



Early Learning Program
Overview Document

December 2020

Darien, CT

ELP Overview

Program and Goals Overview

Overview



The Early Learning Program is an integrated preschool where children with special needs and children with typically developing skills learn from each other in a nurturing environment. It has been part of the Darien Public School system since 1996.



Philosophy



The Darien Early Learning Program values each child as an individual learner with unique strengths, needs and interests. We support children to become critical thinkers and social learners. Our play-based learning environments provide daily opportunities for preschool children to be purposeful, creative, inquisitive, flexible, and reflective. As a program designed to meet the needs of all learners, children in our diverse classrooms develop empathy toward others and an appreciation of differences. Families are critical partners in our support of children's growth and development.

Meet the Team

ELP has a highly educated, certified, team of teachers



Laura Straiton

Years in District: 23

Program Director of Early Childhood for Special Education Student Services

- Special Education and Regular Education Certified
- Masters in Teaching (Technology)
- Administration Degree
- Uconn Fellow for PreSchool through 3rd grade curriculum
- Special Education experience across all ages (preschool thru 21 years of age)

Teachers



Amanda Merjian
Ox Ridge



Laurie Wigglesworth
OxRidge



Kristin Iorio
Tokeneke



Ann Appel
Tokeneke



Whitney Mullins
Tokeneke



Jessica Markus
Royle



Karyn Wynot
Royle



Jo-Ann Epstein
Royle

ELP Overview

Program Overview

By the Numbers



8

Classrooms

- 3 at Royle
- 3 at Tokeneke
- 2 at Ox Ridge

3 – 4

Ages

- Program is comprised of a 3s and 4s preschool program
- Classroom is co-mingled with 3's and 4s children

67

Current Enrollment

16 - 20

Hours per Week

- School day runs Monday thru Thursday 9.30am – 1.30pm for Peer Models and 8.30am – 1.30pm for Children with Special Needs

12

Average Class Size

- Class sizes range from 10 – 15 children

3.5

Number of Total Teachers per Classroom

- 1 Main Teacher + 1-2.5 Para Professionals

1: 3.4

Ratio: Teacher to Student

- Based on 12 children per class with 1 teacher and 2 Para Professionals

50 / 50

Class Composition

- Blend between Peer Models and Children with Special Needs¹

Other

Potty Training

- ELP does not required children to be potty trained but would like parents to be working with their child on that goal and ELP will help with that independence



No Pre-K5

- ELP does not offer a PreK program. "Kindergarten is ready for the children". Should you elect to send your child to a PreK program, several in-town preschools offer this program

1) Approximate

Curriculum



- Preschool curriculum planning has its foundation in the philosophies of “Emergent Curriculum” and “Project Approach”. Teachers use a variety of curriculum resources to plan the classroom environment, experiences, interactions, and opportunities for family engagements that are meaningful and relevant to the observed interests of children.
- The CT Early Learning and Development Standards for Birth to Five detail what children should know and be able to do and serve as the basis for planning.
- Connecticut Documentation and Observation System (CT DOTS) Assessment System

Classroom Practices¹

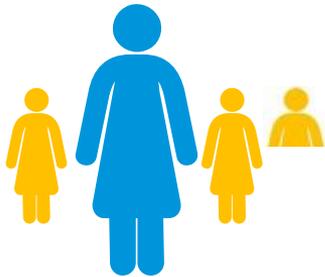
- ✓ Real-life literacy opportunities such as signing in and making snack or lunch choices
- ✓ Planned opportunities provided to allow for problem solving.
- ✓ Environmental print created for, with, and by children
- ✓ Explicit instruction in discourse such as how to access the daily schedule
- ✓ Opportunities for conversations amongst children and adults
- ✓ Shared reading
- ✓ The read-aloud
- ✓ The writing workshop
- ✓ The incorporation of literacy enhanced play centers
- ✓ Interactive and shared writing
- ✓ Singing of familiar songs

1) Not Comprehensive

ELP Overview

Classroom Overview

- Teachers engage in the cycle of intentional teaching, consistently observing and assessing children's growth and using this information to plan and implement the highest quality learning experiences.



Teaching Team

- 1 Certified Teacher
- 1- 2.5 Para Professionals



Curriculum

- ELP follows:
 - “Emergent Curriculum” and “Project Approach”.
 - Connecticut’s Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS)
 - Connecticut Documentation and Observation System (CT DOTS)



Specials

- Music
- Social Skills
- Movement throughout the Day
- Community Integration
 - Examples: Visit from Darien Fire Department, Nature Center, etc.
- Participate in School Lunch¹



Services

- Speech and Language Therapist
- School Psychologist
- Behavioral Analyst
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- On-site Nurse
- Access to Teachers of the Visually and Hearing impaired
- Compliant with 504 regulations

1) Voluntary

Hybrid and Remote Learning

Hybrid Model:

Due to the young ages of the students and smaller classroom numbers, ELP will remain open Monday-Thursday 9:30 to 1:30.

Remote Learning:

If the school is required to close for COVID-19 related concerns, ELP teachers are prepared to provide synchronous and asynchronous lessons using the “Seasaw” Platform and Zoom.

* If school shuts down due to COVID and ELP becomes virtual, parents who decide to withdraw their children from the program will be refunded a prorated amount based upon their attendance in the program. The non-refundable deposit will not be included in this proration.

Early Learning Program- Classroom Areas

Morning and Closing Circle



Student Work



Play Kitchen Area



Center Area



Art Center

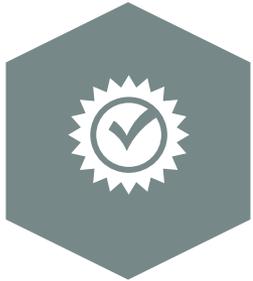


Block Area



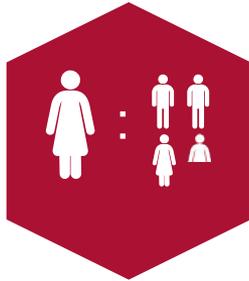
Value of ELP

Attending ELP has significant and differentiated benefits for the children



Certified Teachers

All have Masters Level credentials



Teacher to Student Ratio

~ 1:3.5 is the highest in Darien for age group



Elementary School Familiarity

Creates more seamless transition to Kindergarten¹



Daily Communications

Emailed from Teacher (e.g. what occurred in the classroom, etc)



State Standards

Curriculum aligned with State of CT's ELDS and CT DOTS and COVID safety compliant



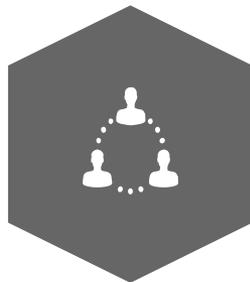
Exposure to Different Ages and Styles

Blended class room of typical and special needs children and 3 & 4 aged Peer Models



Access to Services

Comprehensive suite for all children with identified need



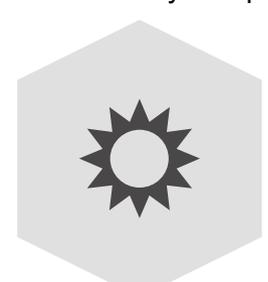
PTO Community

Included in elementary school PTO and PTO-sponsored enrichment programs



Long School Year

September through mid-June. Longest pre-school year in Darien



Summer School

ELP Summer School and Kindergarten Readiness offered June 28 – July 29. Apply separately for Summer

1) Examples: Playground, Cafeteria, Field Trip to 5th Grade to see class pet

Admissions

Eligibility, Cost, Acceptance, & Placement

Eligibility



- Child must be exactly 3 years of age or older
- Child must reside within the town of Darien, CT

Acceptance



- Peer Models need to submit an application and are admitted based on a lottery system
- Children with Special Needs are admitted based on assessment decisions

Cost



- 2020-2021 Yearly tuition is \$6,850.00 (plus a 3% processing fee).¹
- BOE will decide on 3% tuition increase
 - If child is eligible for free / reduced lunch, tuition is reduced in a sliding scale

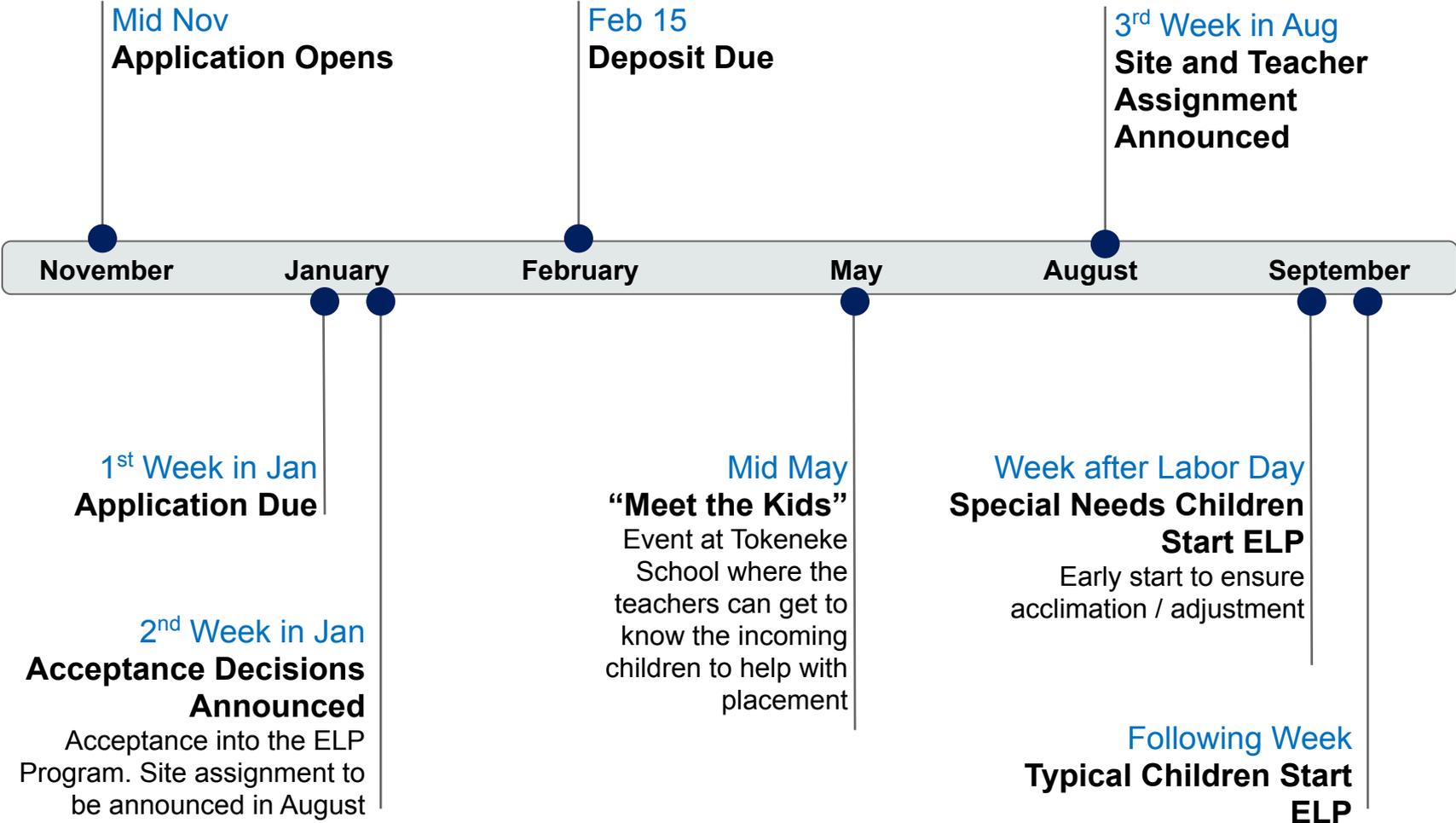
Placement



- Site (Royle, Tokeneke, and Ox Ridge) and Classroom assignments are constructed by balancing:
 - Age
 - Typical v. Special needs
 - Male / Female
- Every effort is made to align site assignments to a child's home school, however, cannot be guaranteed.

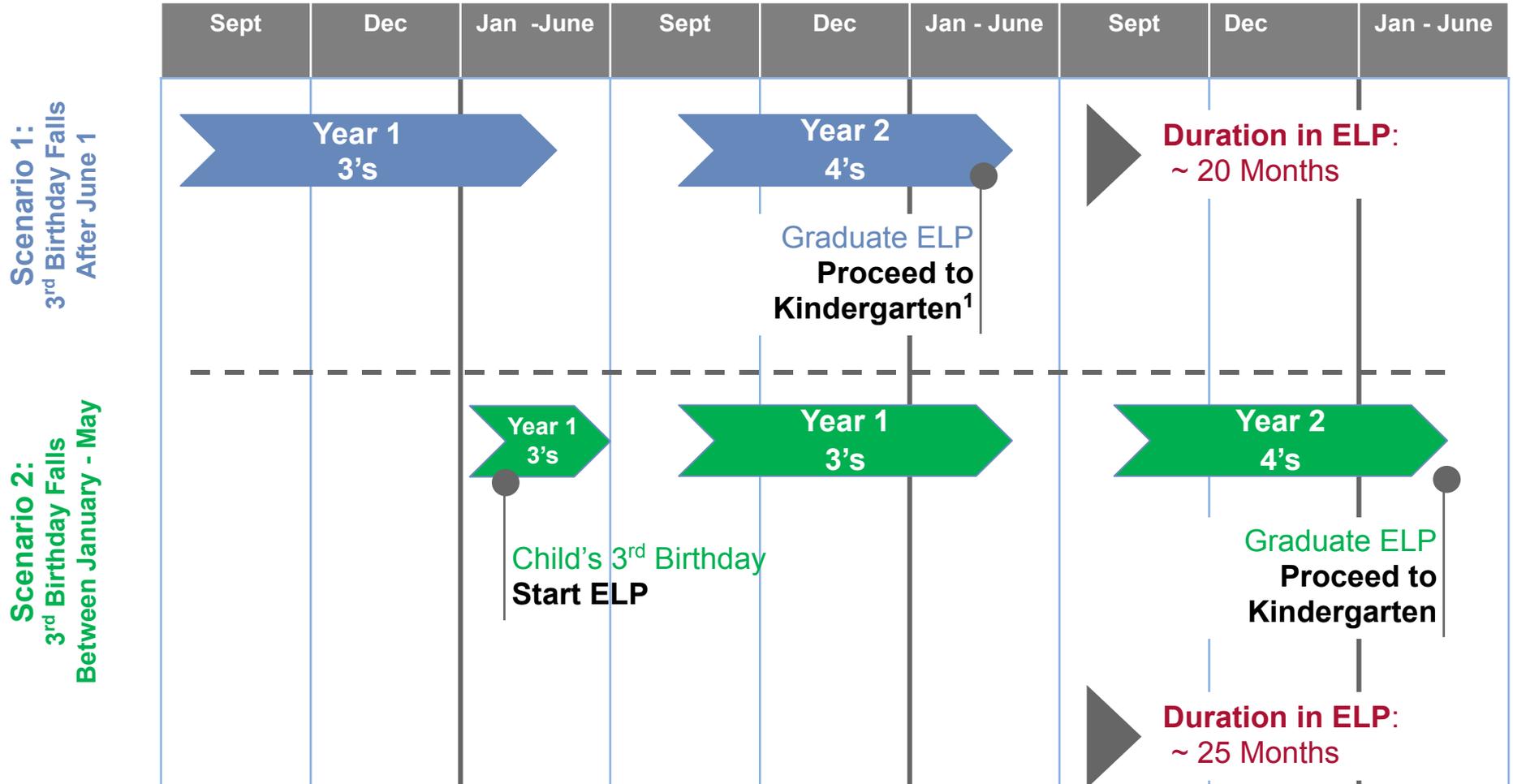
1) 2020/ 2021 Cost

Admissions Timeline



Admissions

Duration of Program



1) Or PreK at another Darien PreSchool. ELP does not offer PreK

Contact Information

Administration

Contact	Contact Info
Early Learning Program website	https://www.darienps.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=399038&type=d
Application Link	https://www.darienelp.org/elp-application/
Laura Straiton	LStraiton@darienps.org 203-656-7472

Parent References

Will be provided upon request.

Early Learning Program Teacher Tour

Ms. Whitney Mullin's Classroom Tokeneke Elementary School

[Click for a Tour](#)

Ms. Amanda Merjian Classroom OxRidge Elementary School

[Click for a tour](#)

Royle ELP Teacher's Open House

[Click for a tour](#)

Questions about The Early Learning Program?

[Click here for Questions](#)