



*It Takes a Village for  
Our Youngest  
Students*

**FRIDAY  
CONNECT**

Feb. 23, 2024

In the Chehalis School District, student achievement starts with a student-centered education that rises to meet each individual student's learning needs. At James Lintott Elementary, a whole team of educators works to make sure this is the case for some of our district's youngest learners.

There are about 26 kids ages 3-5 in the developmental preschool program at James Lintott, though their numbers change all year long. The program is open to students who are not yet 5 by August 31st of the current school year, who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and reside within the Chehalis School District boundaries. Students who require special education services are typically identified through Birth to Three early intervention programs such as the Summit Center's [Growing Together Program](#), or through referral to the Chehalis School District [Child Find](#).

The team that makes up the preschool program includes: Hillary Sibley, Preschool Teacher; Jamie Smith, Preschool Teacher; Ruth Stoker, Paraeducator; Ashley Gruginski, Paraeducator; Elizabeth Laffranchini, Paraeducator; Jill Peterson, Teacher for the Visually Impaired and Orientation/Mobility Specialist; Sandy Jones, Speech Language Pathologist; Leann Kay, Occupational Therapy Assistant; Deborah Overby, OT Paraeducator; Kendra Schack, Occupational Therapist; Janell Schade, Physical Therapist; and Susan Veatch-Nugen, School Psychologist.

One aspect that makes this program unique is that there are also spots in the preschool for students who do not have IEPs. Referred to as peer models, they learn alongside the students with IEPs in an environment where every student is simply there to be a learner.

"It's for inclusion and so they get used to seeing each other and working with each other. That preps them for kindergarten and life, really," Sibley said of the peer models.

The Lintott office keeps a waiting list for any families interested in having their child be a peer model and preschool staff call families at the end of August to discuss placement and registration. Peer models must be turning 5 on or after September 1st of the coming school year.



### Specialists Help Students Grow

Taught by experienced, certified early childhood special education teachers, the developmental preschool program holds classes in two 2.5-hour sessions four days a week. The work students do in preschool is very similar to any other preschool program, with time for breakfast or lunch, stories, songs and art. Teachers also work with students on the social skills needed for success in a classroom setting, such as sitting in a chair, raising their hand, cleaning up after themselves, playing nicely and sharing and lining up and walking in the hallways.

Our preschool students also get to work on academic kindergarten readiness skills such as recognizing shapes and colors, learning the alphabet and reading and writing. The preschool uses a program called Zoophonics that is the same program used by kindergarten classrooms in Chehalis.

"A lot of what they see in Kindergarten, they'll get it here first and it won't be such a high learning curve for them," Sibley said.

While the majority of the work preschool students do during the day is in the classroom, students who require additional help have specialists on site to help. Students can receive services such as Occupational Therapy, instruction from a vision specialist, Speech Therapy or Physical Therapy without having to leave the building.

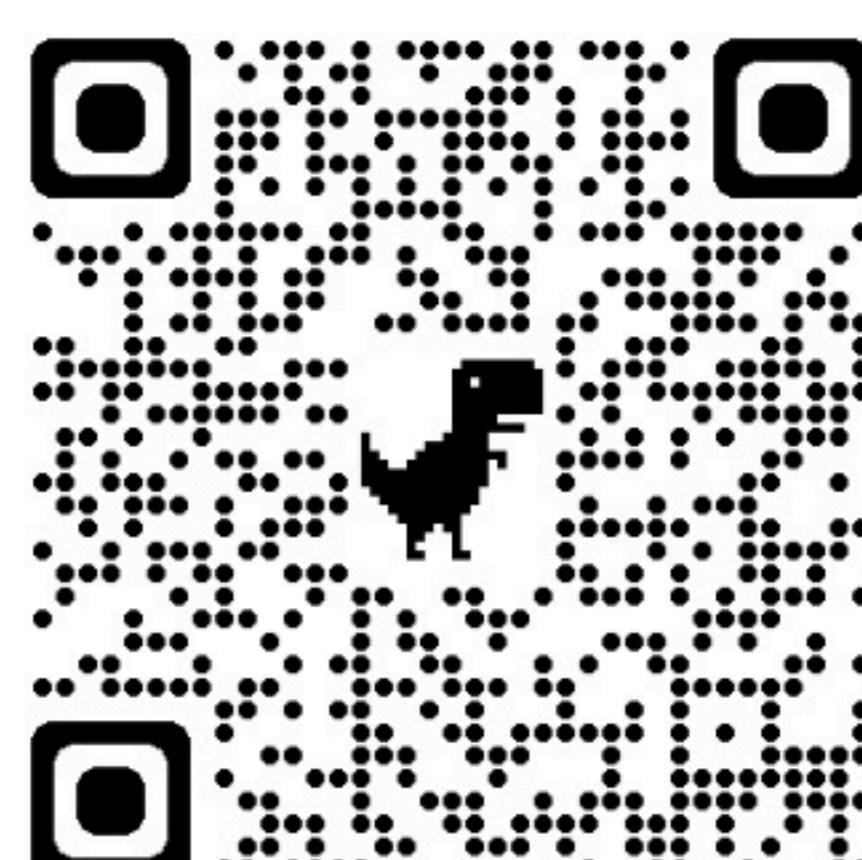
"Students in our program move on to kindergarten with different plans and support based on their individual needs, but they all experience growth," Jones said.



Jill Peterson, teacher for the visually impaired and orientation/mobility specialist works one-on-one with a student.

### Bearcat Mentors Needed

In an effort to better support more Chehalis students, Bearcat Connect, our alumni association, has done some brainstorming and revamping of its Mentoring Program to focus more on Career Mentoring. Bearcat alumni are asked to consider signing up to become a mentor today.



What does career mentoring look like? Quite simply, being a resource to students who have questions or would like to further explore your area of professional expertise. This could be in the form of a phone call, email, job shadow, or scheduled meeting. We want Bearcats to learn from people like you as they begin to narrow down what pathway they want to choose beyond high school. It is just as valuable to discover what you are passionate about as it is to discover what career may not fulfill that passion.

Would you be willing to be a part of our career mentor network at W.F. West? If so, please take a moment to sign up at [bearcatconnect.com](http://bearcatconnect.com) or using the QR code.

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