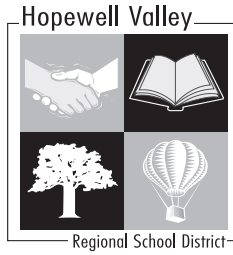


**PROGRAMS FOR
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS**

HOPEWELL VALLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Programs for PRESCHOOL CHILDREN with SPECIAL NEEDS

- **SKIP (Special Kids in Preschool)**
- **SKIP + (for children with significant, multiple disabilities)**
- **PEECH (Preschool & Early Education for Children in Hopewell)**

The following is appropriate for students who have been found eligible for special education and related services via the category of Preschool Disabled and who are enrolled in the SKIP, SKIP+, or PEECH program. Additional information regarding the PEECH program is provided as a separate document. The reader should note that the SKIP and SKIP+ programs typically are considered to be more intensive special education program for students who require a greater degree of services, supplementary aid, and supports. It is the responsibility of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to determine the student's goals, objectives, and specific program components.

A. Program Principles

- The Hopewell Valley Regional School District preschool programs, including related services, are based upon the principles of **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**. ABA is the science of systematically applying experimentally derived principles of behavior to improve socially significant behavior. ABA involves:
 - Taking what we know about behavior and using this information to derive positive change (Applied).
 - Defining behaviors in observable and measurable terms so one may assess change over a period of time (Behavior).
 - Considering and analyzing the behavior within the environment to determine the factors or circumstances influencing the behavior (Analysis) (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).
- ABA principles include targeting specific skills for intervention, systematic programming and teaching, data-driven approach to assess and monitor skills including any and all of the following (this list is not all encompassing):
 - verbal behavior approaches
 - discrete trial instruction
 - natural environment teaching/training
 - fluency-based instruction
 - pairing of staff members with students
 - pairing of students with each other
 - prompt hierarchy

- reinforcement schedules
 - chaining
- An individualized curriculum will drive each student’s program, which is based upon the general education curriculum and results of the assessment approaches. This will be included in the student’s IEP. Skills are broken down into multiple steps consistent with the student’s individual strengths and needs. Students are taught in a systematic way, ensuring that the students have mastered prerequisite skills prior to introducing and teaching relatively higher-level skills (Bondy, 1996; Smith, Donahoe, & Davis, 2001; McClannahan & Krantz, 2001; Taylor & McDonough, 1996). The intensity and rigor of ABA principles vary, based upon the individual needs of the student.
 - Students’ programs will be derived based upon Individualized Skills Assessment and Goal Selection (Bondy, 1996; Jacobson, 2001). Students’ skills will be assessed during the first several weeks after they enter the program, with continuous assessment throughout the students’ enrollment.
 - Goals and specific objectives will be determined based upon a combination of factors, including the results of assessment, Core Curriculum Content Standards, input from the parents and school personnel, etc. Skills will be assessed in all developmental areas including cognitive, academic, social, play and leisure skills, communication, self-help / daily living skills, gross motor, fine motor, sensory processing and interfering behaviors that impact the student’s development and educational progress.
 - Programs will incorporate individualized data collection evaluating students’ progress of each skill (McClannahan & Krantz, 2001; Jacobson, 2001).
 - The district’s program components are the result of multiple additional factors, including staff and consultants having observed many regular education and special education programs throughout New Jersey, having consulted with numerous professionals in the field of special education, review of relevant literature, and participation in various training seminars.
 - Programs may include related services. As per the New Jersey state code, with respect to a “preschool child with a disability,” the preschool child must experience a developmental delay or a disabling condition in order to qualify as “preschool child with a disability.” A child qualifying under that category is then eligible for a program and related services.

B. Instructional Approaches

- Evidence-based teaching methods will be incorporated throughout the students’ program.
- Programming includes individual, small-group, and large-group learning activities to strengthen all developmental skills, with emphasis placed on play skills, social/pragmatic language, sharing, turn-taking, waiting, attending skills, greetings/good-byes, commenting and questioning, etc.
- Students will be involved in activities to promote their understanding of, and exposure to, skills necessary for meaningful and functional community involvement. These include

learning centers at school, video modeling, photographs, games, and community-based visits as appropriate.

- A multi-sensory, hands-on approach will be incorporated with engaging materials.
- A total communication approach will be used to promote functional communication across settings. This includes, but is not limited to, developing students' expressive language, gestures, sign language, and/or the use of augmentative communication systems per each student's IEP.

C. Social-Behavioral Supports

- Social skills, play skills (functional play, pretend play, cooperative play) and peer interaction skills will be incorporated throughout the program (Johnson, Meyer, & Taylor, 1996).
- ABA principles will be used to address challenging/interfering behaviors, including at least the following methods:
 - classroom-wide behavior interventions, including clearly established behavior expectations and both positive and negative consequences;
 - individualized Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) developed following completion of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) per each student's individual needs. This includes targeting specific behaviors, data collection, systematic procedures for the implementation of positive behavior supports to strengthen the replacement behaviors and decrease the challenging/interfering behaviors.
 - negative consequences, if and when necessary. Staff members will respect the student's dignity and will adhere to ethical guidelines. Student safety and supervision will be maintained on an ongoing basis to ensure that learning may take place in a safe and maximally productive environment.

D. Related Services

- Related services are designed to support the child to access the classroom curriculum in a collaborative manner. Related services include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation and counseling. Related services are provided to all children who qualify for therapy based on each discipline's evaluations.
- School-based occupational therapy assists in the development of underlying performance components that are prerequisites for academic learning within the educational setting. The occupational therapist may work on improving gross and fine motor skills, sensorimotor processing, coordination, adapting environments, organizing and using materials appropriately, and developing dressing and self-feeding skills in the learning environment.
- School-based physical therapy is a related service available to those children who have an IEP in preschool. The determination for specific PT services is made after a physical therapy evaluation, discussion with the child study team, and the agreement of the parents. The main purpose of PT in the school setting is to promote and enhance the potential physical development of eligible students so that they can achieve maximum independence and function in all of their educational activities.

- Speech and language therapy is provided for children who have communication impairments and have been found eligible based on the criteria in the NJ special education code. Children may receive treatment to address disorders of articulation, voice, fluency and/or language. Service delivery models of the program may include individual, small group, or classroom-based instruction.
- Counseling services may be provided to children whose emotional and/or behavioral functioning is impacting their educational progress. The IEP team may refer a student to the school psychologist or school social worker for such services.

E. Professional Development

- Ongoing hands-on staff training (Bondy, 1996; Jacobson, 2001; Smith, Donahoe, & Davis, 2001; McClannahan & Krantz, 2001) will be provided by the district's intervention specialists, district consultant(s), child study team members, and program supervisors.
- Collaboration among staff members is ongoing, including observation, discussion, and data review. Classes are canceled bi-monthly, in part, for collaboration. Parents will be notified of the exact dates of these collaboration days so that appropriate child care arrangements can be made.
- Didactic staff training (Bondy, 1996; Jacobson, 2001; Smith, Donahoe, & Davis, 2001; McClannahan & Krantz, 2001) will be provided throughout the school year via trainings in the principles of ABA, social skills training, curriculum, functional communication training, and other relevant topics. Training will be provided by district personnel, district consultants and other highly respected professionals in the field. The occupational therapist may provide staff training on the following topics: sensory processing theory and practice, classroom modifications and accommodations, prewriting/handwriting strategies, fine motor/visual motor strategies.

F. Integration/Inclusion

- There will be opportunities for integration/inclusion with typically developing peers via appropriate, individualized supports. Such opportunities are varied and depend upon the strengths, needs, and IEP of each student. To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities will be educated in the regular education environment with appropriate supplementary aids and services (Johnson, Meyer, & Taylor, 1996).

G. School-Home Connection

- Communication with parents will be ongoing to develop and maintain positive relationships between school personnel and families. This includes review of data, progress summaries, meetings, phone calls, etc.
- Parents/guardians have the opportunity to visit their child in his/her program at a mutually agreed upon time between the parents and school personnel. Based upon district practice, parents/guardians have the opportunity to observe for one 42-minute period per marking period. Parents must be accompanied by an administrator or designated staff member.

- Parents have the opportunity to work with therapists and teachers to learn strategies on an ongoing basis to promote maintenance and generalization of skills. These will be arranged by staff members and be held on the bi-monthly collaboration days.
- A monthly parent support/education program is available to parents of all preschoolers.
- There will be volunteer opportunities in all classrooms. The type of volunteering and frequency and length of time for each opportunity will be determined by staff members. All interested parents must attend a training session in the fall.

PEECH (Preschool & Early Education for Children in Hopewell)

The Hopewell Valley Regional School District is offering the communities of Hopewell Valley a half-day (2.5 hours) collaborative preschool program serving 3- to 5-year-old children. This is a developmentally oriented program based on noted preschool curricula, as well as New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards for preschool. The class consists of typically developing children and children with developmental challenges learning together in the same environment.

The PEECH program incorporates activities within the classroom based on a child's individual learning style. The goal of the program is to provide an enriched preschool environment that meets the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of all students. The classroom is staffed with a special education teacher and a paraprofessional. Physical, occupational and speech therapies are integrated within the classroom setting. Pull-out therapy services are available within the constraints of the school day and based on a child's IEP.

Program Design

The PEECH program structure is similar to a typical preschool experience, as the teaching of developmentally appropriate skill areas is embedded throughout the school day. The reader is also referred to the district's description of **Programs for Preschool Children with Special Needs**, which outlines the Applied Behavior Analysis components and other program details incorporated across all programs.

Skills will be developed in the following areas:

- *Perceptual Motor* – Blocks and puzzles
- *Social and Language Development* — Dramatic play (i.e. kitchen & dress-up)
- *Language and Emergent Literacy* – Writing/Alphabet Center/Library/Listening
- *Gross Motor* – Large group games/ Playground
- *Sensory Experiences* – Tub table
- *Creative Representation* - Art center
- *Mathematic Skills* – Manipulative center

Program Advantages

The integrated preschool program design offers children the opportunity to learn and play with age-appropriate peers with and without developmental challenges. Having a variety of therapists in the classroom is a benefit to all students. Staff will focus on developing students' individual goals while an environmental team concept will assist in developing a culture of respect and an acceptance of differences. Also, the PEECH instructional team offers parent information sessions on topics such as behavior management, language and reading development, and physical and social development.

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