

# Hebron Preschool Study



**Board of Education Presentation  
February 14, 2019**

# Preschool Study Team Introduction

Timothy Van Tasel, Superintendent

Donald Briere, Director of Educational Services

Katie Uriano, Gilead Hill School Principal

Gail Richmond, Vice Chairmen of Board of Selectmen

Donna Lanza, Director of Administrative Services

Heather Petit, Board of Education

Christopher Lapsis, School Readiness Teacher

Rachel Thayer, Preschool Teacher

Kara Lee Aubrey, Preschool Teacher

Margaret Ellsworth, Preschool Teacher

Richard Gadoury, Parks and Recreation

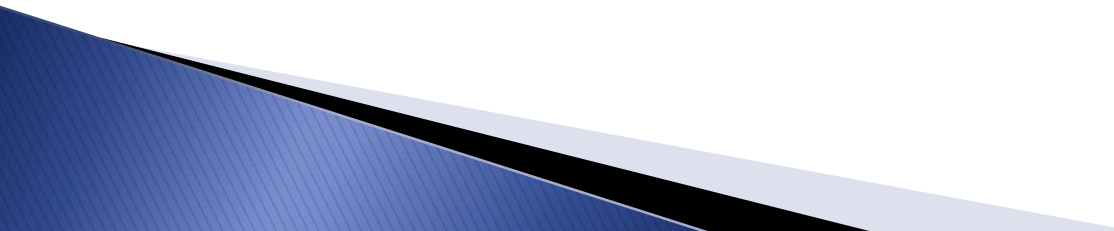
Dan Smith, Parent

Shannon Congdon, Parent

Judith Podell, Community Member

Kellie Sheridan, Independent Facilitator

# Preschool Study Overview

- ▶ To further explore the current preschool program and the needs of the community, the Hebron Board of Education requested a Preschool Study be conducted
  - ▶ In October, a Preschool Study Team was developed, which included community members, parents, Hebron Board of Selectmen, Hebron Public Schools, and an independent facilitator
  - ▶ The Team researched and discussed the history of the Hebron Preschool program, the benefits of a preschool experience, best practices, and developed program recommendations
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# Major Study Questions

- The following study questions were provided from the Hebron Board of Education to guide the Team's research:
  - What is the historical perspective of the Hebron Preschool Program, as well as community history related to preschool?
  - Why should we have preschool? What are the outcomes of children who attend preschool?
  - What defines a successful preschool program?
  - What does the community want in a preschool program?
  - How should the Hebron Preschool Program be funded?

# Hebron Preschool Program History

- In 2000, one AM/one PM class of four year olds offered four days per week
- By 2001, peer models were minimum of 1:1 (i.e., peer model : student with an IEP) and recommended class size was twelve students
- Peer models were selected on a lottery basis



# Hebron Preschool Program History

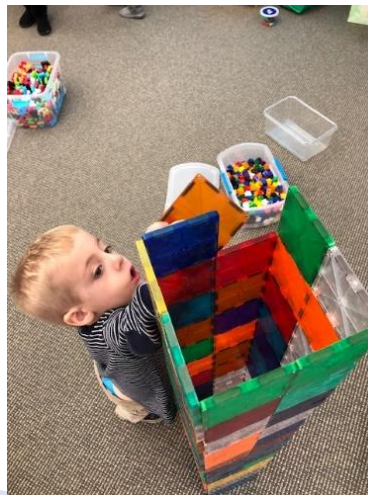
- In 2012, the district was awarded the School Readiness Grant, which provided eighteen full-day slots, eleven of which were reserved income eligible families
- As a requirement of the School Readiness Grant, the town established a community-based School Readiness Council and the Hebron Preschool Program applied for and was awarded NAEYC accreditation in 2015
- All Hebron community preschool programs were invited to become NAEYC accredited; however, none of the community programs pursued this option at the time





# Hebron Preschool Program History

- By 2016, with the School Readiness Grant, the preschool program expanded to three full-day programs and two half-day programs (one AM/one PM)
- Currently, all full-day slots and half-day slots are tuition-based, with exception to students with IEPs and families eligible for reduced tuition based on income



# Benefits of a Preschool Experience

- ▶ The research examined by the Team highlighted the following benefits of a preschool experience:
  - Provides **fundamental learning** and supports students transition to Kindergarten
  - Offers increased opportunities for **socialization**
  - Emphasizes social-emotional learning and development
    - Group work, self-regulation, problem solving with peers, turn taking
  - Provides **early intervention** and supports to students experiencing academic and developmental challenges
  - Increased and persistent **gains on achievement test scores**
  - Fewer occurrences of grade retention and less likely to be identified for specialized services
  - Increased high school graduation rates
  - Decreased crime and delinquency rates

(Barnett & Hustedt, 2003; Bouffard, 2017).



# Input from Kindergarten Teachers

- Students who have attended preschool:
  - Display better **self-help skills**
  - Exhibit improved **language skills**
  - Demonstrate increased **social skills** and more effective problem solving skills
  - Exhibit less frequent tantrums
  - Are more confident, as they are familiar with the building and staff
  - Demonstrate more advanced **reading and math readiness skills**



# Benefits of Preschool: Major Findings

- The available research and professional perspectives reviewed conclusively indicated **noteworthy gains** for students who experience preschool from academic, social/emotional/behavioral, and developmental standpoints
  - Kindergarten Readiness
  - Cognitive Development
  - Social Experiences
  - Behavioral Supports
  - Early Family Engagement
  - Unified Arts Experiences



*(Additional information regarding the benefits of both full and half day preschool can be found at <http://www.ct.gov/oec/cwp/view.asp?Q=581998&A=4545>)*

*(Barnett & Hustedt, 2003; Bouffard, 2017)*

# Best Practices for a Successful Program

- The research examined by the Team highlighted the following best practices and components of a successful program:
  - Highly qualified, certified teachers that receive ongoing professional development and learning opportunities
  - Adequate planning time and collaboration time for teachers
  - Social-emotional development opportunities for students
  - Investment in the implementation and sustainability of an evidence-based curriculum
  - Increased opportunities for early interventions and student supports
  - Building positive connections between teacher and student
  - Fostering positive connections between teacher and parent/guardian
  - Culturally responsive practices

(National Institute for Early Education Research, 2019; NAEYC, 2019)

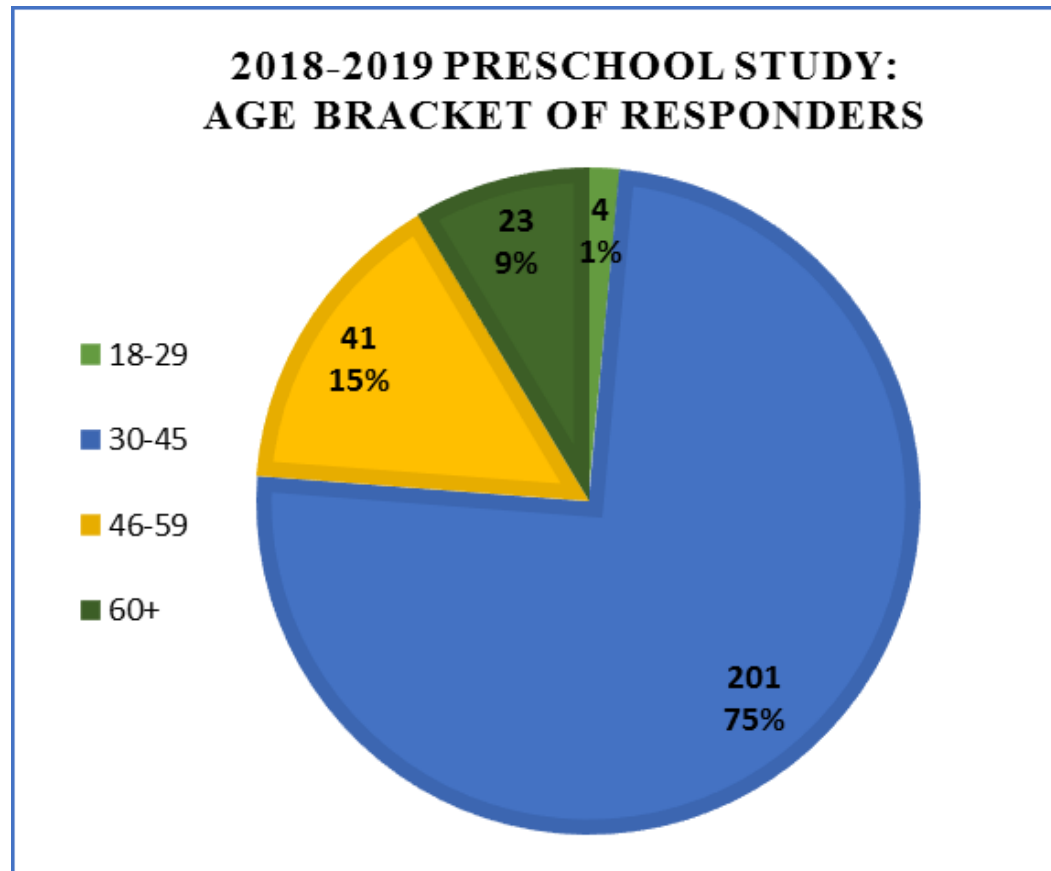
# Community Input Related to Preschool

- Team developed and administered a Preschool Community Survey to collect information related to the major study questions
- The Preschool Community Survey was advertised in the local newspaper and online (i.e., Hebron Town website, Hebron Facebook page, Hebron Public Schools website)
- The Survey could be completed electronically or in hard copy -- paper copies were distributed across the community (i.e., Douglas Library, Hebron Senior Center, Hebron Town Hall)
- The Team was pleased to receive 269 responses



# Survey Logistics

- The survey consisted of ten questions, which included demographic information and others related to the major study questions



# Survey Major Findings

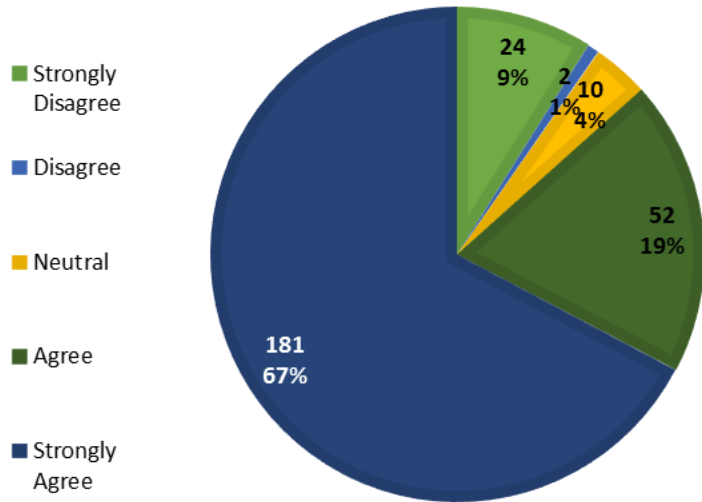
- Survey responses indicated a high level of interest in preschool programming and favored towards Hebron Public School's **current program**
- The majority of respondents (**86%**) agreed or strongly agreed that a quality preschool experience is an important step in a child's development
- The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) mandates that preschool be offered to children who qualify for special education services
- The majority of respondents (71%) think the Hebron Board of Education should offer a program that extends beyond what is mandated



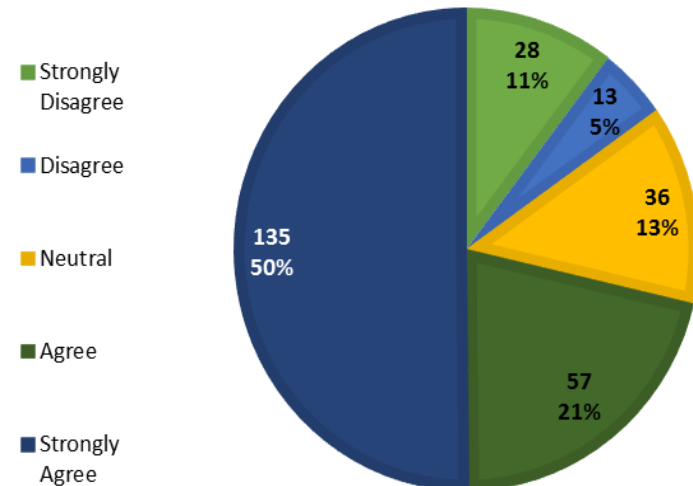
# Survey Major Findings



## 2018-2019 PRESCHOOL STUDY: PRESCHOOL IS AN IMPORTANT EXPERIENCE IN A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT



## 2018-2019 PRESCHOOL STUDY: HEBRON SHOULD OFFER PK PROGRAMMING BEYOND WHAT IS MANDATED



# Survey Major Findings

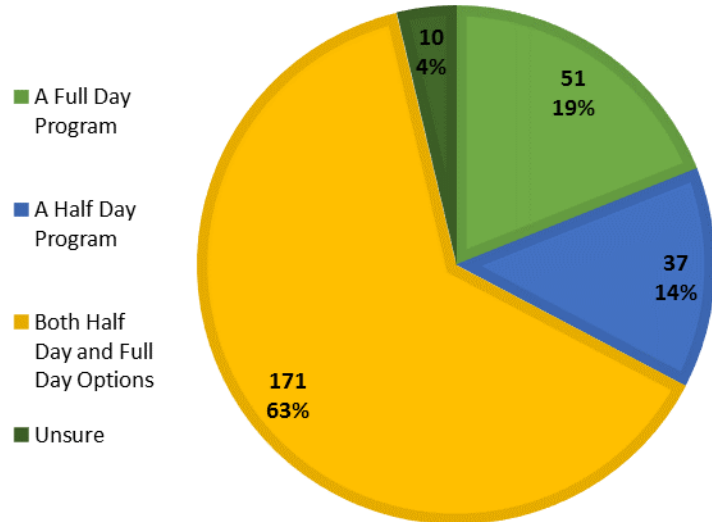
- In terms of program structure, the majority of respondents (64%) think the Hebron Public Schools should offer **both half-day and full-day options** to families
- The majority of respondents (**65%**) agreed or strongly agreed that the size of the Hebron Public School's Preschool Program should be large enough to accommodate all age eligible preschool children (i.e., 3 and 4 years old) in Hebron
- If the Hebron Public School's Preschool Program is unable to accommodate all age eligible preschool children, the majority of respondents (**75%**) think the current **lottery system is a fair and equitable** selection system



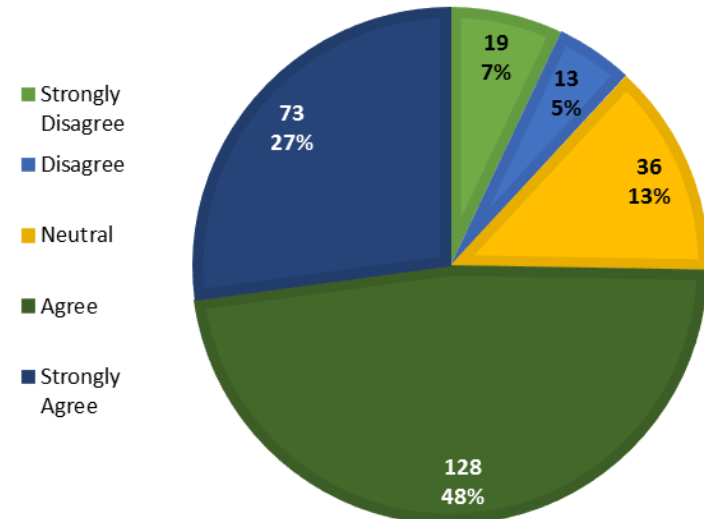
# Survey Major Findings



**2018-2019 PRESCHOOL STUDY:  
PREFERRED PROGRAM STRUCTURE**



**2018-2019 PRESCHOOL STUDY:  
SELECTION PROCESS**



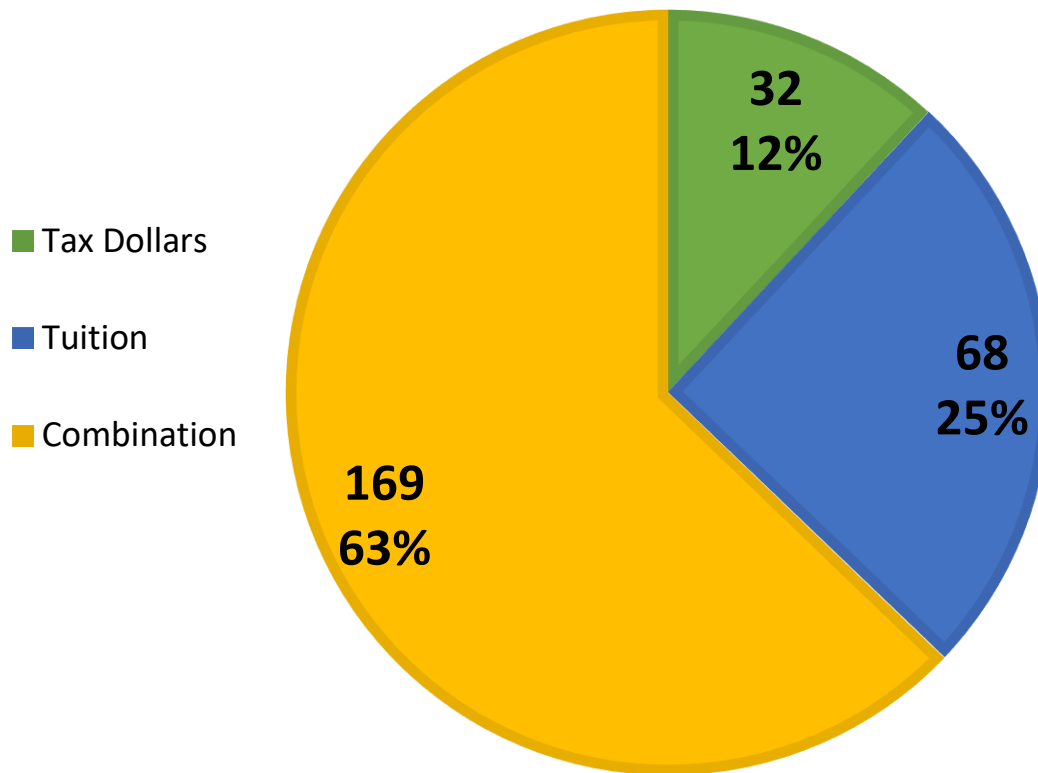
# Program Funding

- Question 7 of the Preschool Community Survey asked, “I think the Hebron Public School’s Preschool Program should be funded through: tax dollars, tuition, or a combination of tax dollars and tuition.”
  - Survey responses indicated that **63%** thought the Preschool Program should be funded through a combination of tax dollars and tuition
  - This mirrors Hebron Public School’s **current cost structure**, which charges families \$600/month to attend the full-day Preschool Program and \$240/month to attend one of the two half-day Preschool Program classes
  - Students with IEPs and/or families meeting income eligibility criteria receive programming at **no-cost or a reduced rate**, respectively
  - Current cost structures were based upon work completed in 2017 where districts from across the state were called and surveyed on their district’s tuition costs

# Program Funding



## 2018-2019 PRESCHOOL STUDY: PROGRAM FUNDING



# Recommendations

- When forming recommendations, the Team considered the advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and challenges of each option in order to create a model for sustained improvement
- “**Program Option 1**” is considered the favored recommendation of the Team; however, the Team did find value in providing a subsequent recommendation to the Board for their consideration






# Program Option 1:

## Current Program Structure Remains the Same

### Advantages:

- Current preschool program is meeting the needs of the majority of students and families in Hebron
  - Current program also extends beyond the state mandate of providing a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with identified special needs
  - Structures are already in place to provide quality programming, such as: classrooms with bathrooms, outdoor space, access to specials, and certified teachers
  - Current structure allows for more student-staff contact during classroom activities, outdoor time, meals, and specials
  - Program offers full-time and part-time options to accommodate the specific needs of families
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# Program Option 1: Status Quo

**3 Full Day Classrooms  
with  
18 School Readiness slots**  
6.5 hours/day; M-F

**1 AM Half Day Class  
1 PM Half Day Class**  
2hrs. 50 mins./day; M, T, TH, F



# Program Option 1:

## Current Program Structure Remains the Same

### Disadvantages:

- Program as it stands does not meet the needs of all students and families, as there is a variable waitlist of students from year to year
- Class sizes have expanded to meet the needs of students on the waitlist
- Current structure presents staffing challenges in terms of full-day coverage (e.g., lunch breaks, planning time, collaborative planning time, maintaining ratio)



# Program Option 1:

## Current Program Structure Remains the Same

### Opportunities for Improvement:

- Common planning time and collaboration for staff
- Increased time to communicate with parents
- Professional development for non-certified staff
- Creating all classes the same size (physical space and number of students)



# Program Option 2:

## Addition of Two, Half-Day (AM/PM) Classes to Current Program

### Advantages:

- The addition of two, half-day classes to the current program may help address perceived inequity in the number of students served, as it will accommodate more students and reduce the waitlist

**3 Full Day Classrooms  
with 18  
School Readiness slots  
6.5 hours/day; M-F**

**2 AM Half Day Class  
2 PM Half Day Class  
2 hrs. 50 mins/day;  
M, T, TH, F**



# Program Option 2:

## Addition of Two, Part-Time (AM/PM) Classes to Current Program

### Disadvantages:

- **Additional costs** would include: 1.0 certified teacher; 1.0 paraprofessional; furnishing new PK classroom
- The school would have to identify an appropriate **physical space** with a bathroom within the existing building
- **Scheduling:** specials would be impacted and may not be possible
- Parking and **increased traffic** during drop-off and pick-up
- On a **community level**, expanding the Gilead Hill Preschool Program may impact other community preschool programs



# Program Cost Comparisons

## State Mandated Program

### Structure:

**40 Seats**

1:1 Peer Model

2 AM/ 2 PM Half-Day Only

### Budget Drivers:

2.0 Teachers;

4.0 Paraprofessionals;

2 Classrooms

### Program Expenses:

\$350,113

### Anticipated Program

#### Revenue:

\$48,000

### Total BOE Cost:

**\$302,113**

## Status Quo Program

### Structure:

**75 Seats**

3 Full Day Classrooms

1 AM/ 1 PM Half-Day Only

### Budget Drivers:

4.0 Teachers;

6.5 Paraprofessionals;

4 Classrooms

### Program Expenses:

\$701,347

### Anticipated Program

#### Revenue:

\$251,640-314,160

### Total BOE Cost:

(\*Range Due to School Readiness Grant)

**\$387,187-449,707**

## Expanded Program

### Structure:

**95 Seats**

3 Full Day Classrooms

2 AM/ 2 PM Half-Day Only

### Budget Drivers:

5.0 Teachers;

7.5 Paraprofessionals;

5 Classrooms

### Program Expenses:

\$867,179

### Anticipated Program

#### Revenue:

\$299,640-362,160

### Total BOE Cost:

(\*Range Due to School Readiness Grant)

**\$505,019-567,539**

# Conclusion

- The Preschool Study Team has come to the conclusion that the **current program** is successful in providing a quality preschool experience
- Adding two additional part-time classes would allow more students and families to benefit from the program; however, comes with financial, programmatic and community-based implications

