

# LEADING THE WAY

in early intervention & education



## NEEC 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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# LEADING THE WAY IN EARLY INTERVENTION & 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 230 children annually.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & 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 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 (aged birth – three) with special needs based upon the family 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 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 & 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 ages 6 to 14 predominately in Clay and Platte counties, as well as surrounding counties in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

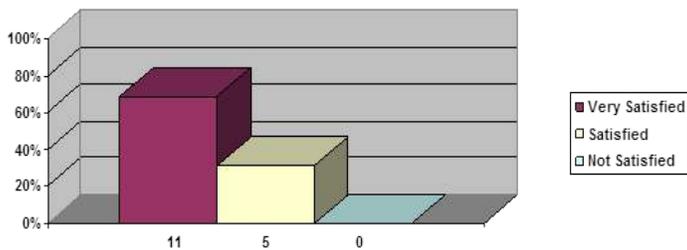
# 2017 • outcome measurements

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 Outcomes Measurement format for evaluating annual goals. The Outcomes Measurement 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 Outcomes Measurement 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.

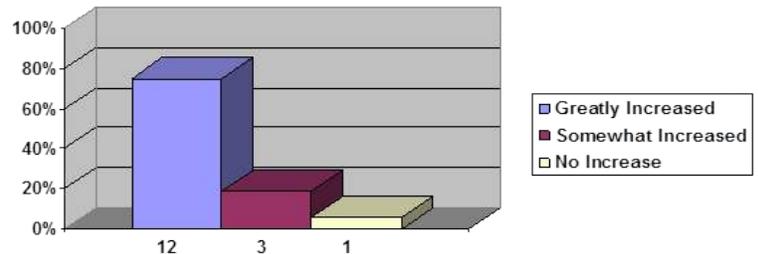
- NEEC provided a total of 6,056 units (1,514 hours) of physical and occupational therapy, speech and language pathology and special instruction.
- 96% of children with special needs receiving services from NEEC made progress on at least 75% of their IFSP/IEP/classroom goals.
- On average, 38% of children 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 • family satisfaction survey

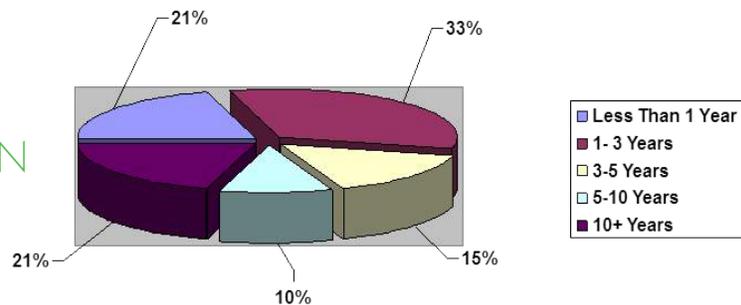
Are you satisfied with the services provided for your child by NEEC?



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



## 2017 STAFF RETENTION



# 2018 • 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 2017, 36% 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 – 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 in the 2015-2017 Strategic Plan.

# 2018 calendar of events

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July 4	NEEC Closed - Independence Day Observation
August	Enrollment
September	Community Helper's Month
September 3	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



## 2018 board of directors

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# CURRENT STUDENT SPOTLIGHT • james

James is our little miracle baby. He shows us strength, courage, laughter and hope every day.

When James was born, he did give a bit of a scare, as he was a little blue and did not want to breathe right away, but he came around quickly and his APGAR scores were good. We did have a long delivery, and other than that, there were no other complications during labor. The nurses did keep him for observation that night just to monitor, but we were assured that all was well. About 12 hours after his delivery, I was woken by a nurse to say that James was having seizures and the doctor was on the way. Not five minutes later, James' pediatrician came in to



tell us that yes, he was having seizures and that she was having some tests run for any infections that may be causing them and that she had also paged the neurologist. Soon after, the neurologist came in to tell us that the tests had all come back negative, and he didn't know why James was seizing but they had gotten them under control and he notified Children's Mercy to transport him there.

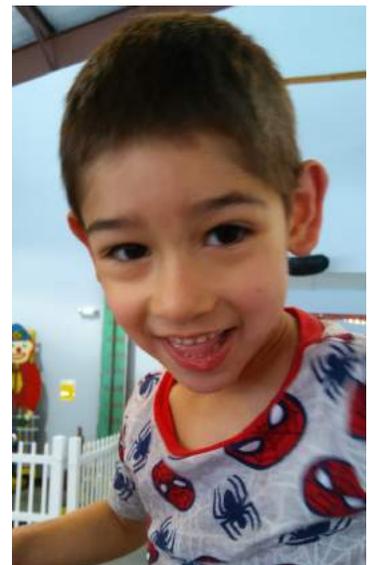
I was released from the hospital and met my husband at Children's a few hours after James arrived. We waited for what seemed like an eternity to see our son and a doctor to tell us what was happening. When I arrived, he had been intubated and had a machine breathing for him. It was heartbreaking. A team of doctors finally came to us and the neurologist with the group informed us that there had been an MRI

done and that James had a stroke. He told us that James would never eat on his own, never breath on his own, he would likely be attached to machines and a feeding tube for what would probably be a short life. And he walked away. Thank goodness for one of the other doctors pulling us aside after that neurologist left to tell us to have hope. This doctor told us that babies are absolutely amazing and many times recover from very dire diagnoses. She told us that she would be monitoring him and that she believed that she was already seeing improvement in his condition. Needless to say, James was off the ventilator within 24 hours of that diagnosis, was taking a bottle by day three and we were nursing by the end of the week! We were in the Children's NICU for a total of 16 days! During our stay we started receiving therapy and were given many resources for continuing therapy once we left. We were told by doctors and therapists that this would be key in his recovery.



Once our little guy was home, he started immediately with Missouri First Steps and just kept thriving! While he has been delayed in hitting milestones, he does hit them eventually! By the time he was 2 however, we noticed that he didn't want to be around anyone but us, especially other kids. Maybe we were too protective of him, but we knew that to keep his progress moving along, he needed to be integrated with other children. We were very apprehensive about sending him to preschool. To be honest, I didn't think that there was such a thing as a preschool that even accepted special needs children. His Missouri First Steps Physical Therapist recommended Northland Early Education Center to us, as she had worked with other kids who had attended there before and she really sung their praises. So, we bit the bullet and enrolled him. He was in the Brown Bears class with Ms. Jodi and we couldn't have been more pleased. Ms. Jodi and the staff just took him right in and while it was a difficult first few weeks for both him and us. Everyone there at NEEC did all they could to help integrate him in with the children and ease us as well.

Now, our James is turning 5 in July, and I can't say, "Thank You!" enough to NEEC! The little boy that I see running on the playground, making crafts, playing with kids who call my son friend, is absolutely amazing to me. The care of the staff in taking the time to help him learn and adapt is nothing short of phenomenal. James will be starting kindergarten in the fall and it's because of NEEC that he will be prepared and able to be among his peers and continue his journey of recovery.

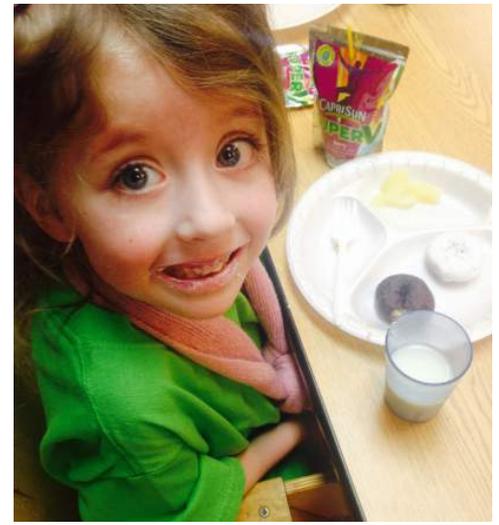


Sincerely,

Joshua & April Roybal

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT • novella

Novella was our second child. Everything during my pregnancy felt normal. However, now that I look back on it, Novella's movements while still in utero were not substantial and had I been "counting kicks" I'm not sure I would have had many to count. For me, my second time around, I was not hyper focused on all the details of a pregnancy as I was with my first pregnancy. When Novella was born I noticed that her feet were flexed all the way up and were basically laying on her shins. I remember being concerned but the nurses in the room said not to worry, and that babies are flexible and get into interesting position while in the womb. I relaxed and talked myself out of any further concerns, but in my honest mind, I knew it was a problem. During the infant exam the doctor reported that both of Novella's hip sockets were "clicking" and, at times, failing to remain in socket. This was the first time I heard the term "bilateral hip dysplasia". I was absolutely devastated. However, looking back now, that initial diagnosis sounds like a breeze. I had no idea of what was to come.



Over the next week, Novella's feet relaxed a bit and were beginning to look more typical. We had to go to Children's Mercy a lot that first week for the hip dysplasia. They put her in a pavlik harness and we had to go back to the doctor frequently (sometimes twice a week) to get it adjusted. During one of the adjustments, the doctor was taking the harness off so we could do an ultrasound of the hip to check for growth progress. I remember the nurse holding Novella against her chest and Novella's back was exposed. Now, this was a unique time as Novella had to wear the harness at home 24-7. We were not allowed to take it off. So that meant no baths and no skin to skin. I point this out because at the time this was the absolute worst. I remember being so angry, and everyone said "Hang in there. It is only for 12 weeks". Unfortunately for Novella, this was only the beginning-- and soon that soft cloth harness I was complaining about turned into a full body cast. During that time when the nurse was holding Novella is when I noticed that her spine looked crooked. I remember placing my hand on her back and following her spine with my finger as I moved my hand down her back. I asked the nurse to look at her back. She said that she would not be able to confirm scoliosis visually, and that we would need to speak to the doctor. I will never forget the look on this nurse's face when I asked her, "Scoliosis right? Is that a big deal?" She didn't even have to say anything because her face said it all, and to be honest I don't even remember what she said, if anything after that. We spent the next two years treating the infantile scoliosis with casting, and one of those years spent simultaneously treating the hip dysplasia which also called for casting of the hips and legs. After that, we moved Novella into a brace for the scoliosis. Novella's diagnosis from 7 days old to 7 years old was 'unidentified connective tissue diagnosis and severe infantile scoliosis'. However, during the summer of 2016, Novella received a corrected diagnosis of Muscular Dystrophy Collagen 6.

I was fortunate enough to work in the home for the most part while Novella and her brother were young. Novella was about 3 1/2 when I decided to go back to work. I was familiar with NEEC as we have lived nearby for years. I had called NEEC a few times in the past to check in on openings and also to check out the process for when I was ready to go back to work. Honestly, had NEEC not worked out the way it did, I would not have gone back to work. I was working PT evenings and there was an opportunity to interview for a FT position. Before I even applied, I called NEEC to make sure they had an opening, and they did! Long story short, I got the job and Novella got the school! I have to say this again that I would not have gone back to work had NEEC not been an option for Novella. There is no other place I would have sent her. NEEC took care of Novella in the same way I cared for her. They are a special school for even more special and incredible children. Novella's attitude toward life is so inspiring. Some of that I know she was born with, and some of that was built and supported by her environment. NEEC was an early environment for her and I know it shaped the way she views herself and also shaped her caring heart for others. Our family can't thank NEEC enough for the work they do, the mission they serve, the people that they are, and how they care for our children in this community.

Sincerely,

Allison - Novella's Mom



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## 2017 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 fees for services through contracts it has with the Missouri First Steps program, Clay County Developmental Disabilities Resource Board, Platte County Board of Services and other local and state governmental entities. 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 and intervention 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 Hangar Party, a benefit for Northland Early Education Center and Pioneer Run, a 10K & 5K Run and 2-Mile Walk event held at English Landing Park. We are grateful for their benevolent support in 2017. Thanks to the charitable spirit of our donors, NEEC is able to further our vision of shaping the future of children through quality early education and therapeutic intervention while teaching compassion for diversity.



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