

The Early Education Center
Blue Hills Regional Technical School

PARENT HANDBOOK
2026-2027

Blue Hills Regional Technical School
800 Randolph Street
Canton, MA 02021
781-828-5800 x 2060

*This handbook is subject to change based on current health metrics and guidelines

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PHILOSOPHY

The Early Education Center at Blue Hills Regional Technical School is a state approved, teacher training preschool that models high-quality early childhood education. Student teachers learn to carry out “best practices” in early childhood education and transform principles of child development and educational theories into a unique preschool learning experience for your child.

Our philosophy reflects the current educational research that young children learn best through hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences while developing relationships with caring adults. Our classroom is designed to provide a safe, happy, and stimulating environment where each child will feel nurtured and experience learning, success, and growth.

OUR TEACHERS

The Early Education Center is staffed by Blue Hills’ educators that are certified preschool teachers by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). The high school students work as student teachers under the direct supervision of the Blue Hills’ instructors.

Student teachers learn and practice all aspects of an early education program. They study young children’s physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, as well as the teaching methods most appropriate for preschool-aged children. They implement health and safety regulations, child guidance and classroom management skills, complete developmental assessments, communicate with parents, as well as plan the daily curriculum. The students learn and plan using the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care’s licensing regulations and the state’s Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences.

The Early Education program is a four-year vocational course of study at Blue Hills Regional Technical School. During their four years in the program, approximately 12–14 students are in training each week in the preschool classroom. The students alternate their week in the preschool with a week of academic classes. Since we are a hands-on teaching program, all grades from freshman to seniors may observe and/or participate in the preschool under the direct supervision of Blue Hills’ instructors.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Enrollment in the Early Education Center is open to all children from the surrounding communities who are two years and nine months to six years old. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, cultural heritage, disability, or the marital status, political beliefs, or sexual orientation of the parents. Families must have toured to be eligible for enrollment in the program. Children with special needs are eligible to enroll with the understanding that we do not deliver special education services. We will support the child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to the extent possible as a high school laboratory classroom. We recognize that we may not be able to meet the needs of every child, in such instances, we will work with the family to try to accommodate the child’s needs while we work on an appropriate referral to services within the community.

The Early Education Center offers these enrollment options:

2 days a week 8:30-12:00	**Tuesday/Thursday or Wednesday/Friday**
4 days a week 8:30-12:00	**Tuesday-Friday**

Please arrive on time to support the morning routines and arrive promptly for dismissal, as we are unable to provide care beyond this time due to our obligations to the high school students.

We follow the Blue Hills' school calendar. The program runs from mid-September to early-June. A school year calendar will be provided in the fall, and a monthly preschool calendar is provided at the beginning of each month. Once a month, Blue Hills' schedules in-service training for high school staff. On these mornings, there will be no preschool. If there is an afternoon event that closes the high school, the preschool will also be closed. The monthly preschool calendar will remind you of these days.

Registration occurs in the spring for the following fall. Enrollment is first offered to the currently enrolled families and their siblings starting February 1st-February 28th. We will open enrollment to new families on March 1st until we are fully enrolled, at which time we generate a waiting list. There is a maximum enrollment of 20 children per day. We have an open door policy for enrolled families to visit and/or call during hours of operations to inquire how their child is doing.

Parents inquiring about the program are asked to call for an appointment to visit the school at a time convenient for the program, the daily schedule, and the staff.

Orientation Day is to be held in the fall before the program begins so that you and your child can become familiar with the classroom, meet some of the children and student teachers, and prepare your child for the first day of school. Parent input, questions and suggestions about improving the program are always welcomed.

Communication is preferred through the Brightwheel app. It is free for parents to download. The messages you send will only be seen by Blue Hills' instructors and student teachers. We will send videos, pictures, potty updates, curriculum, tuition, announcements, etc. through this app. You can also email or call us as well if needed. If you need to reach us during preschool hours, please message us through the app or call. We cannot always check email when the preschool is open.

TUITION

- The tuition deposit is due before June 1st
- Tuition is non-refundable.
- Tuition is due on the first day of the month.
- Tuition policy is a separate document that is updated yearly and signed by parents on Brightwheel
- Tuition statements can be seen on Brightwheel app (autopay is available)

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

Parents are entitled to access their child's record and to request copies of its contents. Information in your child's file is privileged and confidential. We will not speak to anyone about your child or provide any part of your child's record to anyone without your written consent.

Confidentiality is taught and is expected of the student teachers. Under the supervision of the Blue Hills' Instructors, students are assigned to review the information in your child's file that you provided at intake, and your child's developmental history in order to get to know your child and to prepare to write your child's progress report.

REFERRALS AND TERMINATION

If we find that we are not able to meet your child's individual needs (physical, cognitive, emotional, or social) the Blue Hills' Instructor will consult with the family to discuss the concerns and to decide on a course of action. We will provide you with a written description of the concern(s) and recommend that you contact:

- Your child's health care provider.
- The Early Childhood Coordinator of the child's hometown school system for special education screenings and evaluations.
- The MA Department of Children and Families, 617-748-2400.
- The Child-At-Risk Hotline, 800-792-5200.
- For referrals to other programs:
  Child Care Works, 508-999-9930 ext:128 (for residents of Avon, Holbrook, Sharon, and Stoughton, and Walpole)
  Community Care for Kids, 617-657-5305 (for Braintree, Canton, Dedham, Milton, Norwood, Randolph, and Westwood)
- For Head Start; call Self-Help Inc. 508-588-5440

Blue Hills Regional Technical School reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment if we are unable to meet the child's individual needs after making reasonable accommodations. Other situations that may result in termination are; failure to pay tuition in a timely manner, and being unable to resolve differences between the family and the program. We are not affiliated with these programs and offer them as a resource. Please do your own due diligence and research any childcare provider.

WITHDRAWING YOUR CHILD

If you decide to withdraw your child during the school year, please notify us in writing by the first of the month when you pay that month's tuition. No reimbursement will be made for withdrawing your child in the middle of the month. Children and staff need time to prepare for saying goodbye. We will make your child's last day special by drawing pictures for him/her, and we will discuss why he/she is leaving. You may want to bring in a special treat for snack time on your child's last day.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND SNOW POLICY

If it becomes necessary to cancel or delay the opening of the high school, for storms or emergencies, announcements will be made through local television stations and the Blue Hills website. When the high school is closed, the Early Education Center is closed. When the high school has a delayed opening, the Early Education Center will be closed for the day. Blue Hills Regional Technical School is listed separately and is not included as part of any town school system announcements for radio and television.

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

Regular attendance helps your child make the most of their preschool experience. If your child will not be attending for any reason, please send a message through Brightwheel or call us (781-828-5800 x 2060) so that we will know whom to expect.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Arrival: We take our responsibility for your child's safety very seriously. Please walk your child up the sidewalk and bring your child into the preschool ramp at 8:30 (doors do not open until 8:30). Children have labeled cubbies for their personal belongings. We encourage children to hang up their jackets and take care of their possessions to the best of their abilities.

You may want to send in a backpack to bring home your child's artwork, projects and notices. Each child has a cubbie to hang his/her jacket and a bin for their daily notices and artwork. We ask that children do not bring toys from home to school. Sharing and being responsible for special personal possessions are especially difficult for young children. Losing or breaking toys are disappointing experiences.

Some children may have a difficult time saying goodbye to you on their first days, or after they've been on vacation or home sick for several days. **Once you have decided that you are leaving, please do not hesitate or sneak out.** Most children benefit from being prepared for what to expect. Tell us when you're ready to go, and we will hold your child's hand, wave goodbye, reassure him/her that you will come back and try to engage him/her in an activity.

Preschool Dismissal: Please arrive before 12:00 to pick up your child. During inclement weather, we will bring your child out to you on the ramp. We cannot provide care for your child after 12:00. If you are running late, please call someone on your list of authorized adults to come for your child, and then call or message us on Brightwheel to let us know whom to expect. If we have not heard from you by 12:05 we will call you, then your emergency contacts to come pick-up your child.

We will not release your child to anyone who is not on your pick-up list.

Please be sure to list all the people who might pick up your child from school; including babysitters, neighbors, friends or relatives. Tell them that we will ask to see a driver's license to verify their identity and compare it to the authorized adults for pick-up list.

Older siblings and other young adults must be at least 18 years old to pick up a child. In the event of a restraining order, a copy must be provided to us to keep in the child's file. It must be discussed with the instructor at enrollment or as soon as one is issued. **Permissions must be in writing, so we cannot accept a telephone call to add someone to your pick-up list.**

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

As a lab preschool, our operational hours are from 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM, and we are unable to provide care outside of these designated times. We recognize that unforeseen circumstances may occasionally result in late pick-ups. In such instances, we kindly request that you make every effort to promptly contact both your designated adult pick-up and our center, allowing us to arrange alternative dismissal plans for your child.

To ensure a smooth operation and minimize disruption, we have implemented a late pick-up policy outlined as follows:

- **First Late Pick-Up:** Upon the first instance of late pick-up, an email reminder detailing our late pick-up policy will be sent as a courtesy.
- **Second Late Pick-Up:** A fee of $5 will be automatically applied for the second late pick-up, with an additional charge of $1 for every subsequent minute thereafter.
- **Multiple Late Occurrences:** If late pick-ups exceed three instances, you will receive written notice of immediate termination of enrollment.

For example, should you arrive at 12:02 PM for pick-up, a late fee of $5 plus an additional $2 (for two minutes past the designated time) will be charged, resulting in a total fee of $7.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in adhering to our pick-up policy. This policy is in place to maintain the efficiency of our operations and ensure the well-being of all children in our care. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy, please feel free to reach out to us. Thank you for your continued support of our preschool program.

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

Blue Hills' does not offer transportation to The Early Education Center. Parents transport their own children or carpool with other families. The first time you visit, you should park in a visitor's spot at the front of the school, and enter the lobby where they will issue you a visitor's pass. We will send a student to escort you to the preschool. When your child is enrolled, you can park along the curb at the sidewalk that leads to our playground. Our classroom door is #45, and we have a sign in front that is right across from the playground. For their safety, please do not leave children unattended in your car or let them run onto school property, into the driveway, or in the parking lot.

Remember:

- **Smoking is NOT allowed on school property.**
- **Children are NOT allowed on school property before or after school.**
- **Please walk your child by the hand *on the sidewalk* to and from your car.**
- **Please keep children off the hill as classes are in session.**

FIELD TRIPS

We regularly take the children for walks inside the school as well as walks around the school grounds. We do not take children on field trips away from the school. We regularly visit the school library, the gym, and the school nurse. We plan special visits to some of the other vocational programs throughout the year. We may visit Culinary Arts for a cooking lesson, Cosmetology for a manicure, Construction Technology for a lesson in hammering, the restaurant for snacks, or visit the Auto Body or Commercial Arts programs. Some visits (i.e. Cosmetology) will require your written permission.

BUILDING SECURITY AND SCHOOL EMERGENCIES

Blue Hills Regional Technical School works closely with the Canton Police Department to maximize the safety of everyone in the building, including the preschool children. No one is allowed into the building without a visitor's pass, and no one is allowed into the preschool without the instructor's permission. All the doors to the preschool remain locked to outsiders. Only school staff and the early education high school students are allowed in the preschool.

When a disruptive incident has occurred in the school or on our grounds, an announcement will be made describing the incident/situation based on real-time information. Faculty/staff and students are asked to respond based on the real-time information given over the PA. The teacher will refer to the school's safety procedures.

FIRE DRILLS

Fire Drills are scheduled regularly throughout the year. The fire alarm sounds, and we evacuate the children out our exterior door and walk them to a safe area to the west of the school, away from the building. We take attendance and keep the children calm and supervised until the fire department allows us to re-enter the building. If you arrive during a fire drill, we will not be able to release your child to you until we are given permission to re-enter the building. We always notify you when there has been a fire drill.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Every child enrolled in a child care program in Massachusetts is required by the Department of Public Health to have up-to-date documentation of a physical exam on file, (dated within the previous year), and an up-to-date immunization record. Please upload all copies of documentation into Brightwheel. **Your child cannot start school until we have received proper documentation of your child's recent physical exam and immunization record.**

ACCIDENT REPORTS

Blue Hills' instructors maintain current First Aid and CPR certifications. Student teachers are also First Aid and CPR certified. We will give minor first aid whenever your child gets an injury at school, and you will receive an accident report. You will need to sign the accident report when you pick up your child, at which time you will also be given your own copy. The Blue Hills' school nurse will be called to assist in more serious accidents. **In case of emergencies, we will: 1) call 911, 2) call the school nurse, and then 3) notify you of the emergency.** These serious emergencies require additional documentation.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All teachers and child care providers in Massachusetts are mandated by state law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to The Department of Children and Families. Suspicions of abuse are brought to the Blue Hills' Instructor's attention, who immediately notifies the Blue Hills' Principal. The Department of Children and Families is notified and a 51A report is filed. We will cooperate with all investigations of suspected/reported cases of abuse or neglect.

Reports of alleged abuse by school personnel must be directed to the Blue Hills' Principal and to The Department of Children and Families for investigation. Investigation procedures will be conducted in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 42.

MEDICATION

We cannot administer nonprescription and prescription medications of any kind, without a written permission form signed by your child's health care provider. If your child needs regular medications, or has allergies requiring emergency medications (i.e. EPI-PEN), we will discuss this with you at enrollment to be certain that we are prepared for your child's care.

If your child has been exposed to an illness at school, we will notify you with a letter from the Health and Safety in Child Care manual (MA Department of Public Health) so that you are informed about the illness and its symptoms.

SICK POLICY

Children cannot attend the Early Education Center when they are sick with a contagious condition. Children may return to school when they have been fever and/or diarrhea free for 24 hours. In some cases, 24 hours after prescribed medication has been given and/or a physician's note may be required before your child can return. In light of the recent pandemic, we need to be very diligent about all symptoms. Please refer to How Sick is Sick? for specific guidelines on when to keep your child home and when he/she can return.

If your child becomes sick at school, we will call you to pick up as soon as possible. We will try to keep your child comfortable until you arrive. If we are unable to reach either parent/guardian, we will contact one of your emergency contacts.

How sick is sick?

I need to stay home if:	I am ready to go back to school when I am…
Fever Temperature of 100 degrees or higher	Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication (i.e. Advil, Tylenol, etc.)
Vomiting and/ or Diarrhea Within the past 24 hours	Free from vomiting for at least 24 hours
Rash Body rash with itching or fever	Free from rash or itching, or fever. I have been evaluated by my doctor if needed
Eye Infection Redness, itching, and/ or crusty drainage from eye*	Evaluated by my doctor.
Hospital Stay and/ or ER visit For any reason*	Released by a medical provider to return to school.
Cough/ Cold with other symptoms Cold or bad cough with thick green/ yellow nasal discharge	Not coughing consistently and have clear nasal drainage

If your child has strep throat or another bacterial infection, they should stay home until the antibiotic has been given for at least 24 hours and your health care provider has given permission for your child to return to school.

We encourage you to seek medical attention when your child is sick and to follow your health care provider's recommendations about returning to school.

*** Please inform us of the illness**

CHILD GUIDANCE PLAN

Young children need positive guidance from supportive adults to help them learn the difference between expected behaviors and unexpected behaviors. In the process of growing and learning socially expected behavior, most children will test the limits. Student teachers are learning and practicing effective guidance and behavior management techniques in the classroom with the children. These include:

- **Modeling appropriate behavior and language.**
- **Establishing simple, basic, consistent classroom expectations early in the school year.**
- **Redirecting a child to another activity or area of the room.**
- **Using positive phrases to remind children of the classroom expectations. (Ex. saying "Please walk" instead of "Don't run").**
- **Preparing children in advance for new situations by stating the expectations clearly, (ex. "We're going to hold hands and walk on the sidewalk")**
- **Helping children learn how to express their feelings verbally ("Tell your friend how it makes you feel")**
- **Helping children learn alternative ways to solve their problems. (Ex. Waiting for a turn, sharing, compromising)**
- **Helping children learn to deal with the consequences of their behavior. (Ex. Showing him/her how to repair a book he/she ripped)**
- **Removing a child from the immediate situation to calm down and/or discuss his/her behavior. We do not use "TIME-OUT" or exclusion.**
- **Identifying and recognizing children's prosocial behaviors. (ex. "Thank you for sharing the clay with your friends, that's very thoughtful of you").**

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT, VERBAL ABUSE, RESTRAINT
OR DENIAL OF FOOD IS NEVER USED TO DISCIPLINE CHILDREN.

DIAPERS AND TOILETING

We have two bathrooms in the classroom for the children's use whenever they need. We also take each child to the bathroom just before snack time. Children are helped with their clothing and handwashing. The student teachers are trained in proper handwashing, supervision, and sanitation practices. However, student teachers do not change diapers, wipe bottoms and are not alone with children in the bathroom per EEC regulations. The children are supervised at all times while using the bathroom.

Children who are toilet training or who are still practicing to use the toilet independently will need to wear clothing that they can manage quickly and easily to alleviate possible accidents (i.e. no belts, snaps or buttons).

Children's diapers will be changed as needed by Blue Hills' instructors. Parents of children who are in diapers or who are toilet training are responsible for providing a supply of disposable diapers, a container of wipes, and several changes of pants and underwear to be kept at school.

SNACK

The Early Education Center provides a nutritious snack every day around mid-morning. Snack is a group experience which encourages nutrition education, language, and social interaction as well as building self-help skills. Snacks are served "family style" and children serve themselves from baskets that are passed around. They pour their own water from child sized pitchers. We serve fresh fruits and vegetables, 100% fruit juice, 2% milk, whole grain crackers, and Poland Spring water. We limit the serving of less nutritious foods like cookies, donuts and cake. The student teachers occasionally plan simple cooking activities as a lesson plan (fruit salad, pudding…). The daily snack is printed on the monthly calendar.

Some typical snacks:

Fresh fruit and Wheat thins
Yogurt and Teddy Grahams
Tossed salad, Club crackers
String cheese and crackers
Fresh vegetables, hummus, and saltines
Cheerios, bananas, and milk
Applesauce and graham crackers

Due to allergies and dietary restrictions, we ask that you do not send a donation of "treats" for the class.

LUNCH

Parents will provide a bagged **NUT FREE** lunch for their child. We cannot heat items up or store items in the refrigerator. Please send any utensils needed for your child's lunch, such as a fork or spoon.

BIRTHDAYS

We would be happy to celebrate your child's birthday during snack time. If you would like to bring a food-related item, then we will provide you a list of allergy safe items. Please do not send in decorations. Invitations cannot be given out at school. Please utilize the school directory to communicate with other families.

CURRICULUM

Young children learn best through play and direct "hands-on" experiences. The curriculum follows weekly skill-based lesson plans made by the student teachers with the support of the Blue Hills' instructors. The lessons are written using the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences to ensure children receive the needed skills for kindergarten.

Our program provides a variety of teacher-directed and self-initiated learning. The children are able to explore their environment during free-choice and work-time activities. They are given the freedom to plan their learning, seek out peer and/or adult socialization, and navigate problem-solving skills. This allows your child to take ownership of their learning experiences. They will be supported by a student teacher at work-time to facilitate and discuss the learning experiences. During small groups, children work with a student teacher on the developmentally appropriate activities for their age and ability. We are a process-oriented program, so many times there will not be a physical product to go home. However, we will show you pictures on Brightwheel, so you can engage your child in a discussion about their experiences.

Every day, your child will be actively involved in the classroom and outdoors. Please dress your child in washable play clothes that do not inhibit his/her participation. Even when they are wearing smocks to protect their clothing, your child will get dirty and occasionally "painty" as a normal part of their active participation in activities. Your child needs to wear clothes that they can quickly manage by themselves in the bathroom. Sturdy shoes or sneakers are appropriate and safe, sandals are not permitted. **Please bring in a complete change of clothes (pants, shirt, underwear, socks) labeled with your child's name, to keep at school in case of an accident.**

Children preparing for kindergarten the following year will be working with the following programs: Lively Letters™ is a research-based and clinically-proven, multisensory reading program that turns plain, abstract letters and sounds into lively characters.

Handwriting Without Tears curriculum uses a multisensory tactile approach to increasing fine motor skills. The use of concrete borders to support letter formation coupled with developmentally appropriate stages to handwriting gives the children time to progress at their own speed.

THE DAILY ROUTINE

8:30-9:00 Children Arrive; a choice of simple, open-ended activities are available for free play with the student teachers. Examples are: play dough, dramatic play, games, books, the interactive smart board, blocks…*

9:00-9:05 Clean-up; everyone helps return things to their proper place.

9:05-9:10 Movement; In a large group, we dance or play a game.

9:10-9:25 Small Groups; children meet with their assigned student teachers for an activity specific to their educational needs, abilities and interests. (dismiss groups one at a time to wash hands for snack)

9:25-9:45 Snack; a nutritious snack is served “family style”, which allows the children to pour their own juice, pass the food, serve themselves and clean up after themselves.

9:45-9:50 Movement; In a large group, we dance or play a game.

9:50-10:05 Circle Time; in the large group we: take attendance, review the calendar and weather, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, play a group game, and sing a few songs. The activities of the day are explained to the children, who then choose their first activity.

10:05-10:40 Work Time; the student teachers plan various lessons throughout the classroom relating to the theme of the week. Every day there are lessons in art, science, math, literacy, writing, and blocks, or dramatic play.*

10:40-10:45 Clean-up; everyone helps return things to their proper place.

10:45-11:00 Story Time; Lively Letters curriculum, read aloud story

11:00-11:30 Lunch children eat the NUT FREE lunch provided by their family

11:30-12:00 Outdoor Play/Gross Motor Activities; we play outdoors every day, weather permitting, even in the winter! (But not when it’s raining or when the “real feel” temperature is below 28 degrees). We often take nature walks around the school. (dismiss groups one at a time to wash hands for lunch)

11:55-12:00 Dismissal

*If we have to stay indoors, we may do gross motor activities in our room, go to the big gym, or take a walk inside the school. We will leave a note on our exterior door that tells you where we are and when we are returning.

*** The children are always given a two-minute warning to help prepare them for clean-up.**

PROGRESS REPORTS

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care requires progress reports to be given for children attending a child care program. Progress reports will be written by students with support from Blue Hills' Instructors in the spring. Parents will be invited to attend a parent-teacher conference to discuss your child's progress. Parent conferences are not mandatory but recommended. Parents will be given copies of progress reports. Parents may also request progress meetings at any time if they would like to discuss their child's development.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Blue Hills' Instructors are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Early Education Center and oversee the supervision of the student teachers in the classroom. The Lead Teacher of the Early Education department oversees the high school Early Education and Care program. The Vocational Director oversees the Lead Teacher, as well as all the vocational programs and vocational instructors at Blue Hills.

MA DEPARTMENT OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE, LICENSING REGULATIONS, MA DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Early Education program at Blue Hills Regional Technical School has been approved by Massachusetts' **Department of Early Education and Care** as a preschool teacher training facility. Although we are exempt from licensing, The Early Education Center uses the Massachusetts' Early Education and Care regulations as a model for student teacher education. Upon graduation, students who successfully complete the Early Education program are recommended for Preschool Teacher certification by the Department of Early Education and Care.

A copy of the Department of Early Education and Care licensing regulations is available in the preschool office or can be accessed at: Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) laws, regulations, and Policies

The Early Education Center implements the Department of Early Education and Care's Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences (AKA the "standards"). These guidelines are available at: Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences

If you are interested in what is the student teachers are learning in the Early Education and Care program at Blue Hills, you can view the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Vocational Technical Education Frameworks at: VTE Framework: Early Education and Car