

Leading the way in
EARLY INTERVENTION & EDUCATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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LEADING THE WAY IN EARLY INTERVENTION AND EDUCATION

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 over 200 children annually.

EARLY 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 5. NEEC also provides a before and after school/summer program for children ages 6 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 3. 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 (aged birth - 3) with special needs based upon the family needs and goals. An IEP is for children 3 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 AND 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 6 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 5 who have special needs and typical needs, as well as children who have special needs ages 6 to 14 predominately in Clay and Platte counties, as well as surrounding counties in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

2016 outcome measurements

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 Measurement 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 6,056 units (1,514 hours) of physical and occupational therapy, speech and language pathology and special instruction
- 96% of children with special needs receiving services from NEEC made progress on at least 75% of their IFSP/IEP/classroom goals
- On average, 38% of children enrolled on-site at NEEC were children with special needs
- 67% (149) of children receiving services from NEEC, both in-home and on-site, were children who have special needs
- NEEC provided early education and/or therapy services for a total of 221 children in 2016.

2017 action plan

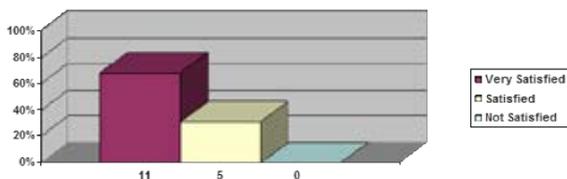
The long-term goal for NEEC is an on-site consistent enrollment of 50 percent children with special needs and 50 percent children who have typical needs. In 2017, NEEC's goal is to continue to work to ensure our on-site enrollment is consistently at least 43% children with special needs to 57 percent children who have typical needs. On average in 2016, 38% of the children served on-site had special needs.

In order to expand NEEC's 2017 goals, the NEEC Quality Improvement Committee has established the following action items:

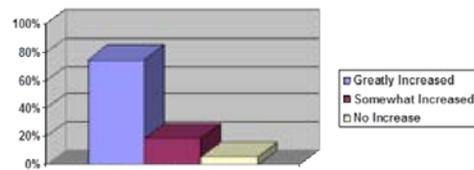
1. The Executive Director, Program Director and Development Director will increase community outreach and awareness through newsletters, presentations, social media outlets, strengthening relationships with area hospitals and advocacy groups, and through special events with the specific purpose of growing a constituency of community members.
2. The Program Director will ensure that several spots on-site are left available for children birth – 2 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 in the 2015-2017 Strategic Plan.

2016 family satisfaction survey

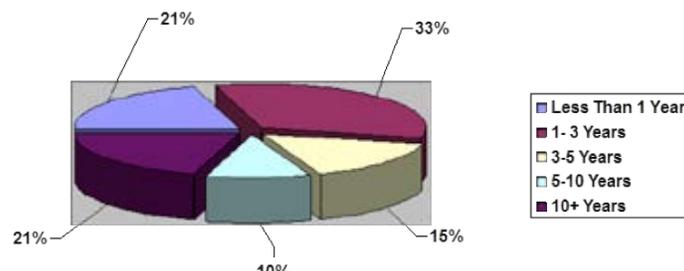
Are you satisfied with the services provided for your child by NEEC?



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

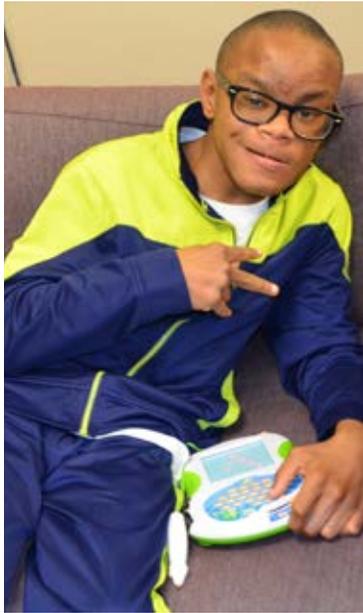


2016 STAFF RETENTION



2017 calendar of events

July 4	NEEC Closed - Independence Day Observation
July 8	Graduation
August	Enrollment
September	Community Helper's Month
September 5	NEEC Closed - Labor Day Observation
October 10	NEEC Closed - Columbus Day Observation (teacher in-service)
November	Family/Teacher Conferences
November 23	NEEC Closed - Thanksgiving Day Observation
November 24	NEEC Closed - Day after Thanksgiving
December 25	NEEC Closed - Christmas Day Observation



2017 board of directors

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current student spotlight

FINNIGAN GREEN

“Are you sure you want to waive genetic testing?”

This is the question that was asked of me every time I visited my OBGYN throughout my pregnancy. And every time my response was the same. “Yes, I am sure. It won’t change any decision we will make about this baby.” As a parent/future parent, a lot of people respond the same way. It was an honest heartfelt answer, but I didn’t truly believe it would be one I would have to think about in “real life”. Finnigan Michael Green was born April 28th, 2014. Three and a half weeks before his scheduled C-Section. Everything about my pregnancy was “normal”. Everything about the delivery was “normal”. The day after my 37th birthday, I was blessed with a very healthy 8 pound 2-ounce baby boy. APGAR scores were fine, and we spent the first evening snuggling and loving our new addition.

Twenty-four hours later, the pediatrician came to talk with us about a small abnormality with Finn’s heart. This same pediatrician also let us know that heart abnormalities were common in children with Down Syndrome. What?! Down syndrome? Down syndrome? Down syndrome! The first time I heard those words in the context of my own life will stay with me forever.

Only people who have heard those words can understand the thoughts that flood your mind (most of them beginning with the words “he won’t”). We took our moment to process and in true Kelly/Green family fashion, became immediate warriors for Finn and for each other.

For the first year of his life, Finn was able to stay with my mother –in-law instead of using an outside daycare. After the first year, it became apparent daycare/preschool was going to be necessary in the immediate future. Petrified is the only word that can describe the feeling I had about this. Leaving my special needs child, at two years old, with people I don’t know. We put Finn’s name on many waiting lists, and backed out of every single one. Until our fabulous First Steps therapist told us to look into NEEC. It was love at first sight for all of us, and we haven’t looked back since.

Finn has only been at NEEC since August of 2016, but you would think he has been there his whole life. He is greeted by name each day by every employee we pass. All of his sensory issues with strangers, crowds, and noise have faded away, and left us with a happy, silly, and most importantly, comfortable child. The gains he has made in his 9 months at NEEC are priceless to

us. His therapists are amazing, patient, and make him work for every achievement. His teachers are flexible and know just how to put a mom’s mind at ease. My Finnigan lights up every day when he walks into school. It is a place where he is challenged, loved, and able to thrive.

Finnigan has taught us so many lessons about life and love, and I know he will teach us so much more. This was not the direct route we thought we were going to travel, but sometimes the scenic route is much better, especially when Finn is in the driver’s seat.



alumni spotlight

CHASE BARTLETT

Our daughter Chase was born with Down syndrome and a serious heart defect in 1998. Shortly after she was born, friends of ours who also have a child with Down syndrome told us about NEEC (then Lighthouse Preschool). She attended Northland Early Education Center from 8 weeks old until she graduated to kindergarten, with a short hiatus for heart surgery when she was 4 months old. We watched Chase thrive in the early intervention program provided by the school. She learned not only from her teachers and therapists, but also from her friends in the classroom, reaching developmental milestones well before she was expected to do so. As new parents of a child with special needs, the school provided the resources and support we desperately needed. I honestly don’t know what we would have done without the school.

My husband (Thad) and I became very involved with NEEC as parents, advocates and volunteers. Although the school was struggling during those times, we truly believed in the school’s mission and we knew that it was the best place for our daughter and for all children to learn and develop. In an attempt to help the school, my husband joined the Board of Directors. In 2002, when the Executive Director position became available, Thad stepped down from the Board and I applied for the position.

At the time the school had a strong Program Director with vast experience in Early Education and Special Education. They needed someone with Business Management experience and a passion for the program. I believed that the school could be successful. I wanted to be a part of that success and reach other families and children who may have been in the same position as my family was years ago. I was hired in July 2002.

Almost 15 years later, I remain with NEEC because I still have that same passion for our program and mission. I see the impact we have on children (and their families) daily. A successful beginning in life ensures that all children, whether typically developing or with special needs transition into their least restrictive environment prepared with a foundation for future learning success.

Chase is now 19 years old and I know that she is the young lady she has become because of NEEC and the inclusive environment that was provided to her. The teachers and therapists in her life believed in her and challenged her to learn and develop to her full potential. We have been fortunate to have lived in a community who also believes in the importance of inclusion, Kearney, MO. We cannot go anywhere without someone (who I may or may not know) stops us to say hello to Chase. She has made such an impact on so many people in her nineteen years. Chase is graduating from Kearney High School this year and is looking forward to working with animals and volunteering at her preschool almatmater. In the future our hope for Chase is that she continues her drive for independence and have a happy and productive life.



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\$45,000 - \$55,000

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\$25,000 - \$35,000

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NEEC's Green Room Staff & Families

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NEEC's Pink Room Staff & Families

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