



Northland

EARLY EDUCATION CENTER



Annual Report 2013

Shaping the future of children through quality early education and therapeutic intervention while teaching compassion for diversity

Mission

Northland Early Education Center (NEEC) provides early education and therapy services for children who have special needs as well as early education for children who have typical needs, in a fully inclusive classroom environment in order for them to reach their full potential.

History

NEEC was founded in 1981 by a group of concerned parents of children with physical and mental disabilities along with parents of children whose household incomes were low to moderate. These parents envisioned an early education center that would serve all children, regardless of their developmental level or socioeconomic status. The school began in a basement of a church north of Excelsior Springs, Missouri with a class of only six children. From then, the school continued to grow and as the need for fully-inclusive early education and therapeutic intervention for children with special needs continued to increase, it became evident that the school was in need of a larger building to ensure that services were available for all children with special needs residing in the Northland. In 1998, with funding from the Clay County Developmental Disabilities Resource Board, NEEC was able to move into a larger building in Kansas City, Missouri that was more spacious and inviting. The new facility provided, and continues to provide, an environment where children's classrooms are separated by age, not developmental level, allowing them to learn not only from their teachers but from one another as well. Since its inception NEEC has grown from a preschool serving six children to a nationally accredited early education center providing early education and therapy services for nearly 200 children annually.

Early Childhood Education and Therapeutic Intervention Program

NEEC provides early education and therapy services for children who have special needs and early education for children who have typical needs age's birth to five. NEEC also provides a before and after school/summer program for children age's six to 14 who have special needs. NEEC's eight early education classrooms are staffed by dedicated childcare professionals, including a lead teacher with a Bachelor's degree in special education, early childhood education or a related field. All lead teachers prepare weekly lesson plans that fully utilize and incorporate the principles of the Project Construct curriculum framework. In a Project Construct classroom, children build their own knowledge, at their own pace and development level, through play and interactions in a well-facilitated educational environment. As a result, children become critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers while developing a love of learning.

Children are screened upon entry into the program and continually assessed each day; milestones are recorded

in each child's individual portfolio and discussed at bi-annual parent-teacher conferences. Success for a child, either with special needs or typical needs, in a NEEC classroom is demonstrated by the child's ability to think critically and creatively, problem solve, and cooperate with other children in a learning environment. At NEEC children attain these skills in a fully-inclusive classroom environment, meaning that children are separated by age, not developmental level.

In addition to high quality, fully-inclusive early education, NEEC offers therapy services for children with special needs who qualify. NEEC's therapy department consists of four therapists specializing in physical and occupational therapies, speech and language pathology and special instruction. The therapists work collaboratively in a teaming model to ensure the whole family's needs are being met. Primarily, the NEEC therapy program collaborates with Missouri's First Steps program to determine the appropriate level of

therapeutic intervention for children from birth to age three. NEEC therapists also work with families and children through Medicaid, and private pay. Each child that receives therapy services through NEEC has some form of individualized goals and a plan on which the therapy services are based. Predominately this plan takes the form of either an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IFSP guides the therapy process for children (ages birth - three) with special needs based upon their family's needs and goals. An IEP is for children three and older and consists of a written plan developed by a team to help an individual child with educational goals. All therapy service plans at NEEC include a statement of the child's present levels of educational and/or developmental performance, measurable annual goals, and outlines the specific services that will be offered to help the child meet these goals. Success for a child receiving therapy services through NEEC is as individualized as the child.



Before & After School/Summer Program

In order to fulfill a growing need recognized in our community, NEEC provides a before and after school program for children ages six to 14 with special needs. This program, which meets before and after public school and during the summer months, has its own teaching staff that incorporate each child's Individual Education Plan goals into the classroom's daily activities and lesson plans. Knowing that the fully-inclusive environment is the most appropriate for all children, this program is seeking to incorporate typically developing peer models. However, space for this program is limited and children with special needs still remain the number one priority for this continued learning program at NEEC.

Licensing and Accreditation

The Northland Early Education Center is proud to be accredited through both the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Additionally, NEEC is a licensed private agency with the Missouri Department of Health and holds certification through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These accreditations, licensures and certifications ensure that NEEC's program standards are among the highest in the nation.

Service Area

NEEC serves children age's birth to five who have special needs and typical needs, as well as children who have special needs age's six to 14 predominately in Clay and Platte counties, as well as surrounding counties in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

In 2013, NEEC served children who resided in the following counties, Andrew, Buchanan, Clay, Jackson, Platte, and Ray counties.



Outcome Measurements For 2013

The families of NEEC have entrusted their most cherished loved ones with the staff and teachers at the Center, their children. In order to ensure that our program is continually improving, NEEC utilizes an Outcome Measurements format for evaluating annual goals. The Outcome Measurements serve as a motivating and tracking tool, allowing us to better qualify the impact that our programs have on the children and families we serve. The NEEC Board of Directors, administration, and staff believe that the well-organized, thoughtful, and honest program evaluation the Outcome Measurements provides is imperative to furthering our mission to provide early education and therapy services for children who have special needs as well as early education for children who have typical needs, in a fully inclusive classroom environment in order for them to reach their full potential.

- NEEC provided a total of 4,987 units (1,247 hours) of physical and occupational therapy, speech and language pathology and special instruction
- 95% of children with special needs receiving services from NEEC made progress on at least 75% of their IFSP/IEP/classroom goals
- 8% of children with special needs receiving in-home therapy services transitioned to the on-site early education program
- On average, 39% of children enrolled on-site at NEEC were children with special needs
- 62% of children receiving services from NEEC, both in-home and on-site, were children with special needs
- NEEC provided early education for 132 children onsite and 52 children received in-home therapy services. In total, NEEC provided early education and/or therapy services for 184 children throughout the Northland.
- 76% of staff had been employed at NEEC for at least one year



2014 ACTION PLAN

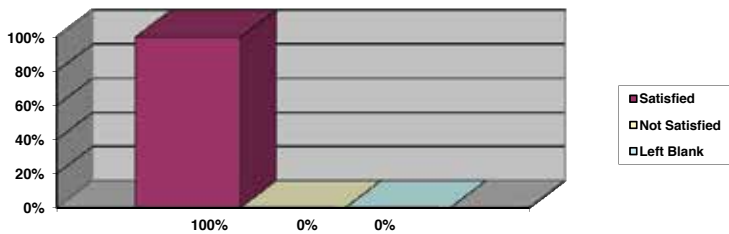
The long-term goal for NEEC is an on-site consistent enrollment of 50 percent children with special needs and 50 percent children who have typical needs. In 2014, NEEC's goal is to continue to work to ensure our on-site enrollment is consistently at least 43 percent children with special needs to 57 percent children who have typical needs. On average in 2013, 39 percent of the children served on-site had special needs.

In order to expand NEEC's 2014 goals, the NEEC Quality Improvement Committee has established the following action items:

1. The Executive Director, Program Director and Development Director will increase community outreach through newsletters, presentations, contact with hospitals and advocacy groups, and special events with the specific purpose of growing a constituency of community members.
2. The Program Director will ensure that several spots on-site are left available for children birth - two years of age with special needs requesting placement at NEEC.
3. The Executive Director and the Development Director will research additional funding opportunities for the scholarship program, making every effort to ensure that all children with special needs seeking placement at the school can find scholarship opportunities.
4. The Executive Director, Program Director, Development Director, and the Board of Directors will continue the action steps needed to potentially expand the program as outlined during the final year of the 2012-2014 Strategic Plan.

2013 Family Satisfaction Survey

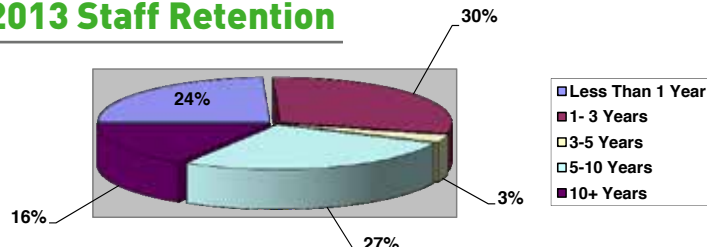
Are you satisfied with the services provided for your child by NEEC?



How would you rate your child's improvements since he/she began attending NEEC?



2013 Staff Retention





2014 Calendar Of Events

January 1 • NEEC Closed

New Year's Day Observation

February 17 • NEEC Closed

President's Day Observation (teacher in-service)

April 6-12 •

Week of the Young Child™

April 12 •

Free NEEC Carnival

May •

Family/Teacher Conferences

May 26 • NEEC Closed

Memorial Day Observation

May 31 •

Pioneer Run at English Landing Park

June •

Day of Caring

July 4 • NEEC Closed

Independence Day Observation

July •

Graduation

August •

Enrollment

September •

Community Helper's Month

September 1 • NEEC Closed

Labor Day Observation

September 13 •

13th Annual Diamond K Ranch Party and Auction

October 13 • NEEC Closed

Columbus Day Observation (teacher in-service)

November •

Family/Teacher Conferences

November 27 • NEEC Closed

Thanksgiving Day Observation

November 28 • NEEC Closed

Day after Thanksgiving

December 24 • NEEC Closed

Christmas Eve Observation

December 25 • NEEC Closed

Christmas Day Observation



Current Student Spotlight

Our second daughter was born in the spring of 2009. In the 38th week on an ultrasound they noticed that baby's head was small and they thought she was only going to weigh around 5 pounds. I was induced just 3 days later and to the surprise of the staff in the room I delivered a healthy baby girl that weighed 6 pounds 12 ounces. She had great APGAR scores, breathing, and ate like a champ. The day after she was born I asked our doctor why her head was so small. I still remember him looking her over very carefully (finding nothing else to be concerned about) and saying that he wasn't terribly worried about that since she wasn't big and her proportions were good. Life was good. She was perfect.

Three and a half months later I was picking my daughter up from her learning center and I noticed that she wasn't doing anything the other kids in the room were doing. I wondered if all the other children were prodigies. After the initial doctor's appointment and subsequent physical therapy sessions we were eventually referred to a neurologist. After meeting with the doctor she agreed that something was wrong and ran blood work along with ordering an MRI.

Two days before Christmas I received a call on my cell phone from the neurologist while I was in Sam's Club. I still remember walking to the mattress aisle so that I could hear the phone better. The doctor said she had a diagnosis that explained all of Alexis' symptoms. My daughter has Bilateral Perisylvian Polymicrogyria (and borderline microcephaly). Her brain didn't form in the typical manner in utero due to either a genetic issue or catching a virus that looks like nothing more than a common cold (cytomegalovirus). The doctor said there was no need to follow-up unless seizures started occurring and she should continue receiving therapies. It turns out that even after working 20 years in neurology this doctor had never seen a case of PMG before. After depressing Internet searches it didn't take us long to find a book called "Schuyler's Monster" by the father of a girl with the same condition. It was a great book that offered us a bit of hope about our daughter's future. It inspired us to work even harder to help Alexis.

Alexis has developmental delays in most areas and continues to work hard for everything she accomplishes. We have worked with a small army of therapists, teachers, and other specialists (PT, OT, ST, GI, Ophthalmology, Audiology, and the team at NEEC) to gain new skills. She strives to do most everything that everyone else does (no matter how long it takes her to master a new skill). This is especially evident with her love of copying her older sister, Mariska. Although almost entirely non-verbal, and lacking almost all practical use of her mouth, Alexis uses gestures (we often lovingly refer to them as charades), sign language, and an AAC device (a small computer that can speak when buttons are pressed) to communicate. When we switched to NEEC in 2012 they didn't bat an eye when she came back from an illness with a NG tube running out of her nose and again no trouble when we switched to a Mic-Key button (feeding tube in her stomach) a few weeks later. In fact, we quickly learned that her teachers were more familiar with this new equipment than her parents. I remember being very impressed with the teachers and staff for such a smooth transition.

Alexis is truly her own unique individual and her condition contains no roadmap for the future. Never has there been a child with her unique combination of sweetness, passion, stubbornness, independence, fearlessness, and excitement. These days some of Alexis' favorite things to do are going to the zoo, riding horses, playing dress-up, going down slides at the park, practice letter recognition, riding her bike, playing with baby dolls, and weekly practice for the Rainbows special needs cheer team. We have many struggles on a daily basis raising a daughter with multiple special needs, but we are comforted that she is in such good hands at NEEC. It means the world to us that each teacher and staff member at Northland Early Education Center treats Alexis with love and respect and doesn't take her "off" days personally.

Finally, it is inspiring to raise someone that is so excited to experience all the world has to offer. We're so lucky she's still perfect...

Shelly and Tom Gifford



Alumni Spotlight



My water broke when I was 33 weeks along, after teaching the first week back from summer break. After two days of steroids to develop her lungs a little more she showed up with a head full of caramel red hair. She seemed perfect! She had a small hole in her heart that the doctors were sure would close up on its own. We hung out in the NICU for 13 days while she gained weight and learned to eat on her own. We got her home and she gained weight and blessed us each and every day. We could not get her into the childcare facility we had chosen because she was two months early. It seemed to be an answer to our prayers when we found an in-home daycare that in that moment just felt right. Gwen was an easy baby who was sleeping through the night at six-months-old. Her lungs were highly susceptible to allergies and anything such as a cold almost always turned into bronchitis or pneumonia, but we were doing great despite.

Then the worst day of our lives happened when she was 14-months-old. I received a call from the in-home daycare that I needed to get to the house because Gwen had fallen and was not acting right. I drove faster than legally allowed. When I got in the house, my perfect angel was completely lifeless and unconscious. At the hospital, I learned that someone in that house had violently shaken and shoved my princess. She had a subdural hematoma (a bleed between the two halves of the brain) and retinal hemorrhaging (the blood vessels of her eyes had burst). These two things combined ONLY happen when shaken baby syndrome has occurred. Legally, I was not able to have any contact with her and the police department began their investigation of this woman, her home, and the police in her life.

We came home again from the single most horrific event anyone can ever suffer through. We were told at the many doctor's appointments that followed that her eyes were going to be fine, but it could be weeks, months, or years before we saw any of the effects of the traumatic brain injury. Gwendolyn seemed to be on track with her development until the expectations on her social skills came into play.



We struggled through several more daycare centers until we were given one of the greatest gifts ever, Northland Early Education Center. When we got there it was no longer, "Gwendolyn is a horrible child" or "Gwendolyn is a severe behavior problem". We were now hearing things explained to us about her daily experiences and we were learning terms that meant something and we were being given the language to explain things to a specialist. This is exactly what Gwendolyn and her dad and I needed. We saw a developmental specialist who diagnosed Gwendolyn with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Asperger's Syndrome) and early ADHD. The Blue Room teachers in the three-to-five year old classroom began to work with her with this new knowledge and they assisted us in getting her into Early Childhood Special Education through the North Kansas City School District. How amazing it was to see Gwen get on a bus each day at NEEC and go to her classes. We saw immediate changes for the better. The knowing gave us power. Gwendolyn learned differently and saw the world from a different perspective.

Gwendolyn graduated from the Blue Room and began Kindergarten just as she was turning six-years-old. Her Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was in place and she was actually in school with several friends from her class at NEEC. It took two months of school and struggling before she was formally diagnosed with ADHD. She began medication and it wasn't two weeks before everyone was seeing very positive differences. At her last IEP meeting we have learned that Gwendolyn is flourishing in school and learning at such a rapid pace they are referring her for SAGE (gifted education). She is an extremely happy child and she can light up a room. The thought of never having NEEC in our lives is scary. This very special place will forever be in our hearts and we are forever in their debt.

Sincerely, Ryan & Lori Goodman



2013 Supporters

As a 501(c)3 not for profit organization, NEEC must rely on the generosity of community members, foundations and corporations for nearly 20 percent of its annual budget. Forty percent of NEEC's operating income is derived from parent paid tuition and the other 40 percent comes from county and state fees for services through contracts with the Missouri First Steps program, the Clay County Developmental Disabilities Resource Board, and the Platte County Board of Services. Each year NEEC strives to diversify its funding pool and form relationships with new community members and donors. Our goal is not necessarily to receive funding from every new person we meet; we simply want to convey the message of how important quality, fully-inclusive early education services are for all young children.

The Board of Directors, children, families and staff of NEEC would like to thank the following corporations, foundations and individuals, as well as the businesses and individuals who provided items or services for, and attended, our Annual Pioneer Run and 12th Annual Diamond K Ranch Party & Auction. We are grateful for their generous support they provided us in 2013. Thanks to the charitable spirit of our donors, NEEC is able to further our mission and continue shaping the future of children through quality early education and therapeutic intervention while teaching compassion for diversity.

\$30,000 - \$20,000

Kenneth and Roswitha Schaffer

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The Kick Theater
The Landing
The Legends
The McCoys Public House
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The Running Well Store
The Track Family Fun Parks
The Westin Crown Center
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Northland

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Dear Jake and the
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I love you
Love,
Andrew