

Eligibility Guidelines for Participation in Colchester Early Childhood Program

Colchester Public Schools provides the Colchester Early Childhood Program (CECP). The CECP is a preschool learning opportunity provided to eligible 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children residing in Colchester. The goal of Colchester Public School's CECP is to provide an early childhood preschool education to eligible children to promote their growth and development so that they are ready to enter kindergarten. Focused learning areas include: language; social skills; problem-solving; early literacy, math and science; as well as the development of gross and fine motor skills. The CECP is accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which is a hallmark of quality.

The CECP consists of three distinct programs, all of which have their own eligibility. Those programs include:

- ✓ School Readiness which provides an early education to 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children who meet the eligibility requirements;
- ✓ Early Childhood Special Education which provides a classroom program for some 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children who: (a) are found eligible to need special education because of a disability and (b) have a frequency and intensity of need that requires that an early childhood setting serve as the intervention context; and
- ✓ Colchester's Early Childhood Lottery that provides an additional opportunity for an early childhood preschool education to 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children living in Colchester.

Once accepted into any of the three programs offered through the CECP, children must be registered for school and follow district policy. Access to One of the CECP programs includes:

School Readiness

What is the School Readiness?

School Readiness is a state-funded early childhood preschool education opportunity. Colchester Public Schools is able to offer a School Readiness Program through the CECP because the school district, in collaboration with C3, the Collaborative for Colchester's Children, applied for and received a state grant to provide an early childhood preschool education to twenty-two (22) 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children. Transportation to and from this program is not provided by the school district.

Who is Eligible for School Readiness?

Children must be 3- or 4-years of age, or age 5 and not yet eligible for a public school education in kindergarten. In addition, priority is given to families whose income is less than 75% of the state median income.

How Do I Access the School Readiness Program?

Families need to complete a School Readiness application. That application is available at Colchester Elementary School or through the Collaborative for Colchester's Children (C3). A completed application needs to be submitted to Cindy Praisner in the C3 office at Colchester Elementary School. Applications are assigned "points" based on the School Readiness Admission Rubric that identifies risk factors such as English Language Learners, parent's education level, family composition, other services received, etc. Parents need to resubmit an application each year up to the age of eligibility for kindergarten in order to continue in the School Readiness program.

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Early Childhood Special Education

What is Early Childhood Special Education?

Early Childhood Special Education is the early public education provided to 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children with identified disabilities that are found to require special education in order to access, participate and benefit from an education with typically developing peers.

How are Children Found Eligible for Early Childhood Special Education?

Colchester Public Schools brings together the child's parent(s) and a group of qualified individuals to determine children's eligibility for special education. That group is called a planning and placement team (PPT). The PPT meets to discuss concerns about a child, designs an evaluation and then meets to discuss the results of the evaluation. It is the PPT, along with the child's parent(s) who will determine if the child is eligible for special education. If the child is eligible, the PPT goes on to develop an individualized education program (IEP) for the child that will include the specific goals and objectives that will be addressed as well special education and related services as determined by identified weaknesses on formal evaluations. That IEP will also represent whether the child requires a particular frequency, intensity and/or duration of services and how those services should be provided.

Who is Eligible for Early Childhood Special Education?

Children are found eligible for special education if they have one or more of the following disabilities **AND** the PPT determination that the child requires special education:

- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Hearing Impairment, including Deafness or Hard of Hearing
- ✓ Intellectual Disability
- ✓ Specific Learning Disability, including Dyslexia
- ✓ Multiple Disabilities
- ✓ Orthopedic Impairments
- ✓ Emotional Disturbance
- ✓ Speech or Language Impairment
- ✓ Traumatic Brain Injury
- ✓ Visual Impairment including Blindness
- ✓ Deaf-Blindness
- ✓ Other Health Impairment, Including Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- ✓ Development Delay (only for children 3-, 4- and 5-years of age)

How Do I Access Early Childhood Special Education?

If a parent or other person is concerned about a child's growth and development, a referral can be made to the Colchester Public Schools' Department of Special Education and Pupil Services. Developmental screenings are conducted through CECP to identify if a child is or may be eligible for special education. To arrange an appointment, please contact us via email at pksscreenings@colchesterct.org. Additional questions regarding special education should be directed to Kathleen Perry, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education at (860) 537-3103.

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Colchester's Early Childhood Lottery

What is the Colchester Early Childhood Lottery?

Colchester Public Schools provides an additional opportunity for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children to obtain an early childhood preschool education at the CECP. Transportation to and from the CECP may be provided from large daycare centers in Colchester only.

Who is Eligible for the Early Childhood Lottery?

Children must be 3- 4-years of age, or age 5 and not yet eligible for a public school education in kindergarten. Children and their families must be residents of Colchester.

How Do I Access the Early Childhood Lottery?

Families need to complete an application. Applications must be submitted by January 31 to be considered for acceptance in the following school year. The application is available at the Colchester Elementary School office or through the Colchester Elementary School website at Colchesterct.org under "Departments" and the [Colchester Early Childhood Program tab](#). A completed application needs to be submitted. The lottery is drawn once per year in February. A child accepted through the lottery can continue in the CECP until entry into kindergarten.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How will the CECP programs help my child's development?

The Colchester Early Childhood Program (CECP) helps preschoolers (who reside in Colchester) grow in many areas including language, social interaction, pre-literacy and numeracy, fine and gross motor, and cognitive skills.

Which guidelines regulate the practices of the CECP programs?

The CECP is designed to meet NAEYC (the National Association of the Education of Young Children) and federal and state requirements as designated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), which, in part, requires that children with special needs (1) receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) by a child's third birthday and (2) are educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with programming that maintains at least an equal ratio of children with and without special needs.

How do the CECP programs integrate with the rest of the Colchester Elementary School community?

The CECP program is fully integrated into the Colchester Elementary School (CES), with CECP students participating in events and activities offered to K-2 students enrolled at CES. Children participate in the program both as regular education students and as students identified with special education needs.

What is the process for determining if my child is eligible for special education?

A child is eligible for preschool special education as part of the Colchester Early Childhood Program (CECP) if he or she is between the ages of 3 and 5, meets the eligibility criteria for one of the disabilities listed below, and for whom the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) determines that classroom placement is appropriate. Children who are found to demonstrate a disability, and because of this disability, he or she needs special classes, special instruction or specialized services to succeed in school, may attend one session of the Colchester Early Childhood Program. A special

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education student is eligible for classroom participation if he or she displays, through formal evaluation, a significant impairment in one or more areas of development (physical, communication, cognition, social-emotional, and/or adaptive), demonstrates that the delay has a marked impact on their learning and development, and/or placement is recommended by the PPT. Significant impairment is defined by a formal evaluation resulting in standardized scores of ≥ 2 standard deviations below the mean in one area or ≥ 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two or more areas. Scores on standardized measures are considered in conjunction with information shared by parents and other members of the PPT in determining eligibility for special education. Van transportation is available for these students.

What if my child is found eligible to receive therapy (e.g., speech and language therapy, physical therapy) but is NOT eligible for special education classroom placement?

In some instances, a child may be found eligible for special education due to a speech or language impairment, but not be found eligible for special education classroom placement. In such cases, preschool special education includes the provision of speech and language therapy provided on a “single service” basis. These students receive 30 to 60 minutes of speech therapy per week on an individual or small group basis in a related service office. Occasionally, occupational and/or physical therapy is provided in addition to the speech language therapy, as determined by the PPT. Frequently in cases where single services are recommended, such provision of service does not automatically qualify a student for classroom placement. Van transportation is available for this service

What is the School Readiness program?

School Readiness is a grant-funded program designed to help all families access quality early childhood education. CECP receives grant funding that allows twenty 3 or 4 year old students to attend our preschool program. A child may remain in the program until they are eligible for kindergarten by updating his/her application annually. (An exception may be possible for a kindergarten age eligible student who is already enrolled in the School Readiness program). A family can apply for a School Readiness spot by completing a SR application. CECP complies with the state guidelines for placing students in these openings. (Guidelines are available by request from our School Readiness Liaison; enrollment priority is given to families whose income is less than 75% of the State Median Income) Transportation is not provided for students in the School Readiness program.

How can a family access the CECP Lottery?

Because not all 3-, 4- and 5-year old students in Colchester can participate in CECP due to program size, regular education students are chosen through a lottery to maintain a 50-50 ratio in a classroom with children identified with a need(s) and those who are not identified. If a parent wishes to enroll his or her child in the Colchester Early Childhood Program, he or she can be entered into the lottery by completing and submitting an application prior to the date posted on the CECP website.

Applications are also available in the Colchester Elementary School office or on the CES website. The lottery is drawn yearly, and thereafter as needed, in order to maintain at least a 50-50 ratio of students with an IEP and without an IEP. A child selected as a three year old may attend his/her CECP classroom until eligible for kindergarten. Transportation is not provided for students entering the program through the lottery.

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