

fact\$ *in a backpack*

October 2007

Preschool funding from mix of sources

"Wisdom begins in wonder."
— Socrates

Curiosity is often considered one of the chief tools of learning, and is particularly potent in young learners. The Walter Shade Early Childhood Center seeks to harness that curiosity and wonder in a carefully crafted preschool program for three and four year olds.

The Walter Shade Early Childhood Center (ECC) is home to three different programs run by the West Carrollton School District: kindergarten, special needs preschool and public preschool.

Parents are required by law to send their children to school beginning in kindergarten, therefore, kindergarten in public schools is free. Schools are required to educate children with special needs beginning at age three, therefore, that program is also free.

Preschool for typically developing children is optional in Ohio. Funding for the program at the ECC comes from a variety of sources including tuition paid by families.

The two preschool programs overlap. Education of children with special needs includes giving them a chance to spend time in class with children who do not have special needs. At the ECC some classes include both children with special needs and typically developing children. Other classes are exclusively typically developing children.

The two programs are funded by five different sources:

1. Unit Funding for Special Needs Preschool Units from the Ohio Department of Education.

Preschool Tuition Rates for 2007-2008							
	100%	113%	125%	150%	185%	200%	Above 200%
	Maximum Income	Maximum Income	Maximum Income	Maximum Income	Maximum Income	Maximum Income	Minimum Income
Monthly Tuition	\$55.00	\$75.00	\$95.00	\$140.00	\$150.00	\$175.00	\$190.00
Family Size							
1	\$10,210	\$11,537	\$12,763	\$15,315	\$18,889	\$20,420	\$20,421
2	\$13,690	\$15,470	\$17,113	\$20,535	\$25,327	\$27,380	\$27,381
3	\$17,170	\$19,402	\$21,463	\$25,755	\$31,765	\$34,340	\$34,341
4	\$20,650	\$23,335	\$25,813	\$30,975	\$38,203	\$41,300	\$41,301
5	\$24,130	\$27,267	\$30,163	\$36,195	\$44,641	\$48,260	\$48,261
6	\$27,610	\$31,199	\$34,513	\$41,415	\$51,079	\$55,220	\$55,221
7	\$31,090	\$35,132	\$38,863	\$46,635	\$57,517	\$62,180	\$62,181
8	\$34,570	\$39,064	\$43,213	\$51,855	\$63,955	\$69,140	\$69,141

The U.S. government has established a federal Poverty Line. For a family of four, this means an annual income of no more than \$20,650. Families living on this level of income are said to be living "at the poverty line." A family of four living at 185 percent of the poverty line would be living on an annual income of no more than \$38,203. Families at 185 percent or below are targeted by the public preschool program at the ECC.

2. Public School Preschool Grant from the Ohio Department of Education
3. Federal Early Childhood Special Education Grant
4. Tuition
5. WCSD General Fund

The ECC receives Unit Funding for three units for a total of \$109,000 said Principal Kimberly Hall-Alt. The state grant brings in another \$195,000, the federal grant \$33,000 and tuition typically nets \$55,000 each year. Remaining costs come from the general fund.

The unit funding does not cover all the costs of operating the preschool units, Hall-Alt said. ECC teachers, like all WCSD teachers, have at least a bachelor's degree and many have master's degrees and several years of experience.

Highly qualified teachers are more expensive, she noted. Tuition from typically-developing students helps make up the difference.

However, tuition is not the same for every student. The terms of the state grant require Hall-Alt to reach out to lower income families. Most of the public school preschool slots are filled by families whose income is 185 percent of the poverty line or less (see chart). The amount of tuition is based on income and family size and can be different for everyone, Hall-Alt said.

"Our program is meant to give as many kids as possible a strong start in school," she said. "Families who can afford to often send their kids to private preschools. Other families don't have that option – we try first to serve those families."

Occasionally, Hall-Alt has seen tuition paid for by private donations. She also carefully researches other area programs to keep the ECC's rates competitive.

Other fees paid by parents include:

- ▶ \$1.50 a day for snacks for special needs preschool students.

- ▶ \$167 a year for bus transportation for public school preschool students IF the school has to add a bus stop to the route. (If a stop already exists for a special needs student or a kindergarten student, this fee is waived.)

"Our goal is to make our program self-supporting," Hall-Alt said. "We have fund-raisers and take donations and spend carefully so we can serve as many kids as possible with a great first school experience."

All day kindergarten programs in the news

All day kindergarten has made the news in recent months as parents who were asked to pay tuition for such programs complained to the Ohio Department of Education.

State Superintendent Susan Tave Zelman sought an opinion on the issue from Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann. Dann's opinion states that schools cannot charge tuition for all-day kindergarten programs.

Districts that did offer and charge for such programs did so because all day kindergarten is not required. Schools are required to offer half-day kindergarten and receive state funding for it. Parents are required to send their children to half-day kindergarten and are able to do so at no charge.

Schools who charged tuition reasoned that they were offering an extra and could

and should charge for it. Dann's opinion is based on the notion that public school is supposed to be free beginning in kindergarten, no matter what.

Of Ohio's 613 districts, 448 offer all-day kindergarten. Of that number, 122 have all-day kindergarten through Poverty Based Assistance Funding. Another 326 offer it by charging tuition or funding it locally. (Reported by *The Cincinnati Enquirer*)

WCSD and the ECC do not offer an all day kindergarten program currently. Some students, however, are eligible for extra programs.

First, all students can be recommended for the school's enrichment program. This is for students who are struggling or need extra help. They attend a regular kindergarten class for half the day and an enrichment class the other half of the

day. This program is free for families and funded by the WCSD general fund. For information on this program, call ECC Principal Kim Hall-Alt at 859-5121, ext. 4401.

Second, families who live in the geographic area served by Frank Nicholas Elementary School can choose to enroll their child in the extra, half-day enrichment program at Nicholas. Students attend a regular kindergarten class at the ECC for half the day and an extra kindergarten class at Nicholas the other half of the day. This program is free for families and is currently funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education specifically for Frank Nicholas families.

For information on the Nicholas program, contact Principal Melissa Theis at 859-5121, ext. 2201.

How to get in the preschool programs at the ECC

Special Needs Preschool

The first step to enrolling a child in the special needs preschool program at the ECC is an evaluation. Call the school at 859-5121, ext. 4400 to make an appointment.

If your child qualifies, he can attend school for free. However, you will pay for snacks.

Public Preschool

This program is full for the 2007-2008 school year. However, parents who wish to be placed on a waiting list can call Wendy Sercu at 859-5121, ext. 4434 for enrollment information.

For the 2008-2009 school year, enrollment packets will be given out in the office at the ECC beginning on March 3, 2008. Completed packets, including proof of income for determining tuition, must be returned by 4 p.m. March 20.

Students are enrolled based on a lottery system that balances income levels and also boys and girls, said Principal Kimberly Hall-Alt.

Families who are on a waiting list for a full year can bypass the lottery and receive guaranteed enrollment the second year (a new packet must be completed, however). Families whose child attends as a three-year-old are guaranteed re-enrollment as a four year-old (again, a new packet must be completed).

The lottery takes place in April and all families are notified by mail regarding the results.

Students must be at least three-years-old by September 30 and toilet-trained to attend.

Human services levy on Nov. 6 ballot

Before age three, children with special needs are served by programs such as the Montgomery County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD).

MR/DD, the Combined Health District, Job and Family Services, Children's Services and many other agencies receive

funding from the Montgomery County Human Services Levy.

On Nov. 6, Montgomery County voters will be asked to approve a levy totaling 7.21 mills: 5.21 replacing an existing levy and an increase of 2 mills. Learn more about the levy, Issue 20, by visiting www.mcboe.org or www.keephumanservices.org.



**WORD
FILE**

tuition: n. the charge for instruction, as at a college

**Got a question?
Still think the
pieces don't fit?**

**TELL US ABOUT
YOUR CONCERN!**

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