

Liberal

Background

USD #480 has a long history of providing preschool services to families in Liberal. The district partnered with High Plains Special Education Cooperative/ Russell Child Development Center in Garden City to provide Early Childhood Special Education services in the early 1980's.

In 1986, the district opted to administer all special programs. The Special Education preschool program was located in a district elementary school and expanded to two other elementary school sites within five years. The District also opened Migrant preschool classrooms for 3 and 4-year-old children at two other elementary school sites.

Long range planning in the 1990's determined children could best be served by locating all early childhood programs in one building. In 2001, The Preschool Center, which houses all preschool programs, opened in a K-3 building.

Description of Existing Preschool Programs

The 10 classrooms at The Preschool Center include three (3) Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and seven (7) Migrant 3-4yr/ 4 yr. At-Risk classrooms. Children attend for three (3) hours for five (5) days a week.

As best practices in early childhood special education encouraged inclusion of role models in ECSE classrooms, the district started the peer role model program in 2004. Current enrollment includes 23 ECSE students, 11 peer role models, 170 At-Risk students and 11 Migrant students.

The 4-yr.-old At-Risk program has a waiting list of 40 students at this time. Migrant regulations changed and increased the at-risk population of Liberal. Many families no longer qualify for migrant status, but do qualify for at-risk.

Head Start is currently serving 78 children in Liberal. Of these children, 12 are home-based with the rest attending a part-day center-based program. The waiting list is three (3) times the number of children served.

USD #480 currently collaborates with Early Head Start to provide room and office space as needed. Parents and Children Together, Inc., (PACT), a non-profit agency that provides ECSE services to children from birth to two years in Seward County, currently serves 40 children with special needs. These children transition to USD #480 before age three. The children seen by PACT, Inc., are seen in home-based settings; time varies for each child as indicated by IFSP.

Liberal currently has two well-established private preschool/child care programs with full enrollment. In August 2008, a long-term preschool/child care center serving 77 children closed.

Partners

USD #480 (Liberal School District), KCSL Head Start

Program Goal

Liberal will implement a full inclusion model for 4-year-old at-risk students and 3-5year/old special needs students in Liberal, including school district services and collaboration with Head Start. (Total = 215)