

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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22 February 2012

Looking Ahead to Kindergarten
Mill Neck's ECC Hosts Transition Workshops for Parents

The Mill Neck Manor Early Childhood Center (ECC), in collaboration with the Nassau County Early Childhood Direction Center, recently held its annual "Transition to K" workshop for parents whose children will be graduating this August to begin kindergarten in their home districts in the fall. The two-part workshop assisted parents in preparing for this new chapter in their children's lives, which, while certainly an event worth celebrating, can also be quite challenging, in turn.

Carolyn Gammerman, Director of the Early Childhood Direction Center, conducted a detailed presentation at the first workshop, which informed parents of the laws and regulations they should be aware of. She provided a timeline, as well, so parents would know what to expect during the course of the next few months.

During the informative session, Gammerman also spoke about the meetings parents will be attending with the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) and the Committee on Special Education (CSE) in their school districts. She reviewed several points for parents to keep in mind in preparation for the meetings; for example, obtaining copies of materials (prior reports; plans; tests); writing down questions and identifying the child's particular strengths and personality. "Parents know their child best," Gammerman related. "It's important for the Committee to look at the whole child."

In acknowledging that the transition process can be somewhat overwhelming, Gammerman also encouraged parents to invite someone, such as a friend or parent member, to attend the meetings with them. ECC Social Worker Cecelia Lynch concurred, "Bringing someone with you is helpful in providing support and it is within your rights to do so."

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At the workshop's second session, ECC alumni parent Lisa Vizza addressed several issues that typically arise during this transition. Vizza, whose son, now a 5th grader in his home school district, recalled her own anxieties about his leaving Mill Neck's "nice, cozy environment." She not only wondered how he'd adapt to a new and different class setting, but also if her child would be looked after as well as he'd been at Mill Neck. She was used to very small class sizes and strong parent support at the ECC. In this way, the transition affects both parent and student. From each of her experiences volunteering at these workshops, Vizza has found this to be the number one concern among parents and has suggested meeting with the new school's principal and social worker early on to communicate these concerns.

Vizza also spoke about the anxiety related to the CSE meeting. While parents may be somewhat familiar with these conferences if they've attended CPSE meetings, the CSE is typically attended by a larger group of school personnel and can rightly be overwhelming. Vizza reiterated having the support of a friend or parent advocate present at the meeting. Regarding support available after their child begins kindergarten, she also said, "I strongly suggest parents join SEPTA (the Special Education Parent Teacher Association) as soon as they can." SEPTA can assist parents in understanding the education issues impacting their child, in the most effective ways possible.

As to parents' apprehension about their child's adjustment to his/her future school, Vizza advised taking every opportunity to introduce the new school into the child's routine, prior to the first day of school. "I would advocate attending every kindergarten orientation offered as well as taking the child to the playground and even to events, such as concerts. These are great ways to familiarize the child to the school building and surroundings." Children will get to meet the principal and their new classroom teacher, as well as other incoming students. Vizza reassured parents that children typically adjust well and often, make new friends easily. Knowing this and being aware of the resources available, ensures a successful and smooth transition to kindergarten for parent and child alike.

Founded in 1991, the Early Childhood Center provides early and intensive assistance to children, ages 3 and 4, who may have deficits in speech, language/communication, cognitive and gross and fine motor development. The Center also provides full evaluations of preschool children suspected of having developmental delays. Most children who attend the program graduate and attend kindergarten in their home school districts. For more information about the Early Childhood Center, please call (516) 922-4100, ext. 276, or visit <http://www.millneck.org>.

Photo Caption:

The majority of ECC students move on to kindergarten in their home school districts.

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