



# Westville Kindergarten Readiness Project Conceptual Framework



## Westville Little School

The Conceptual Framework embodies the philosophy of the Westville Little School – using best practices of a developmentally appropriate approach. The Conceptual Framework focuses on the needs of the whole child within the context of a group setting, always recognizing that the family is a child’s first and most important teacher. The Conceptual Framework provides a structure for the curriculum, assessment and instruction for the two-year program. It connects abstract guiding principles such as *Learning Through Play* and *Readiness* with familiar concrete examples. These examples create a shared meaning for the children, families, preservice teachers, teachers, administrators, university faculty and the community. The various components of the conceptual framework use images and songs, highlighting the importance of play, language, music, movement as critical to young children’s growth and development. Most important, we believe that children are ready for school by having rich, wonder-full, and meaningful experiences that capitalize on children’s natural curiosity.

The Westville Little School is a two-year program designed to create seamless transitions from the early childhood setting into the elementary school. The two-year program provides a coherent progression for children and families, celebrating the early years. The overarching goal for The Westville Little School is to provide joyful, exciting and appropriate learning for young children within a nurturing, social environment. During the first year at the Westville Little School, the focus for the three year-olds is *Learning Through Play*. During the prekindergarten year, the focus for the four year-olds is *Readiness*.

Based on the premise that a high quality learning environment for three and four year-olds includes the school and the home environments, the Westville Little School incorporates family education as well as group experiences with peers. The focus is on all facets of a child’s development – social, emotional, language, cognitive and physical. The program intentionally and explicitly incorporates play, guided exploration and developmentally appropriate direct instruction to foster children’s growth. At the same time, the program provides resources, support and experiences for families to become active participants in their children’s education.

# Westville Little School

## Professional Development Partnership

Another unique component to the Westville Little School model is the Professional Development Partnership established with Dunebrook, MSD of New Durham Township (Westville Schools) and the Purdue University North Central Early Childhood Education program. Each partner has pledged a commitment to the Westville Little School to contribute to the education and support of children, families and also of undergraduate early childhood education students. The Westville Little School serves as a demonstration school for the community to showcase best practices in early childhood education.

In recent years, early childhood education has gained national attention as a critical issue for communities. Concern for young children and their families span a range of complex questions: school readiness, health and safety, quality and affordability in care. A coherent, connected, and focused attention to the curriculum, instruction and assessment is necessary during the crucial period of early learning and development (Maeroff, 2006). Even with the spotlight on early childhood care and education from institutions, public policy initiatives, community and family resources, the single most important factor remains for young children's success: Teachers are the key (Hedges, 2006; Hyson, 2003). The Westville Little School provides the education candidates an opportunity to observe best practices and to apply their emerging skills and knowledge in an authentic setting .

The Professional Development Partnership exemplifies the spirit of John Dewey's progressive educational philosophy (e.g. see *Education and Experience*, 1938 and *The Child and Society*, 1902). The Little School is also grounded in the rich history of Froebel's kindergarten (1900) and the contemporary issues of developmentally appropriate practices (NAEYC, 2009) and school readiness (see Indiana HB 1004). Having the early childhood candidates complete their field experiences at The Little School also reflects an approach to teacher preparation as outlined by the NAEYC Preparation Standards (2011) and Darling-Hammond (2006).

# Westville Little School

## ***Let's Go Play!* - The Westville Little School for Three Year-Olds**

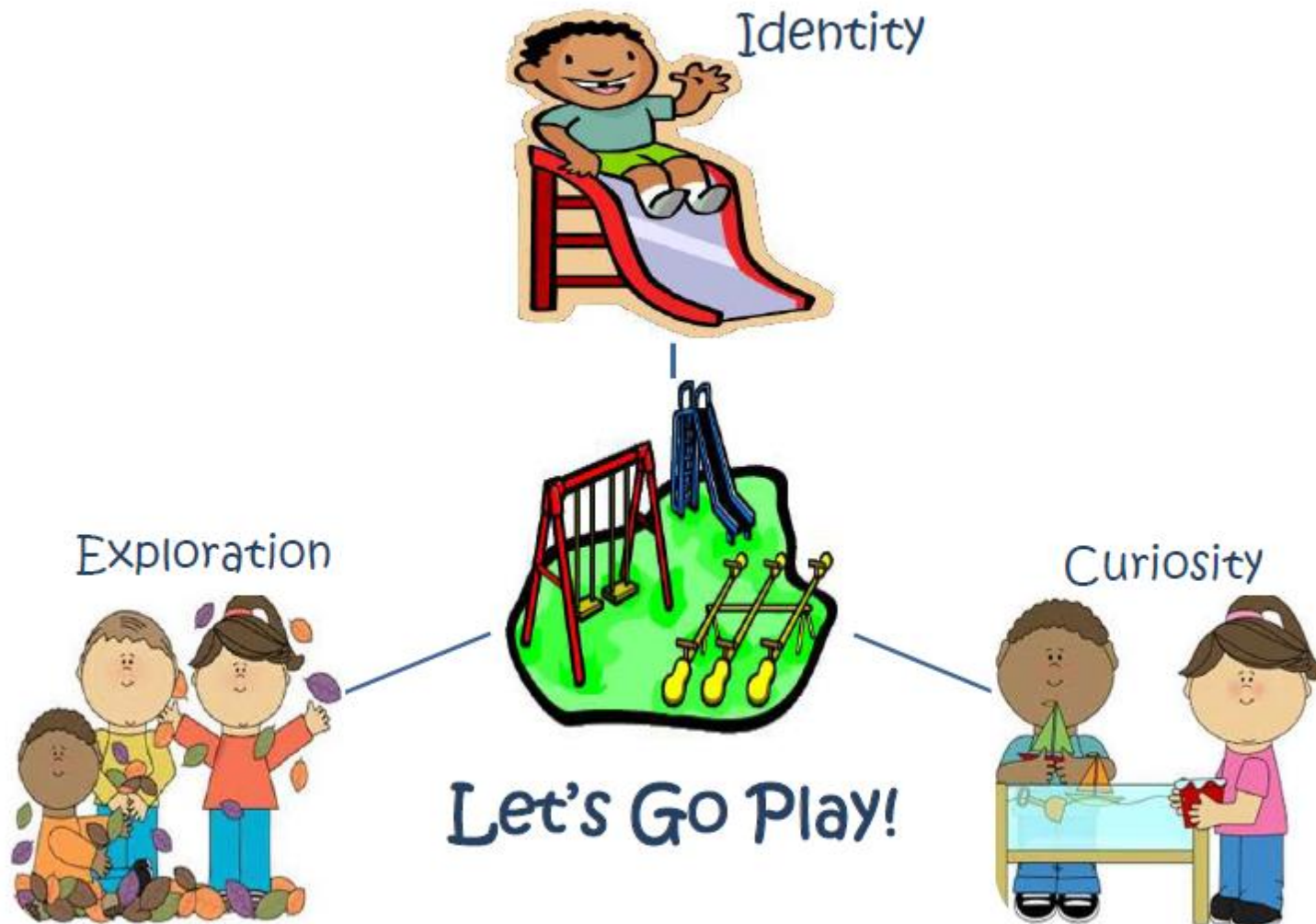
The first year at the Westville Little School draws on the developmental profile of a three year old. The Conceptual Framework uses the progression of children's play – from solitary to parallel to cooperative play – to illustrate the intersection of young children's development with the environment, activities and experiences at the Little School. Three year-old children have a lively imagination and are beginning to engage in pretend and cooperative play. They are active and enthusiastic, becoming more capable and confident with motor skills. Three year-olds can tell short stories and recall elements from stories as their vocabulary increases and their speech becomes more intelligible. Three year-olds typically enjoy being with other children and prefer challenging tasks.

The Conceptual Framework centers on the concept of learning through play – *Let's Go Play!* emphasizes oral language, social-emotional development and active, hands-on learning experiences. This focus on play is seen repeatedly in the conceptual framework to highlight the guiding principles for this year:

### Goals:

1. Support children's emerging self-regulation skills, and to guide children's development of friendships with other children.
2. Support children's emerging language, social, motor and cognitive skills through intentional guidance and meaningful hands-on activities.
3. Support children's emerging capacity to cope within a group setting.
4. Guide children to problem solve in both academic tasks and in personal decision-making.

# Westville Little School



The Westville Little School - Program for 3 Year Olds

# Westville Little School

## Let's Go Play! – 3 year olds

Unit	Themes/ Concepts	Family Support	Social-emotional	Language	Physical/ Motor
			sample foundations <sup>12</sup>		
<b>One Child on the Slide</b>  (Identity)	Who am I? This is me.	Home Visitation Meet the Teacher Night Library Sprouts	SE.1. Sense of Self & Others	ELA.3 Uses print for pleasure and information	P1. Sensory Integration
	Self-Help Skills Routines and Procedures	Family Night – Family's Roles & Responsibilities	SE.2 Manages Emotions	ELA.7 Demonstrates receptive language	P2. Physical Stability
<b>Two Children at the Water Table</b> (Curiosity)	What do I want to know? How does this work? This is what interests me.	Resource & Referrals Community Outreach Library Sprouts	SE.6 Approaches to Learning	ELA.1 Awareness of sounds	P3. Gross Motor Skills
	Project Approach Asking Questions	Family Night – Everyday Wonder		ELA.8 Demonstrates expressive language	
<b>Three Children in the Leaves</b>  (Exploration)	How do I find out?	Family Night – Summer Learning Library Sprouts	SE.3 Interpersonal Skills	ELA.2.Awareness of symbols	P4. Object Control
	This is how I solve problems.  In-depth investigations	PNC Early Childhood Conference		ELA.5 Writes for a specific purpose and audience	

<sup>1</sup> To be aligned: English/Language Arts; Mathematics; Physical Development; Personal Care; Science; Social Studies; Fine Arts; Social-Emotional

<sup>2</sup> Foundations are under revision; alignment should be completed using new Early Learning Standards

# Westville Little School

## ***This is the Way We Go to School!* – The Westville Little School for Four Year-Olds**

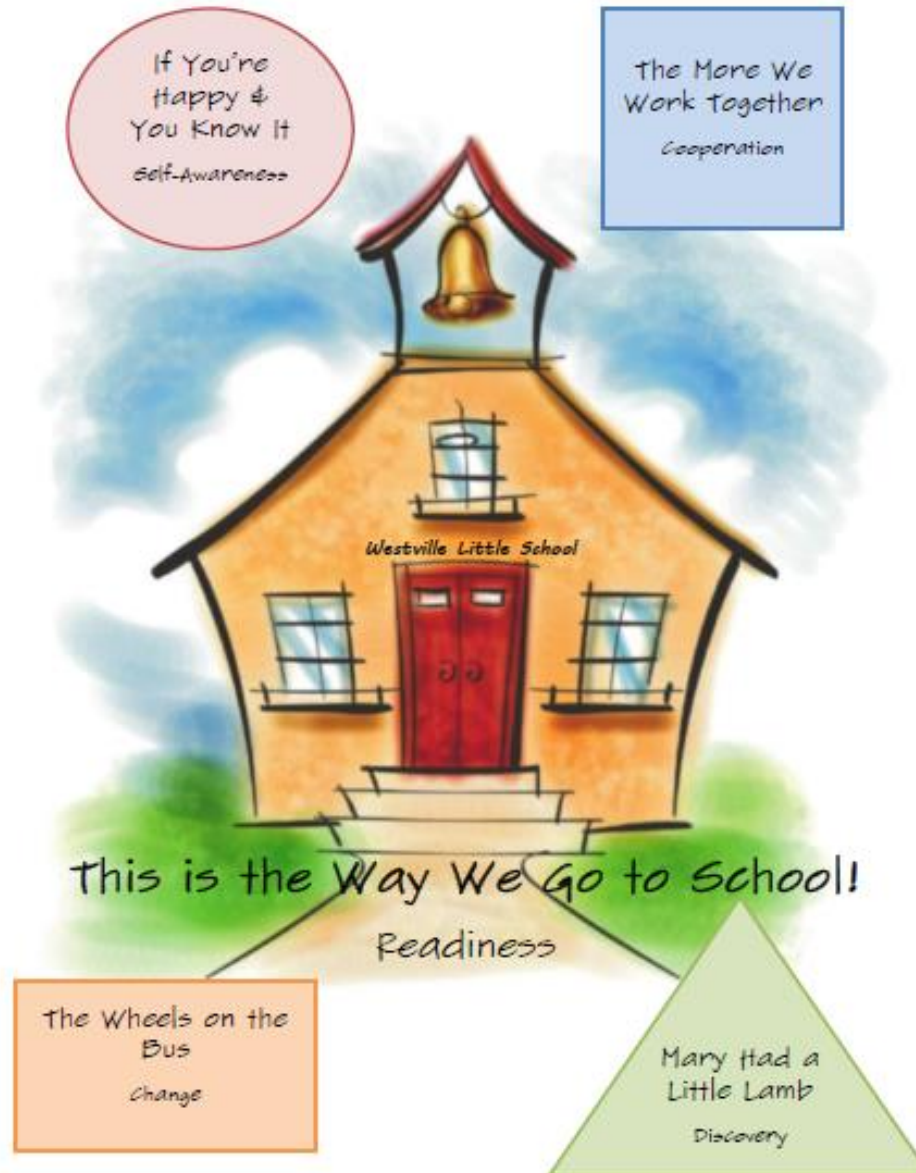
*This is the Way We Go to School* captures the overarching purpose of the Westville Kindergarten Readiness (WKR) Project: to prepare children and families for transition to the formal school setting. The guiding principle for The Westville Little School establishes that high quality early childhood experiences are essential to later school success. Four year-olds have a growing vocabulary, a love for rhymes and an endless curiosity about the world. They are expert at play and are beginning to take turns. Four year-olds also are learning to be a good friend, to observe their surroundings, and to show an interest in numbers and letters. They enjoy stories, songs, movement and sensory play.

The conceptual framework centers on the concept of readiness and integrates self-awareness, cooperation, discovery and change. This year aims to equip children and families with the skills and knowledge that are necessary for kindergarten. Through positive interactions with nurturing adults, exposure to the structure of the school environment and guided experiences with peers, children learn “how to go to school.”

### **Goals:**

1. Prepare students to demonstrate self and impulse control, and to have appropriate relationships with other children.
2. Prepare students to handle the social, emotional and class rules on a consistent level.
3. Prepare students to follow directions in a variety of settings and on a consistent level.
4. Prepare students to problem solve in both academic tasks and in personal decision-making.
5. Prepare students in alphabet awareness, rhyming, print concepts, and other basic reading and numeracy concepts.

# Westville Little School



## Westville Little School

### This is the Way We Go to School –4 year olds

Unit	Themes/Concepts	Family Support	Social-emotional	Cognitive
			sample foundations <sup>3</sup>	
<b>If You're Happy &amp; You Know It</b>  <b>(Self-Awareness)</b>	Who am I and how do I fit in? This is how I express my needs.  Self-Help Skills Social-Conventional Knowledge Routines and Procedures	Home Visitation Parent Support Groups  Family Night – Family's Roles & Responsibilities	SE.1.91 Express self through dramatic play.  SE.5.161 Use art media to channel frustration & anger in acceptable ways.	ELA.2.37 Recognize own name in isolated print.  M.1.20 Sing and dance to a number song.
<b>The More We Work Together</b>  <b>(Cooperation)</b>	Who are my friends? This is my classroom community.  Peer Relationships Discovery and Exploration	Resource & Referrals Community Outreach Family Night – Challenging Behaviors	SE.3.77 Talk about how child is same/different from other children.  SE.3.103 Work together as a team toward a common goal.	ELA.4.76 Use new vocabulary learned from experiences.  SS.5.6 Recognize community helpers.
<b>Mary Had a Little Lamb</b>  <b>(Discovery)</b>	What do I do at school? This is how I learn at school.  "Getting down to business" Young investigators In-depth investigations/ Project Approach	Westville Elementary School Teachers Family Night – School Readiness Skills	SE.2.60 Follow rules for simple games and activities.  SE.6.35 Use active exploration to solve a problem.	ELA.2.43 Put letter shapes or tiles in alphabetical order.  M.4.25 Complete interlocking puzzle of 8-12 pieces.
<b>The Wheels on the Bus</b>  <b>(Change)</b>	What's next? This is how I go to school!  Visit to Kindergarten Class Celebration of Learning	Home Visitation PNC Countdown to a Healthy Start Family Night – Transition to Kindergarten	SE.4.38 Show self-control, following PC.3.15 Determine clothing to wear based on weather.	ELA.8.64 Identify beginning, middle, end M.6.22 Categorize familiar objects by function and class.

<sup>3</sup> To be aligned: English/Language Arts; Mathematics; Physical Development; Personal Care; Science; Social Studies; Fine Arts; Social-Emotional



# Westville Kindergarten Readiness Project

## Conceptual Framework

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