

Pre-K Screenings Underway

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Parents of a Watauga County child who will be four years old by August 31st of this year are urged to bring that child to the free developmental screenings scheduled two more times. Screenings started this past Saturday at Hardin Park, and will continue from 9:00-12:00 on the mornings of March 31st at Cove Creek School and April 21st back at Hardin Park School. Every child in Watauga County who will be four years old on or before August 31st is eligible for the free screening, and all four years olds who may attend the Watauga County Schools pre-kindergarten program next fall must be screened prior to enrollment.

The screenings will be offered by appointment. Each screening is open to children from anywhere in Watauga County and each will feature health care and child care professionals on site to help parents find out how their child is faring and how to best support the development of their child's potential.

Parents can register their child for screening by calling a school office or by filling out the screening appointment form available from the Parent Links page of the Watauga County Schools (WCS) website. To locate the form online, go to www.watauga.k12.nc.us, choose the Parent Links heading, then click on "forms, menus & other WCS information" and scroll down to the link for the screening appointment form.

Parents will be able to submit applications for a space in the Watauga County Schools pre-kindergarten program at the screenings. The application forms are available now in schools and on the same page of the WCS website as the screening appointment form. As part of the pre-kindergarten application process, parents will have to provide proof of residence in Watauga County, verification of household income, and a copy of the child's certified birth certificate.

The approval of pre-kindergarten applications may be delayed by uncertainties about program funding at the state and local level and by an ongoing court case that involves the level of state support for the program and the criteria that must be applied to determine which students can enroll. Because of these uncertainties, parents seeking to enroll their child in the program are encouraged to make plans for alternative child care arrangements in the event their child cannot attend. Parents will also want to note that after school child care is not available for children in the pre-kindergarten program.

There are currently nine pre-kindergarten classrooms in the WCS system, two at Hardin Park School and one at each of the other elementary schools. Each classroom has a teacher and a teacher assistant and typically serves 18 children. The WCS pre-kindergarten program began eleven years ago with half day programs at Bethel and Parkway and expanded to a full school day in all the elementary schools by fall of 2007.