



WESTBROOK CHILDREN'S PROJECT

Our Impact: Early Learning and School Readiness

Westbrook Children's Project (WCP) unites community partners across sectors to ensure Westbrook youth have the academic and emotional support they need from early childhood through high school so they can succeed in school and beyond.

WCP's Early Childhood Advisory Group focuses on supporting learning beginning at birth so children enter kindergarten ready to learn. Children who enter kindergarten with strong language, motor and social-emotional skills are more likely to reach academic milestones that result in high school graduation.

WCP has increased collaboration and coordination with community partners, including the Westbrook School Department, community social service providers and organizations, and early childhood education and care providers, to provide education and resources that support a child's successful transition to kindergarten.

Professional Development for Early Child Care & Education Providers

Recognizing the importance of quality early childhood education and care, WCP and its partners sponsor professional development opportunities that include early childhood education and care provider workshop sessions. These workshops are attended by center and family based child care providers and feature topics designed to support quality programming for young children. The session topics are selected with input from the providers to address emerging needs in child care and education.

The workshops bring together WCP community partners with expertise in their fields to provide on-going, accessible professional development opportunities.

Past workshops have covered topics including social-emotional learning, kindergarten readiness, technology in child care settings, engaging students across developmental stages, culturally responsive teaching, and math and science in multi-age programs.

Since the professional development series started in 2014, WCP has provided 30 sessions with 258 provider education contact hours.

“The Westbrook Children's Project has helped raise awareness of the importance of kindergarten readiness skills, targeting both families and child care providers. It helps support children and families to ensure that all students are ready for kindergarten.”

— Hannah Gundersdorf, Kindergarten Teacher
Westbrook School Department

• Go back and...
 • Pick books you like.
 • Go back and retell.
 • Fill out Reading Logs to show what you read.
 • If you can't read the words, put the book back.

Kindergarten Readiness Checklist

Through community-wide collaborations and partnerships, WCP and the Westbrook School Department developed a Kindergarten Readiness Checklist. The checklist helps schools and early child care providers coordinate and share information to support a smoother, more informed transition for incoming kindergarten students.

Prior to entering kindergarten, the Westbrook School Department assesses each child's academic skills, such as counting, naming colors, and recognizing letters. With permission from parents, early child care providers complete a Kindergarten Readiness Checklist as part of the screening process to provide deeper insight about a child's skills in academic and social-emotional areas. This information is used by school staff and kindergarten teachers to better understand each child's strengths and possible areas for attention.

Early child care providers are asked to participate via a letter from the Westbrook School Superintendent, as well as at the WCP professional development sessions. As a result, the return rate has been growing since the Kindergarten Readiness Checklists were first introduced in 2015. In 2018, 89% of the checklists were returned.

“Kindergarten is critical to establishing the foundation for social, emotional, and academic success. However, not all children are ready and we often see high levels of absenteeism. Our group’s work focuses on making the transition to kindergarten easier for students and to help set them up for success.”

– Kara Reiman, Youth Services Librarian
Walker Memorial Library

Literacy Kits

Each spring, WCP and its partners distribute 200 “Welcome to Kindergarten” literacy kits to families during kindergarten screenings.

These kits are designed to increase parent awareness of early childhood developmental milestones and skills, including the importance of reading, actively engaging with their child, and how to help support school readiness. The kits encourage families to work with their child on these skills over the summer so that incoming kindergarten students are better prepared for school.

While the contents of the kits vary each year because they are dependent on community donations and different funding sources, they typically include one or two books, math and science learning games, crayons, scissors, and other school supplies.




1,000
 literacy kits distributed
 to families of incoming
 kindergarten
 students
 (2013-2018)

