

**Rockland Public Schools**  
Esten Early Childhood Center  
733 Summer Street  
Rockland, Massachusetts 02370

### **Rockland Public Schools Screening Process for Peer Role Models**

The Integrated Preschool Program is a part of the Rockland Public Schools. It allows children with and without disabilities to learn together in a caring and enriching environment. All students participate in developmentally appropriate, play-based learning activities that are child-centered, evidence-based, and aligned with the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences.

One of the primary missions of the Integrated Preschool Program is to provide strong peer role models for children with disabilities. A peer role model is characterized as a child who builds positive relationships with peers, has a strong pre-academic, motor, and play skills, and who presents as a language model. All our students, with and without disabilities, benefit from the inclusive environment and our strong commitment to helping all children develop appropriate social, emotional, and academic skills.

Each year, applicants are screened for enrollment as a peer model. The preschool screening process is conducted in April for placement opportunities in the preschool program for the fall enrollment of that year. All children serving as peer models must be three years of age by August 31st for September enrollment.

Screenings are carried out by the preschool team, which may include the preschool teachers, speech and language pathologists, or early childhood director, using developmentally-appropriate screening tools. To be selected as a peer role model, a child must demonstrate developmentally-appropriate language, socialization, play, emotional regulation, and gross and fine motor skills. The team does its best to choose peer models whose characteristics will help further the development of the students with disabilities and create a balanced, heterogeneous classroom.

Following the screening, parents receive a letter from the Early Childhood Coordinator stating the outcome of their child's preschool screening and whether the child is being recommended for enrollment as a peer role model. The preschool classes have limited space for peers and, therefore, may only be able to accept some students who pass the screening process. If more students pass the screening than there are slots available, a lottery for placement will be conducted.

Children selected as peers for the half-day program will be given the first right of refusal for the full-day program the following year. Each half-day classroom has eight peer slots. If a half-day peer refuses the full-day slot or a slot otherwise becomes available, students will be screened, and there will be a lottery for the full-day slot.

The preschool team appreciates parents' understanding of the preschool screening process. Please contact Heather MacDonald, Early Childhood Coordinator for the Rockland Public Schools, with any questions. Parents who suspect their child aged 3-5 might have disabilities should contact Lisa Makarski at [lmakarski@rocklandschools.org](mailto:lmakarski@rocklandschools.org)