Behavior Guidelines

Self-Management

We believe that 90% of behavior management is in prevention and teaching children alternatives to disruptive behavior. Children are more likely to exhibit self-control when they are highly motivated and engaged, and when adults facilitate positive interactions. All behavior occurs for a reason (e.g., the need for attention, the need for a challenge, a response to frustration, fear, etc.). We look for the cause of the behavior and attempt to change the environment so the cause disappears. We approach behavior in this way rather than viewing it as a separate entity. The following strategies are used to teach self-management skills.

Prevention: There is a strong emphasis on prevention and this is demonstrated in many ways.

- The daily schedule alternates high-energy activities with low energy activities to ensure that children are able to engage in an appropriate balance of physical activity.
- Transitions are staggered so that “down time” (where children have nothing to do) is minimized. For example, instead of having children line up all together to wash their hands, they look at books and are called to the sink in pairs to minimize problems that may occur while they are waiting in line.
- Wide ranges of activities are offered so that children with a variety of preferences, strengths and challenges can be highly motivated and engaged.
- A few rules (e.g., We use gentle hands, We walk in school) are established and taught early on. Visual cues, skits and stories are used to teach the rules. Teachers state rules in positive terms so that children understand what to do rather than what not to do.
- Teachers provide a high level of behavior specific positive feedback to children in order to let them know when they are appreciated. Examples include “Thank you for cleaning the table”, “I like the way you are ready for story.” “Thank you for waiting so calmly.” “Thank you for sitting quietly while you look at your book.”
- Close supervision of children is important in that teachers can often “nip things in the bud”. These times can be excellent opportunities for learning. For example, a teacher may intervene as two children begin to have a conflict over sharing a toy and help them negotiate how they will share.
- Communication with the family is important so that we may understand the child better and respond to situations consistently and with understanding.

Adaptive Alternatives

It is very common for young children to act out as a result of not yet having the social skills to handle certain situations. Much of this behavior is developmentally appropriate. Developing social skills is a high priority in the early childhood programs for this reason. For example, it is common for adults to teach three-year-olds to say “No!” rather than hit another child. Communication is also a common alternative to some behavior and does need to be practiced at a young age. Children are assisted to express their feelings. In addition, they are guided to listen to what other children say and to be more aware of the feelings of their peers.

Responding to Challenging Behavior

- Redirection to another activity is often a good way to get children back in a positive mode. This can sometimes be used to interrupt a cycle and help a child get calm quickly.
- Ignoring some behavior is appropriate, especially when children engage in certain behaviors to get attention. There are many times when no response is more effective than drawing attention to the behavior.
- Social isolation is never used. Time out from preferred activities may be used when all else fails, and for more extreme behavior such as aggression. For example, a child is in the block area and is throwing blocks. He does not respond to attempts by the teacher to use blocks safely. The teacher then helps the child transition to the book area.

Parent-Teacher Communication

The staff believes that good communication between parents and the school community is an essential component in making your child's experiences at Shutesbury Elementary School productive and happy. Special events and workshops are scheduled throughout the year to include families in our school. In the fall, the Kindergarten participates, along with the upper grades, in an "Open House" evening. The "Roadtown News," our school newspaper, contains information and listings related to school events.

Within the early childhood classrooms, we have on-going blog activity on our website, and send home monthly/bimonthly newsletters to inform parents of activities in the classroom and help facilitate conversation with your child. The pre-school program sends home frequent, often daily emails. We encourage you to call or send an email to us at any time with questions or concerns or to write notes that will help us to better understand your child. Sometimes a note that simply says, "Billy needs a hug!" can make a difference in a child's day. We will also work hard at sending notes or making phone calls to keep you informed.

Parent-Teacher conferences take place in the fall and spring, and as needed or requested. Progress reports will be sent home twice a year. The pre-school will be using the work sampling system for assessment.

Parent Participation and Involvement

There is an evening **preK-6 Open House** at Shutesbury Elementary scheduled for September 27, 2013. This will be a time for parents to families to tour the school and meet with their child's teachers to learn about the preschool program. We hope it is also a time to meet other parents and build a home-school connection that will encourage student success in school.

Shutesbury Elementary School encourages parents and community members to volunteer time in our programs. Volunteer service in the school provides us with a valuable resource. It provides you with the opportunity to be closely involved in your child's education work with teachers and meet other students and families.

There are many ways parent volunteers can help us in the early childhood classrooms. Some parents chaperone field trips or spend the day in the classroom. If you prefer, you can help by doing something at home, helping with fundraisers, joining the PTO, donating materials or joining the Early Childhood Partnership Council.

Parents are encouraged to visit the school during school hours. Several helpful hints will make your visit more beneficial.

- As a courtesy to your child's teachers, please call ahead and inform them of your visit.
- Plan to stay for an extended period of time so that you may observe a complete activity.
- Any perceptions, questions or concerns that arise during a visit should be shared directly with the classroom teacher at an appropriate and mutually convenient time.

Early Childhood Screening & Referral Process

Early Childhood Screening is a brief assessment procedure designed to help identify children with special needs. This process consists of: • Developmental and Medical History Forms (filled out by parents and school nurse) • Vision and hearing tests done by our school nurse • Early Screening Inventory (administered by SES staff) • Observations and recommendations of teaching staff when available

Children entering the Kindergarten Program routinely have the Early Screening Inventory. Children in the three and four-year-old program suspected of having a substantial problem in vision, hearing, speech, movement, or emotional adjustment may be screened at the request of the parents or teacher. In addition, children in the community who are three-years-old can request a screening, even if they are not enrolled in our program. This will be advertised in the local newspapers to inform the public. Parents can refer to the *Parent's Rights Brochure* for more information on the referral process for Massachusetts.

