

# HUUSD Preschool Programming Plan

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The HUUSD preschool program operates from the philosophy that young children learn through a variety of rich learning experiences. We believe it is important to focus on the total development of a child, including their social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. Therefore we strive to provide an environment where all children are supported and appreciated for who they are and what they bring to our group. We believe that, at its best, the education of young children is a collaborative adventure involving families, school, and community. While each of the preschool classrooms in our unified district is unique, they each uphold and promote these beliefs. HUUSD is committed to ensuring that a high quality early education experience is available to all students in our school district.

Our preschools all achieve four stars or more within the five star rating in the Vermont child care quality standards recognition process (STARS). They implement the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) which align with the learning standards in place for our K-12 students. They monitor student progress through the state authorized system of Teaching Strategies Gold, an ongoing observation-based assessment system that incorporates 38 developmental components. In addition to the standards of practice we have in place for all of our other classrooms, these programs meet the detailed licensing requirements for preschool programs overseen by the department of children and families.

Preschool has been a component of our schools for many years. Until Act 166, which went into effect in July 2015, school systems were not required to fund preschool education. The schools of our district realized the importance of high quality early education long before this law and provided high quality programming within our schools and through a local preschool partnership that included several private preschool providers. Act 166, passed by the Vermont legislature in 2014, mandated that public schools provide funding for 10 hours of universal preschool in a [prequalified program](#) for 35 weeks in a school year.

Research tells us that a child's earliest years are critical to healthy brain development. "During the first years, a baby's brain makes one million new connections every second, building a foundation for all future development." (Let's Grow Kids, <http://www.letsgrowkids.org/why-campaign>). Recent studies indicate that "preschool provides students with [lasting benefits](#). Those benefits last beyond elementary school: At least one study found the benefits of preschool paying off for individuals, and society, [into adult life](#)." (12/27/2016 NPR interview "[We learned a lot in 2016 about how preschool can help kids](#)").

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In Vermont, 70% of children under age six have all of their parents in the labor force. (Let's Grow Kids, <http://www.letsgrowkids.org/why-campaign#sthash.9uud4an6.dpuf>) High-quality early learning experiences can provide the nurturing relationships and stimulating learning opportunities these, and all children, need for healthy development while their families are working. While preschool programming doesn't meet the full hours of care generally needed by these families, it insures high quality experiences, led by licensed teachers, for a significant portion of the time. We recognize that many families need child care extending beyond the hours provided by our preschool. By working collaboratively with childcare providers (either within or beyond the walls of our schools) we can help minimize transitions and support families in addressing these childcare needs, thereby supporting our economy and our community.

We appreciate the rich learning experiences provided by the private preschools in our area. At the same time, we recognize that by providing preschool programming within our schools, we maximize the investment we have already made in the physical buildings, materials (such as our libraries) and staffing (opening access to unified arts instruction, special education staffing, etc.).

This report captures immediate and longer range plans for preschool programming in HUUSD; it is designed to guide the budgeting, staffing and other work required to bring these plans to fruition.

## II. PROGRAM DATA

### 2016-2017 Washington West SU Preschool Enrollment Summary

- 15 private centers plus 1 public school partner
- 11 partner preschool sites outside our SU boundaries
- 67 Waterbury-Duxbury resident students attending private centers
- 27 Valley resident students attending private centers
- Total number of resident preschool children in our SU:  $67 + 27 + 146$  (from table A) = 240

**Table A. '16- '17 Resident /Non-Resident Preschool Students Attending HUUSD Public School**

HUUSD School	Total # Resident Students	Of Total, # Non-Resident Students
TBPS	36	0
Moretown	25	5
Warren	43	3
Fayston	20	2
Waitsfield	23	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>10</b>

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**Table B. Preschool Students Attending a Private PreSchool Inside HUUSD Boundary**

<b>Private Preschools (5)</b>	<b># Students Attending</b>
Children's Early Learning Space	11
Hunger Mountain Children's Center	16
Kelley Hackett's Daybreak	4
Learning Ladder	8
Spring Hill School	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

**Table C. Preschool Students Attending a Private PreK Outside HUUSD Boundary**

<b>Private Preschools Outside HUUSD Boundary (11)</b>	<b># Students Attending</b>
Adventures in Early Learning: Shelburne	1
Appletree: Stowe	3
Doty: Worcester	1
Heartworks Stowe	4
Heartworks Williston	1
Kids' School: Stowe	1
Kinderstart: Williston	1
Mountain Village School: Stowe	6
Nadeau's: Williston	1
OVWS: East Montpelier	2
Turtle Island: Montpelier	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>

**Table D. Program Capacity and Anticipated 2017-2018 Enrollment in HUUSD**

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<b>HUUSD School</b>	<b>Program capacity building based (# of students)</b>	<b>Anticipated '17-'18 Enrollment building based (as of June 19, 2017)</b>	<b>Anticipated # of students to be served outside of their resident school program (estimated as of June 19, 2017)</b>
Fayston	20	20 (at capacity)*	2
Moretown	30	28 (at capacity)*	11
Thatcher Brook	40	38 (at capacity)*	64
Waitsfield	30	25 (3 year old program at capacity)*	8
Warren	45	36	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>86</b>

*\* It is HUUSD procedure to hold at least one preschool slot per classroom available so that we can accommodate any newly identified or incoming child with early essential education (special education) needs during the school year.*

While some of our preschool programs have been at capacity in past years (notably, Thatcher is consistently full), this spring, we had more families enroll in next year's preschool programming than we have ever seen. Four of our five programs are at capacity for three year olds; three of our programs are completely at capacity. We believe a variety of factors have led to this increase in preschool enrollment:

- Universal preschool (Act 166) has resulted in interest in our programming from families who live beyond our district (i.e. 10 non-resident preschool students in 2016-2017)
- Our commitment to providing preschool instruction in our buildings reaching beyond the minimum 10 hours guaranteed through Act 166 makes our building-based programs even more attractive; many families recognize they get more hours of quality programming by selecting our school-based programs.
- Thatcher Brook's population continues to increase and their capacity to serve their resident preschool students is far exceeded by their enrollment. There has been an increase in the number of TB resident students participating in other HUUSD public preschool programs.
- The connection to childcare opportunities that several of our programs have been able to provide through on-site childcare such as KPAS (at Warren) or MECA (at Moretown) is attractive to families and increases interest and enrollment in their programming by making it accessible for working families.

**III. PRESCHOOL PROGRAM GOALS**

In the coming years, we will provide programming that achieves the afore-described philosophy and, while unique in each setting, insures that all children/families in HUUSD have access to the following:

- Equal hours (within the range of 14-16 hours) in each of our school-based programs.
- Capacity, as much as we can anticipate and feasibly provide, to serve all interested families within our school-based programs.
- Access to a child care program until at least 5:00 pm for Valley programs (TBPS can not currently provide this due to a lack of space).
- Access to school food service program (breakfast and/or lunch).

**2017-2018 Action Steps:**

- Maximize collaboration across our HUUSD preschool programs to insure the highest number of our families can be served (Implemented spring 2017).
- Administrative team develops plan for equitable access to unified arts across programs and parity in staffing responsibilities (preparation time, support staff assignments, etc.)
- Develop plans for those schools where change in schedules will be required to achieve goals.
- In accordance with the VT Agency of Education application for expansion of preschool programming, hold community meetings and gather input regarding our preschool program plan as well as complete outreach to pre-qualified programs in our region.
- Develop plans for aftercare where not currently in place.
- Continue to monitor enrollment/family interest in school-based programming to inform future decisions.

**2018-2019 Action steps**

- Adjust staffing to achieve program goals and increase capacity where needed.
- Implement revised programming schedule.
- Explore interest and capacity for aftercare program for preschool students in Waterbury/Duxbury.

**IV. COST & OTHER IMPLICATIONS****A. FY 19 Cost impact analysis**

Thatcher Brook - 2 Instructional Assts @ .80 FTE each	\$56,000
Savings associated with +/- 20 less students receiving voucher	(\$63,560)
Moretown - Increase teacher FTE from .80 to 1.0 FTE	\$15,000
Fayston-Reduction of a Teacher & Instructional Asst. from .60 to .50 FTE	(\$11,000)

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## FY 19 Cost impact analysis (continued)

Waitsfield-Total teacher FTE increased by .06 (switches from one .94 teacher to two .5 teachers) plus additional Instructional Asst for 6 hours/wk for add'l day	\$ 9,700
Transportation to aftercare programs - Neutral, Waitsfield bus will run to Moretown or Fayston for aftercare.	
Moretown-Expansion Additional .50 FTE Teacher and .50 Instructional Asst	\$52,500
Moretown-Classroom Materials and Setup	\$ 5,000
Savings associated with +/- 15 students less receiving voucher	( \$47,670)
Total Estimated FY 19 increase in costs	\$15,970

The increased personnel costs increases the capacity to serve PK students. Some of the cost increase will be offset by a savings in school district expense for PK vouchers if students currently attending private programs attend a school PK program.

*\*\*\* These numbers are rough estimates, subject to further change as we further explore parity in staffing responsibilities, etc.*

### B. Constraints and challenges

- Physical space in our buildings.
- Natural irregularity of numbers, in small schools (class sizes can shift significantly from one year to the next)
- Implications for private providers, both of preschool and aftercare
- State public school expansion process

## V. SUMMARY

The member schools of HUUSD have been committed to providing high quality preschool education as an important component of our comprehensive education system for many years. With the introduction of universal preschool through act 166, we have experienced growing enrollment and interest in our preschool programming. Each of our schools has worked to accommodate the needs of their community. Unification provides the opportunity to reflect on what is working well in one another's programs and to identify components where we need to achieve equity to best serve students and families. We will continue to attend to the needs and desires brought to us, maintain the unique feel of each of our public preschool programs. and work collaboratively with the broader community to insure that strong early learning opportunities are truly accessible to families across HUUSD.