

Program Overview



Accreditations

We are accredited by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) . We are also 5-STARs certified and licensed by the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services Child Care Services Division and are Prequalified by the Agency of Education to provide publicly-funded Act 166 reimbursements for all children who turn three years or older by September 1 of each school year.

NAEYC's national, voluntary accreditation system has set professional standards for early childhood education programs and helps families identify high quality programs for their young children. This organization gives accreditation to outstanding early childhood education programs. Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc. is proud to have been one of the first programs in Vermont to become NAEYC Accredited and maintain its high standards for 35 years. Our directors have served on NAEYC national boards and as Presidents of Vermont's NAEYC Affiliate - VAEYC.

STARs is Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System for Child Care, Early Education, and Afterschool Programs, and is a quality initiative of The Child Development Division, The Department for Children and Families, The Agency of Human Services, and The Department of Education. STARs recognizes accomplishments and activities that go above and beyond state regulations and Stepping Stones retains a 5-star rating (the highest).

Adult to Child Ratios

We are authorized to care for twenty-four children, but generally limit enrollment to 20 children per day. Our adult-to-child ratio is generally 1:5. On a typical day we enroll 5 two-year-olds, 5 three-year-olds, 5 four-year-olds, 5 five year olds, and 4 teachers.

Ages of Children

Stepping Stones accepts children from twenty six (26) months to six years of age. Please note that enrollment for new families typically begins at age 3. Space for children under the age of three is reserved for siblings of current enrollees.

Center Schedule

Stepping Stones is open from 8:30 am - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The Center is closed for about 10 days of the year for holidays and about 10 days of the year for in-service days. Typical Holidays include: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday after, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the day after Christmas and President's Day.

The Center closes at 12:30 p.m. 10 times a year for staff consultations. Families are notified of these days in advance and are expected to pay tuition for these days and for all holidays. Please see the current Stepping Stones Calendar of Events for exact dates.

All Are Welcome at Stepping Stones

We do not discriminate against any race, creed, religion, and/or gender. This applies to hiring our staff as well as families that we serve. Siblings and families living in our neighborhood are given priority on our waiting list.

The Stepping Stones Way- Our Philosophy

Our program focuses on the development of the whole child. We are in tune with and set out to nurture the cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and creative capacities of children. Our emergent approach to early childhood education is inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia; a city in Italy recognized world wide for its innovative, child-centered, authentic play-based educational philosophy. Like the schools of Reggio, the Stepping Stones Curriculum is based on the following principles:

- Children must have some control over the direction of their learning
- Children must be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, seeing, and hearing
- Children have a relationship with other children and with material items in the world that children must be allowed to explore.
- Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves. The Reggio approach to teaching young children puts the natural development of children as well as the close relationships that they share with their environment at the center of its philosophy. We believe that children must have control over their learning in order to

make sense of new ideas and relationships and that in order for an experience to be meaningful, it must be interesting to the child. Parents are a vital component to our philosophy and are viewed as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children.

Discipline Policy

We work to encourage children to exhibit self-control and to be self-directed. In order to do this children need the opportunity to build self-esteem and develop a positive self-image. Children are encouraged to make good choices and learn to develop prosocial behaviors. We accomplish this through close supervision, and gentle guidance. Children are taught to identify and express their feelings. Teachers use techniques like, re-involvement, logical-consequences, redirection, positive reinforcement, meaningful praise, and taking a break. Time-out is avoided, as it is viewed as punishment. Any other practices that shame, harm, or humiliate a child will not be used. Rules are few, simple and stated in a positive manner: We keep ourselves safe. People are for gentle touches. Through these disciplinary procedures it is hoped that we can help to encourage independence and self control while promoting the development of a child's positive self-image.

Meals

Children are welcome to bring food from home, but home cooked meals and snacks play a big part in our day. We cook, serve and share two healthy snacks daily along with a hot meal at midday. We are a nut- free environment and do our best to accommodate special dietary needs.

Schedule

Full-day from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.

We offer flexible schedules, but require a minimum of three mornings per week.

A typical day may look like this:

8:30 – 9:30 Children arrive, morning snack is offered.

8:30- 11:30 a.m. Inside and outside play, bread making, acrobatics, sewing, carpentry, literacy activities, STEM activities, local field trips.

11:30 Clean up, morning session ends.

12:00 Lunch

1:00 – 3:00 Quiet Rest (nap time for those who sleep)

2:00 – 4:30 Stories and tea, inside and outside play, yoga, extensions of play from morning or previous days and exploration of new ideas/materials.

Accepting New Families

Stepping Stones generally has openings for new children in September or at any time during the year when space becomes available. Families on our waiting list will be

notified of openings for their children in late April, once currently enrolled families return their enrollment request forms. Priority is given to siblings and families from the South End, particularly the Five Sisters neighborhood. If you would like to learn more about enrollment, please [contact us here](#) or email office@steppingstoneschildrencenter.com

Making Payments

Payment is expected on the first day of the month in check form. Act 166 payments will be discharged directly to parents within 7 business days of receipt of the funds from the respective school districts. We accept Child Care Financial Assistance funding, and parents are expected to pay the difference between our daily rate and what the State of has set as the individual subsidy rate.

Parent Handbook

Please [click here to view our Parent Handbook](#)