

Burlington Essential Early Education Program

Mission Statement

The mission of the Burlington School District's Essential Early Education Program is to identify children with significant developmental challenges and to provide family centered early childhood special education services. These services allow children to participate in typical early childhood activities to the best of their abilities, to reach their full learning potential, and to prepare them for the next learning environment.

The Burlington Essential Early Education Program (EEE) provides early childhood special education services to preschool children with identified disabilities/significant developmental delays and their families. Children are referred to the Burlington EEE Program by parents, physicians, community early childhood programs, and community agencies because there is a concern or question about that child's development.

REFERRAL:

Referrals are taken by the Director, who then contacts the parent to be sure the parent has approved the referral and to gather more information to assist in determining the next step in the referral process.

For referrals of children with obvious diagnosed disabilities or medical conditions, the next step would be assigning an evaluation team of EEE teacher, Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP), and, if needed, an OT and/or PT if indicated. The evaluation team would contact the parent and schedule a time for the comprehensive special education evaluation.

SCREENING AND EVALUATION:

A developmental screening is scheduled when there is no clear diagnosis upon referral. An intake form is mailed to the parent to gather more information about the child's development. The parent then brings the child into the EEE program and a teacher and SLP conduct a screening. If the child is developing in a typical manner, no further action is taken. If there are concerns about a child's development, one of several actions will occur: a child may need a comprehensive special education evaluation, more observation may be needed in his/her natural setting, or may be put on a monitor list. In this case, the parent is called back in three months to determine if the child has made progress. If the parent has seen little progress in the area(s) of concern, the child will be scheduled for a re-screen. In the "wait and see" situations, the parent is always provided information of things they can be doing to support the child's development.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP):

Once a child is found eligible for EEE services based on the results of the comprehensive evaluation and the Vermont EEE regulations, an IEP meeting is held with the parents. The child's current functioning is described identifying both strengths and needs. The IEP goals and the special education services to support the attainment of those goals are agreed upon. The child's placement is the Burlington EEE Program. Once in the program, there are many ways children can receive their EEE services. Many factors are considered when deciding *where* the child will receive their EEE/special education services based on each child's individual needs. First, the evaluation results and the IEP goals are considered. Can this child be served in the least restrictive setting with age-like peers? Is the child currently at home or in a community early childhood setting? Could the child's IEP goals be met in those current settings? A review of the *Continuum of Placements in EEE* is completed. The intensity of the child's needs, staffing needed to meet student's needs, past experience with community setting, if the child might be eligible for subsidized child care funding, and transportation needs are all factors that are considered with the family. The decision is based on the child's individual needs as outlined by the IEP and a balance of all the factors above that leads to the decision. Being eligible for EEE services does not automatically mean a child will be served in a preschool - there are no public preschool settings except for the Wheeler Title I program for

children who live in the Barnes and Wheeler neighborhoods, and the Flynn Preschool which serves the Smith and Flynn neighborhoods. An IEP is a legal document for special education services, not necessarily for preschool placement.

The Burlington EEE program believes that parents are essential members of the education team. Parents are required to participate in every step of the process from referral to implementation of the individual educational program. Parents are respected for their input and for doing what they can to be a part of the educational team.

CONTINUUM OF SERVICES:

The Burlington EEE Program provides services for eligible students in the following ways:

Flynn and Wheeler Preschool:

The Flynn and Wheeler Preschools provide children aged three to five years with a high quality early education. Children attending the Flynn Preschool must be from the C.P. Smith and Flynn neighborhoods. The Wheeler Preschool serves students from the Barnes and Wheeler neighborhoods.

Through developmentally relevant activities, children attending the program are provided opportunities to develop skills in each of the early childhood learning domains. Domains include: science, math, literacy, motor, communication and social-emotional skills.

Because it is the belief of the program that parents are their child's primary teacher, the program also provides home visits to work as partners with families in an effort to more fully support a child's growth.

The Flynn and Wheeler preschools are based on the philosophy that all children have the ability to learn and learn best through exploring materials found within their environment with support from teachers. Both classrooms follow the guidelines of the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Outreach Services:

Children may be served in their home or in the community early education program that the parent has enrolled the child in. Usually this involves an SLP, SLP assistant, and/or EEE teacher. We have a long standing relationship (since 1976) with Trinity Children's Center. We also have been able to collaborate with many additional community child care centers and preschools in Burlington.

Clinic Services:

Some parents bring their child to the EEE program at Ira Allen for services, typically for speech and language services.

Ira Allen Classroom Program:

Some children have more intensive needs and are served in the EEE classroom program at Ira Allen. Usually, these children are not enrolled in another setting, and need more intensive services. These services are offered at Ira Allen in a classroom program which is specifically designed for language, motor, cognitive and social learning. This classroom program meets three half days per week.

Ira Allen Extended Day Program:

The four and a half days per week program is for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders or other significant developmental disabilities. These children participate in the classroom program which meets 3 half days a week as described above as well as receive additional one-to-one or small group intervention outside the classroom program. Each child usually has an assigned para-educator who is trained in the instructional programs for the child with direct service also given from the EEE teacher. For younger children with ASD or other significant developmental disabilities who cannot tolerate a full day of programming, an individual program is developed with the goal of extending the student's school program to four and a half days per week.

Staffing for the Burlington EEE Program consists of Early Childhood Special Education Teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists, Speech-Language Pathology Assistants, Discrete Trial Interventionists, para-educators, a half-time Director and an Administrative Assistant.

HEADSTART:

The Burlington EEE program has had a partnership with the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Office Head Start Program since 1994. Head Start places a teacher in our program that carries a caseload of 10 children. Some of the students are EEE eligible and others are Head Start eligible and serve as peers in the classroom. The partnership has allowed EEE to extend more comprehensive family based services to families who need them the most and has allowed Head Start to serve children with disabilities as well as low economic status. Head Start and EEE sign an agreement each year that outlines each agency's responsibilities in the partnership.

LICENSING:

In February of 2000, the EEE program became a licensed early childhood program under the Vermont Department of the Division of Children and Families. Each year the program renews its license. The program must meet all the regulations for licensing as related to staffing, programming and environment.

In August of 2008, the EEE program and the Wheeler preschool became accredited by the STARS program through the State of Vermont. Since Flynn preschool is a new program, it will apply for accreditation in the spring of 2009.

A copy of the Vermont Child Care regulations is posted outside the classroom and is available to all parents. All parents have unlimited access to their child without delay. Parents are encouraged to speak directly to their child's teachers about any questions or concerns they may have about their child's educational program. They are further encouraged to talk with the Director of the program by calling **864-8463** if they feel they would like additional assistance. They may also call the Child Care Hotline at 1-800-540-7942.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

Your participation in your child's educational program is extremely important. The teachers and other staff working with your child need your input and suggestions. You know your child the best!

There are several ways that you can become involved with your child's program. Here are some suggestions:

- Come to school and spend time with your child. Your child will feel really important with mom or dad in the classroom.
- Parent workshops - if parents are interested, we can offer workshops on different topics of interest (ex: behavior management, reading to your child, etc.) Please let us know if you would like a specific workshop this year.
- Home visits - the teacher/SLP may ask to come to your home to observe your child there. It helps the teacher understand your child a little better. It's a great time for you to share information about specific skills or issues at home.
- Telephone/e-mail contact - you and the teacher/SLP can establish regular contact by identifying as a team the best way to communicate information. You should always feel free to call. Just remember, try to call between the hours of 8-9, 12-1 or after 3:15. These are the best times for teachers to speak with you.
- Home/school folder - the teacher/SLP will be sending home a folder or notebook with your child on a regular basis. This is a place for you and the teacher to communicate each day your child comes to school. The teacher will send home the daily activity note and you can send in notes whenever appropriate. Please send the folder to school with your child each day.
- Home games and activities- the teacher/SLP may send a book/game or activity home with your child. The game/activity will offer your child extra practice on something s/he is working on and learning at school. We hope you have fun playing with your child when activities are sent home from school.

GUIDANCE AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT:

We believe that a properly prepared environment and supervision promotes positive interactions among children and can prevent many behaviors from occurring. One of our primary goals of the program is to develop social-emotional, self-regulation, and positive peer interaction skills through direct teaching, modeling, and scaffolding. When behavior management is needed, the primary focus is redirection to a positive behavior. The staff uses techniques and supports such as conversations with the child(ren), visual supports and redirection to another activity. Recurring behaviors will be discussed by the team and a specific behavior plan addressing the behaviors may be implemented. If a behavior plan is developed it will be continually reassessed for readjustment or continued need.

IMMUNIZATION OF STUDENTS:

No person may enroll as a student in a Burlington School, regardless of whether the student has been enrolled in school the previous year, unless the principal or program director has received a record or certificate of immunization issued by a licensed physician or a health clinic stating the person has received required immunizations appropriate to age as specified by the Vermont Department of Health.

ILLNESS POLICY:

Please keep your child home and consult with your physician if your child has:

- A fever (a child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school)
- An earache with a fever or behavior change that has lasted more than 3 days
- A sore throat with a fever and/or difficult swallowing
- A rash with a fever or behavior change
- Vomiting - two or more times within 24 hours
- Five or more loose or watery bowel movements within an 8 hour period

Keeping your child home when they display these symptoms is best for them and could help prevent the spread of illness to others. The best interest of your child is always most important to us.

MEDICATION POLICY:

Most parents whose children require medication are able to give it to their child at home. There are occasional times when medication may have to be given during school hours.

For prescription medications: The physician and the parent must sign the medication administration form. (Many physicians' offices have copies or they may be obtained from the school.) The medication must be in its original container. If it is a long-term prescription, the permission must be renewed each school year.

For non-prescription medications: The parent must fill out and sign the medication administration form or write all the information on a paper. The medication must be in the original, labeled container. The medication will be given for 48 hours with each form. If the need for longer-term administration exists, please call the principal. The principal or designee reserves the right not to give the medication when there is a safety concern about it; parents will be notified and medical clarification requested. Parents can always come to school and administer the medication themselves.

TIPS FOR PARENTS:

We all know that learning starts at birth. Much of what a young child learns s/he learns at home. You are your child's first teacher in these important early years. Parents do make a difference! Here are some tips we hope you will find helpful.

How Do Young Children Learn?

Young children learn best through their own firsthand experiences. They need many opportunities to touch, feel, handle, create, build, experiment and explore. Play is the "business" of childhood. Through play, children actively explore the world through all of their senses. They solve problems, build concepts and ideas and learn how to get along with others.

It is important to provide a child with a healthy learning/play environment where s/he can feel secure and respected and free to explore and to find out that it is O.K. to make mistakes. Here are some things that you can do to help:

- Play with your child. Encourage your child to pretend. Have fun together.
- Help your child expand his/her play by suggesting new ideas, adding new toys or props and by asking questions or making comments on the things they are doing in their play.
- Encourage your child to talk about his/her play. Let him/her know that you are interested in what s/he is doing.

Enhance Your Child's Language Development:

Your child begins to learn language through everyday experiences and s/he hears, sees, listens to and touches all of the things and people in his/her world.

- Tell your child what is happening while it is happening. Give your child the words s/he needs to understand their experiences.
- Children must have a reason to talk. Give your child many opportunities to ask for things before they are given to him/her or to tell you about something that is important.
- Answer your child's questions. The question "why" is a learning experience.

- Provide experiences for your child. Take him/her to the grocery store, the beach, the library, etc. Talk with your child about these places. Help your child learn new words (vocabulary).
- Listen to your child. Give him/her full attention when s/he is talking. Try not to interrupt. Encourage your child to expand on what s/he says by your comments such as "You do?" "That's great". "Tell me more", etc.
- Chants, songs, nursery rhymes and finger-plays are language. Provide opportunities for your child to participate in these kinds of activities.
- Read and re-read stories to your child. Reading and re-reading helps your child learn new vocabulary and concepts, develop good listening skills and learn to love reading.

Reading To Your Child:

Try to read to your child every day. Find a time when you and your child are relaxed and interested in reading such as bedtime or after a nap. Here are some tips on reading with your child:

- Let your child choose the book to read
- Point to the pictures as you talk about them
- Let your child hold the book and turn the pages
- Let your child tell about the pictures and tell the story to you
- Write down your child's "homemade" story and read it to him/her
- Even if your child does not show an interest in reading, continue to read to him/her as s/he plays quietly. Eventually s/he will be eager to participate in reading.

Remember:

- Stories should be appropriate for your child's age level.
- Pictures should be clear with not too many objects on a page.
- Books should help add new words to your child's vocabulary.
- The younger the child, the more pictures and less words you need in a story. You don't always need to read the book's words. Use your own.
- Children learn to love reading when they see adults enjoying reading.
- Take your child to the library. It's a fun activity for both parent and child.

HOW DOES YOUR CHILD DEVELOP GOOD SELF-ESTEEM?

Self-esteem is how a person feels about himself. Developing good self-esteem helps your child become a happy, loving and capable person. Here are some things that you can do to help:

- Accept your child for who s/he is. Remember, every child has strengths and weaknesses.
- Be positive when your child asks you for help.
- Be careful what you say about your child when they are in the room.
- Show your child s/he can do at least a small part of a task, even when s/he says that s/he can't.
- Tell your child about his/her talents and strengths. Praise the things s/he does well even if it does not seem like much to you.
- Give your child the freedom to grow through mistakes.
- Listen to your child.
- Give your child responsibilities that are appropriate for his/her age. Give rewards for jobs well done - a big hug, a special trip, anything that s/he enjoys.

TREAT TELEVISION WITH T.L.C.

Young children are very affected by the things that they see on the television. Here are some tips to help you and your child talk about the things they may see on the television:

- Talk about the programs they are watching.
- Talk about programs that your child enjoys watching.
- Talk about the difference between make-believe and real life.
- Talk about ways television characters could solve problems without violence.
- Talk about violence and how it hurts.
- Talk about television food that can cause cavities.
- Choose the programs that your child may watch.
- Limit the number of programs your child may watch.
- Choose to turn the set off when the program is over.
- Watch the TV programs with your child.
- Look out for television behavior that your child may imitate.
- Look for characters that care about others.
- Look for healthy snacks in the kitchen instead of on the television.
- Look for ideas for what to do when you switch off the television - read a book, draw a picture, play a game, go to the park!

*Taken in part from: Action for Children's Television
46 Austin St.
Newtonville, Mass 02160*

One final note: we are pleased that you and your child will be a part of our program this year. We sincerely hope that you have a wonderfully fun and educational year. Please let us know if there is any way in which we can make your experience better!

Here's to a great year!

The Burlington EEE Staff!