



## PARENT HANDBOOK

*“It is our vision that each child who comes through our door  
joins a community of children, families, and teachers engaged in  
the joy, work, and wonder of childhood.”*

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**WELCOME TO**

**THE SMITH COLLEGE**  
**CENTER FOR EARLY**  
**CHILDHOOD**  
**EDUCATION**

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education (CECE) at Fort Hill. I am pleased that you have chosen to enroll your child in our program and I am looking forward to your families' participation.

Parents are an integral part of our program and I hope you will feel welcome to participate in the program in ways that meet your families' needs. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the program, please feel free to contact me either by e-mail, telephone or dropping in to my office.

Fort Hill is unique in many ways and it is an honor to be the director of the program. The teachers are knowledgeable and caring and reflect genuine respect for children and their potential. We value the relationships we develop with families and children, as well as with each other. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to communicate more clearly with your family or if you have suggestions or concerns.

The Parent Handbook is designed to provide families with practical information about the Fort Hill program and community. We also communicate information by e-mail and on our website, [www.smith.edu/forthill](http://www.smith.edu/forthill).

Thank you for joining the Fort Hill community.

Sincerely,

Martha Christenson Lees  
Director, Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education

## **A. PROGRAM HISTORY**

In 1926, Smith College President William Allan Neilson established both the Smith College Nursery School and the Smith College Day School.

The Nursery School opened with fifteen students, many of them children of the Smith College faculty. It had been organized as a cooperative school by The Institute for the Coordination of Women's Interests and provided educational opportunities for Smith graduate students. It became a part of the Education Department in 1928.

For many years the two laboratory schools formed one school called the Smith College Campus School located on two sites of the Smith College campus: Gill Hall on Prospect Street housing the kindergarten through sixth grade program and Fort Hill on Lyman Road housing the preschool program.

The Campus School began offering full-day programs at the Fort Hill site in 1992 when an Infant and Toddler Program and an Extended-Day Program were established to provide childcare services for Smith faculty and staff. Initially these programs were based entirely in the Fort Hill building. As the number of families utilizing the programs steadily increased, additional classrooms were added in adjacent buildings to accommodate the larger number of children enrolled.

In 2003, in response to a campus-wide Child Care Study Committee, the Preschool Program, the Infant/Toddler Program and the Extended-Day Program formed The Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education (an entity separate from the Campus School) to provide continuity for children, families, and staff.

A new facility was completed in August 2005 to house the early childhood program. The building has one classroom for infants, three classrooms for toddlers and three classrooms for preschoolers, as well as a studio, two community rooms and a library.

The program is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to serve ninety-four children. Our mission is to model and to provide exemplary early education and care for young children, to offer a laboratory for research, practicum, and internships for college students and faculty, and to support the needs of college employees and their families.

## **B. PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

With a mission to provide exemplary early education and care for young children, we strive to create and sustain a caring and respectful community dedicated to supporting the growth and development of each child. In such a cooperative and responsive community, differences are accepted and celebrated, and all relationships are based on respect.

Central to our philosophy is the belief that emotional security and attachment to responsive and respectful adults provide the basis for learning. We view the learning process as a dynamic one that is enhanced by openness to new ideas and willingness to take intellectual risks in the pursuit of knowledge. Guided by a deep respect for the potential of all young children, we recognize the individual learning style, developmental timetable, and personal strength of each child.

We believe that children learn best through active exploration, experience, interaction, experimentation and modeling. We see the classroom environment as another teacher; each classroom design is carefully planned and evolves throughout the year to meet the needs of the children within a structure of routine, predictability, and consistency. Teachers act as guides, observers and collaborators with children in their learning and discovery, as partners with parents and as collaborators with one another.

### **C. DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY**

The Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education shares with parents the ultimate responsibility for guiding children toward the goal of self-regulation. The staff believes that setting firm, consistent rules helps to build a child's conscience and self-control. We utilize teaching strategies, limits and routines that foster the internalized controls, awareness of others, and positive social exchanges essential for constructive group life.

Children are guided with positive directions and rational explanations of expectations. To promote the development of autonomy, they are given choices within appropriate limits. We consider the classroom environment to be an important tool in this process. The environment is arranged so that a minimal number of "no's" is necessary. Teachers alter the physical environment, the style of supervision, or the activities offered in the classroom to affect children's behavior, minimize conflict and promote negotiation and cooperation.

We recognize, however, that it is both common and age-appropriate for young children to test limits and behave "out of bounds." This is their way of exploring relationships, expressing their deep feelings, and testing their own autonomy. Infants and toddlers especially may hit, pull hair, poke, push, snatch toys, bite and yell, as a means to get what they want, to express frustration, or simply to explore another person's response. Depending on the age and motivation for the child's misbehavior, our intervention strategies will vary. However, our message to the children ALWAYS is that, although these behaviors are understandable and their feelings are acceptable and important; hurtful behaviors are NOT acceptable. Our goal is to recognize the individual needs of children while helping them develop legitimate, appropriate ways of meeting their needs without hurting others or the materials.

We do use the technique of "logical consequences" with older toddlers and preschoolers. In the case of a child misusing a material, s/he first is given the opportunity to use it appropriately. If that is not possible, the child must give up the activity to try again later or the next day. If two children are over-stimulating each other or disturbing others, they first are given the opportunity to settle down. If that is not possible, they must spend some time apart to rechannel their energies and are given the opportunity to play/work together again later or the next day.

Discipline involves setting limits and at times restricting or prohibiting, but it involves much more. It incorporates respect and caring for self and others, explaining the reasons for limits, and helping to provide control for a child who lacks self-control. It also involves helping a child distinguish between feelings and behaviors, developing an appropriate repertoire for expressing one's feelings and needs, and developing empathy. The Fort Hill teachers are guided by a book by John Gottman, Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child.

## **D. CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY**

The curriculum for the Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education reflects the staff's commitment to what we believe and know to be best practice in the early childhood field. We view children as researchers of their world, constructing knowledge on an ongoing basis.

We have found inspiration in the early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. These Reggio Emilia schools have been recognized worldwide for their care of young children and their commitment to excellence. We are fortunate that Smith College has a professional connection with Pistoia, Italy, where the philosophy and practice of the early childhood schools are similar to those of Reggio Emilia. Our staff includes a studio/visual arts teacher and we have contracted with consultants to provide drama and music programs.

Our curriculum recognizes the importance of relationships for the well-being of young children. Within the context of supportive relationships, the curriculum emphasizes supporting child-initiated problem-solving, long-term investigations, and promoting prosocial behavior. Teachers are constantly trying to understand and consider what the children know about their world and help them to form new hypotheses through ongoing exploration of a subject. We strive to help children develop a love of learning as they come to know they can learn.

We strongly support children in acquiring a set of fundamental concepts and skills as well as the habits of mind and heart that enable them to understand and operate in their world as effective problem-solvers and responsible community members.

## **E. STARTING THE YEAR**

A family's transition to an early childhood program is important in developing relationships and communication among adults and children. We have created preschool and infant/toddler orientation programs that allow you and your child to become familiar with the teachers, the other children and the environment as the first step in developing trusting relationships. The preschool and infant/toddler programs differ slightly because of the developmental needs of the children.

### **PRESCHOOL**

Some children in each of the three preschool classrooms are returning for their second year of preschool and some children are new to Fort Hill. Teachers plan home visits for all children new to the classroom.

## **New Preschool Students' Home Visits**

The August mailing will include a scheduled time for a home visit for each new student during the week before school begins. Home visits are very informal. Their primary purpose is to offer children the opportunity to meet their teachers for the first time in their home environment. The visits will last about fifteen minutes; no preparation is necessary! Teachers arrive at a child's home, looking forward to meeting the child wherever s/he feels comfortable. Home visits can take place on the front steps, the driveway, a child's room, basement playroom, or outdoor swing set. Teachers often take a picture of the child in a spot of his/her own choosing as well. A home visit ensures that each child who arrives at school for the first day will see a familiar face in the classroom. The children confirm the value of these visits by referring to them throughout the year, "Remember when you came to MY house?"

Also enclosed in the August mailing is a *Home Visit Supplement Form*. This form gives parents the opportunity to note any thoughts, concerns, or knowledge about their child that they or their child feel is important for teachers to know prior to the first day of school. Parents fill it out and give it to their child's teachers at the time of the home visit.

## **Preschool Two-Day Orientation Program**

There are twelve to eighteen children in each of the preschool classrooms. On the first two days of school the class size is reduced to allow children to be introduced to the classroom routines and organization of the day in a small group with a smaller child-to-adult ratio. This is an important transition even for those children familiar with the school and with prior large group experience as it allows them to be introduced to their new group in an environment with more individualized attention. Children attend school on their regular schedule for one of the two orientation days.

## **INFANT/TODDLER**

Some children in the infant/toddler program are new to Fort Hill, some are returning after a summer break, and some have been here through the summer. For every child, even returning children, the first days of the year at Fort Hill are filled with new experiences. We try to make this adjustment period as smooth and comfortable as it can be for each child because it serves as a foundation for a positive and fruitful year at Fort Hill, as well as for future transitions. We have designed a transition program to allow you and your child gradually to become familiar with the teachers, the other children and the environment. Because each child responds to separation individually, this period of adjustment may vary among families. The classroom teachers will work with each family to facilitate a smooth transition.

## **New Infant/Toddler Students' Home Visits**

Teachers make home visits to new students the week before school begins. Home visits are an opportunity for the teachers to begin making connections with children in an environment where they feel most comfortable. Teachers collect information from parents about their child's routines, cues and developmental milestones. Teachers answer questions about their practice and philosophy about working with young children.

### **Infant/Toddler Phase-in Program (all children)**

We encourage you to consider the first week of the program as an important foundation for your child's full adjustment to her/his time at school as it helps to form the bridge between home and school. Transitions are often eased when a parent remains with the child and the child's schedule is reduced during the first week. We hope you will plan to stay with your child for a few hours to play, observe and communicate with the teachers and other families during the first days of the program. When children are prepared for and nurtured by their parents in the classroom setting, children gain an initial feeling of familiarity and emotional security that usually carries over when the parent is no longer present. This time also gives teachers an opportunity to observe and ask questions about individual patterns of interaction to enable them to continue consistency of care when the phase-in period is over. Children benefit in many ways when teachers and parents communicate and develop positive relationships. We hope that by transitioning in this way, you will feel a part of the classroom throughout the year.

The phase-in program also is important for returning children. All children will return to a new environment with new children and, most likely, at least one new staff member. The phase-in allows children an opportunity to ease into routines after a long break, to become familiar with the changes and reestablish connections. Infants and toddlers attend school on a reduced schedule for their first days of school. On the first day of attendance, departure is at 12:15, on the second day departure is at 3:00 and on the third day children attend a full-day.

EVERYTHING  
YOU NEED TO KNOW...  
ABOUT YOUR CHILD  
AND THE PROGRAM

## A. ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

Arrival Time: 8:00 - 8:45 a.m.

Pick-up Times: 12:15 p.m. Preschool Half-Day  
3:00 p.m. Academic Day  
4:45 p.m. Full-Day

Please plan to enter the building no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and to leave promptly when you pick-up your child. Teachers have professional responsibilities before and after their work with children as well as personal commitments at the end of their workday. In the morning, the teachers arrive early to meet, prepare and set up rooms, and to review and update their plans for the day. At the end of each classroom-day, teachers have a finite amount of time to meet, discuss the day, and make preparations for the next day. At midday, staffing patterns may be changing, teachers will be getting rooms ready for lunch and rest, and planning times begin immediately at the end of pick-up time. In consideration of these responsibilities, we appreciate your adherence to the above listed arrival and departure times. Thank you very much.

The security system on the front door allows entry between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (the code is noted in the August letter). *The teachers' days end at 5:00 p.m. Please plan to leave the building no later than 5:00 p.m.* If you would like to have a conversation with the teacher, if you have siblings to pick up in other classrooms, or anticipate a prolonged departure with your child, please plan to arrive early.

If older siblings arrive with a parent to drop-off or pick-up a child at Fort Hill, we ask that the parent carefully supervise the older child. State regulations require that every child be seen and heard at all times. Much of our equipment is designed for young children and is not safe for older children. This includes the infant/toddler climber and the ladder in The Common. Because many of the children stay at Fort Hill all day, it is disruptive to the classroom climate when families remain after the earlier departure times. Thank you for your consideration of all the children at Fort Hill.

There is a fifteen-minute grace period before late fees are charged (See **Late Fee Policy**). Please use the grace period only when necessary.

(See **Morning Arrival Suggestions, Departure Time Suggestions** and **Separation Anxiety - A Healthy Developmental Stage** for more information about arrival and departure.)

## **B. SEPARATION ANXIETY - A HEALTHY DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE**

The beginning of school is an exciting time for your child, as she prepares to play and make friends in a new environment. Don't be surprised if she also feels some anxiety. Getting used to separation can be an emotional process, during which your child will be caught between her need to be close to you and her growing independence. Whether starting school for the first time, moving to preschool from a toddler program, or returning to the same classroom, she may display mixed feelings. Even a child who is used to school may experience anxiety after a long vacation, or during transitions such as toilet training or the birth of a sibling.

Young children are still developing communication skills. Their efforts at expressing their distress at separation can be confusing and painful to watch. Remember that these struggles are healthy and natural, no matter how difficult they may feel at the time. While you may not be able to eliminate separation anxiety, the following strategies can help the transition go more smoothly:

- ❖ Recognize your child's feelings. It can be as simple as reflecting, "You look kind of sad this morning."
- ❖ Have a special morning ritual, such as eating together or feeding the cat.
- ❖ As tempting as it may be to give in when your child begs to stay at home, offer a deal instead: "I know you're sad. You need to go to school today but I could: pick you up early; visit your classroom tomorrow morning; let you have a home day on Wednesday"
- ❖ Have your child bring in a soft object of comfort from home – a familiar blanket, hat, or stuffed animal. Or your child may prefer to have a photograph of you.
- ❖ Let your child see that you and the teacher are building a relationship. Greet your child's teacher warmly. Stay and talk for a minute, trying to include your child in the conversation ("Guess what Jesse and I fixed for breakfast this morning – pancake rollups!")
- ❖ Take time to say goodbye. It may be tempting to slip away when your child isn't looking. Clear goodbyes build trust. It is helpful to develop a goodbye ritual – for example, always waving goodbye from the same spot on the playground. Letting your child talk you into extending the goodbye – "Just one more push on the swing! Please! Please! – will only make the separation harder in the long run.
- ❖ Keep teachers informed of any big changes at home. Any change is a transition, and transitions (even happy ones, like getting a new puppy!) can cause anxiety.

At Fort Hill we also have several practices that are meant to support your child through the separation process. During the orientation period in August, your child becomes familiar with his new classroom and teachers with you by his side. As he observes your interactions with teachers and the new environment, he will see that you trust that school will be a fun and safe place. You can solidify his trust through positive comments, such as "This is such a great place. I'm so happy you're getting to go to school here." We also try to make it easier for

children to adjust to the classroom schedule by reducing the class size on the first day of school.

Most importantly, be sure to talk to the teachers if your child is having a separation problem (preferably while the child is out of earshot). They will be able to help by giving your child extra attention if they know that she is having difficulty adjusting. Please be reassured that separation anxiety is healthy and normal. Together we will support your child as she goes through this important stage of development.

### **C. MORNING ARRIVAL SUGGESTIONS**

The family's arrival and a parent's subsequent leaving in the morning can be facilitated with the establishment of a daily good-bye routine. Planning to stay for a few minutes before you leave for work makes leave-taking a little easier for some children. Reading a book to your child, doing a short activity with him/her, or helping him/her to get involved in an activity are some suggestions for the morning routine. Having a usual good-bye place or planning for a wave at the fence or window afterwards may be helpful as well. Teachers are always happy to help establish a routine. They have observed many parents and children and can help you individualize the farewell for your child if you would like.

Even children who are happy throughout the day may have a hard time saying good-bye to a parent in the morning. It is normal for children to protest when a parent leaves and some may protest for many mornings. Many children, though they greatly enjoy their friends and activities at school, would find it a perfect world if they had it all – you and school! On occasion your child may need help from a teacher. Your child may cry when you leave. You may even have to give your child to a teacher to hold as you depart. These are all appropriate reactions to leave-taking between young children and parents. If your departure leaves you feeling uncomfortable, you can call the office when you get to your workplace to see how your child is faring. Usually children stop crying and get involved in an activity fairly soon after a parent leaves.

Your leaving may also be difficult on days when there have been changes at home: a parent traveling, discussion about the arrival of a new sibling, discussion about moving, actually moving, etc. Again, it's important to keep the teachers aware of any changes at home that may affect your child's day here.

We understand that there will be days when your child has a doctor's or other appointment that means arriving late or leaving early from school. We strongly urge that you make your appointments for early in the morning or late in the day. When children arrive at transitions, lunch or nap time, or are taken out and returned in the middle of the day, they are aware of what they have missed and may have difficulty with the rest of their day. You may want to request appointments at the end of the day to make your child's day easier. If you choose to make an appointment early in the morning, please inform your child's teacher *the day before the appointment* so that we can incorporate the information into our planning. *We strongly encourage bringing children before 11 a.m. so that they have sufficient time for play and engaging with their peers before afternoon routines begin.*

A final word about early arrivals: Sometimes every family gets ahead of themselves and arrives earlier than they normally do. If you arrive before 8:00 a.m., please feel free to enjoy the grounds and playgrounds.

## **D. DEPARTURE TIME SUGGESTIONS**

A separation that frequently gets overlooked is pick-up time. Children must now make the separation from school back to family or other caregivers. They may greet parents with confused emotions: happy to see them at the same time as upset that they left. This confusion can manifest in a number of ways: greetings of “Why did you come so early?” tantrums, refusal to cooperate, indifference to parents, or a sudden need to do all the puzzles again, for example. Parents also may feel confused or distressed by a child’s behavior, especially if they anticipated a warm reunion such as a child racing into their arms, telling them happily about their day and how much they were missed! Clearly, the end of the day can be difficult also and may need to be given as much care and planning as the morning separation. The following are things to think about for enhancing a smooth departure:

- Allow your child to have some control over the departure scenario. For example, letting a child pick one activity to do with you or choosing one item to put away at playground pick-up can facilitate the separation.
- Arrive on time as much as possible! *Even a short delay can seem endless to a child who is waiting.*
- Come 5-10 minutes early to spend time with your child and/or talk to the teachers before leaving whenever possible. Arriving at closing time (12:30, 3:15 or 5:00) does not allow for giving a child choices or talking with teachers as the departure will need to be a quick one.
- Maintain a focus on your child as much as possible. Parents often enjoy talking with each other at the end of the day. However, children may require a parent’s full attention at departure and may act out or become upset if they don’t have it.
- Ask a teacher for help. Sometimes it is easier for the teachers to get the children ready to leave because children do not have the same emotional agenda with the teacher as they do with their parents. This is not a reflection of anyone’s competency but rather simply that children tend to make the biggest fusses (and reserve the most love) for their parents. Even with a nap, a child can be tired and emotions can be high at the end of the day. A teacher is more than willing to help you if your child is having a hard time leaving. Please let the teachers know if you would like help or feel uncomfortable with what is happening at the end of the day.
- If you are going to have someone else pick up your child, please let the teachers know in person and leave a written note. Please introduce us personally to any baby-sitters, friends or relatives who will be regularly picking up your child. We will not allow children to leave with anyone who

does not have written permission or whom we don't recognize. If the pick-up person is someone we don't know, we will ask for picture identification.

## **E. CLOTHING**

Please dress your child in sturdy, comfortable clothing. Smocks are available in each room. However, because some children may refuse to participate in activities rather than wear a smock, wearing a smock is always a child's choice. A certain amount of staining is inevitable with young children, and we do not want children to feel they have done something wrong if they get their clothes dirty. If your child does wear special clothing to school, be aware that it may get dirty or stained sometime during the day.

Each child needs a complete set of extra clothing that will be stored in a plastic box in the classroom in the case of spills or accidents. Infant and toddler children need two to three changes of clothing, including a second pair of shoes. Preschool children need a complete set of extra clothes (pants, shirts, sweater or sweatshirt, two pairs of socks and two pairs of underwear). If your child is recently toilet trained (or in the midst of toilet training) please send extra sets of pants and underwear.

Infant and toddler children should bring blankets for napping. The program provides sheets for cribs and nap-mats. Preschool children who stay for the full day should bring a small blanket and a pillow case for nap. We encourage families to send one special object such as teddy bear, cloth diaper, pacifier, etc. which will stay at school in a bag with their blanket and pillow. Please do not send toys or large stuffed animals for rest time as they can be distracting.

**PLEASE MARK ALL ITEMS WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.** You can use name tapes or a laundry or permanent-ink pen. We ask that you check your child's box regularly and replace the clothing your child uses. Also, if your child borrows clothes from school or another child's extra clothing, please launder and return.

For preschool and toddler children, we encourage as much independence in dressing as children are capable of. For this reason, we recommend pants with elasticized waistbands. They are more easily managed especially during toileting routines. Suspenders, belts, and pants with snaps and buttons often complicate the dressing process. For infants, we recommend pants with snap legs to facilitate diaper changes.

All children should be dressed so they can enjoy outdoor play every day. Non-skid shoes afford maximum safety for both indoor and outdoor activities, and we ask that all children keep a pair of non-skid footwear in the classroom. Indoor shoes are required for playing in The Common. Shoes with Velcro fasteners are preferable to laces because Velcro promotes dressing independence. Please consult with individual teachers for recommendations of appropriate footwear for young children at school.

Children go outside every day. Please send rainwear if it is raining or if the forecast calls for damp weather. In cold weather children need boots, snow-pants, hats, and mittens every day. If your child stays for the afternoon, please send two sets of snow wear, as frequently the

outerwear gets wet in the morning and is not dry before children go out again later in the day. It is helpful to your child if you send garments that are easy to manipulate. For example, zippers are easier than buttons, mittens are easier (and warmer) than gloves. Our goal is to help children do as much dressing as they are capable of on their own. (See **Outdoor Policy** for more information.)

The Lost and Found is located on a shelf in the niche in The Common.

## **F. SUNSCREEN**

We request that parents apply sunscreen and insect repellent in the morning before school. With written parental permission, the teachers will reapply the lotions when appropriate. Each family will receive a permission slip that details the products that we use.

## **G. HANDWASHING**

Please help your child wash his/her hands before entering the classroom.

## **H. SHOELESS ENVIRONMENTS**

Several spaces at Fort Hill are shoeless environments. These include The Common (we also ask that no food or drink be brought onto the carpet in The Common) and Infant/Toddler wing.

## **I. SPECIAL OBJECTS/TOYS FROM HOME**

It is very common for a young child to have a special object, such as a blanket, pacifier or stuffed animal. We welcome these special objects as they not only provide comfort and valuable self-soothing but also can help to build a child's self esteem.

Very young children will keep these objects close by. It is developmentally appropriate for them to do so, and they are not expected to share them with other children. Teachers will work with children to help them learn respect for each others' possessions.

As children grow older and learn to interact in the classroom independently, there will be less need for these comfort items. For example, we ask preschoolers to keep them in their cubbies as much as is possible. However, it remains helpful for children to have such special objects available at rest time or other times when they need to self-soothe.

We ask that children do not bring toys from home. Toys from home distract children from the planned environment, risk being lost or broken, and can create social issues in the classroom.

We do recognize that it is occasionally helpful for children to bring an object to facilitate the transition from home to school. Teachers often will recommend that parents take such an object with them when they leave. If this presents a problem, teachers will work with parents and child to resolve the issue. In these cases, a child may leave the object in her/his cubby for the day. Often a teacher can help safely place the object in the cubby after parents depart.

## **J. HEALTH POLICY**

We strive to maintain a healthy environment for ALL of the children in our care as well as for the staff. Illness spreads more easily among children in group care than for those in home care. When any signs of illness are present, we ask parents to give close attention to their children to determine the advisability of their participation in the program. Being at school requires more energy/stamina than being at home. As a result, a child who may appear well at home may wilt under the demands of a group environment. An ill child exposes all of the other children and staff at Fort Hill to that illness as well. *We ask that parents consider the needs of all of the children and staff at Fort Hill as they give their attention to this very important issue.* Illness significantly impacts the quality of the program and the individual lives of families and staff. If your child seems to be not quite well, please keep him or her home.

If your child has a sick sibling, please refrain from bringing the sibling into the building. The administration or the classroom teachers will be happy to meet you in the parking lot and bring your child into school. Please call us and let us know when you will arrive and we will greet you outside.

We follow the National Health and Safety Guidelines for Out of Home Child Care as published by the American Academy of Pediatrics. They recommend that a child be sent home as soon as possible if one or more of the following situations exists:

- 1) The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities as determined by the teacher.
- 2) The illness results in a greater need for care than the childcare staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children as determined by the teacher.
- 3) The child has any of the following symptoms: fever, symptoms of severe illness (e.g., lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, inexplicable irritability or persistent crying, difficult breathing, wheezing or other unusual signs for the child), diarrhea, vomiting illness, persistent abdominal pain, mouth sores with drooling, rash with fever or behavior change, purulent conjunctivitis, head lice, scabies, impetigo, strep throat, chicken pox, pertussis, mumps, measles, unspecified respiratory tract illness or rubella.

We remind parents that the more conservative they are about bringing their children to school when early symptoms appear, the healthier their children and the other children and staff at Fort Hill will be.

Please call the office between 8:00-9:00 a.m. at 585-3290 if your child is ill and will be staying home. If a parent is uncertain about a child's health, we recommend calling to discuss the child's symptoms and how they may affect her/his day at school with a teacher. We may have information about illnesses that are "going around" that may help to clarify a child's condition.

If at drop-off time it appears that a child is not well enough to be at school, teachers will ask the parent to take her/him home. Teachers also may call parents, or emergency contacts, during the day to pick up a child from school. We will e-mail all families when a contagious illness is “going around” in a classroom.

Listed below are further details regarding some of the more common health concerns. Please consult and use the following information in making your decision regarding your child’s health and ability to thrive in a group environment on any given day.

### **STREP THROAT**

If your child is tested for strep throat, please keep him/her home from school until you receive the results of the “quick test.” If the test is positive, your child may return to school after receiving three doses of medicine, or twenty-four hours after beginning treatment.

### **COLDS**

The early isolation of a child with signs of a cold not only cuts down on the number of children and staff exposed to the infection but also may minimize an individual child’s symptoms or shorten the course of illness. When a child has a cold, s/he needs rest, quiet, extra fluids, often a cool mist humidifier, and may need additional holding and attention to keep her/him comfortable. Because teachers must respond to the needs of a large group of children, they are not able to provide a sick child with the care and comfort s/he may need. *If your child is unable to maintain his usual routine and to participate fully in the program, s/he should be kept home until s/he can do so.*

### **FEVER**

Any child with an axillary temperature of 100 degrees or more should be allowed to stay at home until s/he has been *fever-free for 24 hours after the fever breaks*. A child who develops an axillary temperature of 100 degrees while in care will be isolated until the parents can be called and arrive to take her home. We expect that parents will respond to such calls quickly and pick up their child *within 30 minutes*.

### **DIARRHEA**

Loose stools are attributable to several causes. Children can have loose stools from eating too much fruit, from teething, as the result of an illness, or from the use of antibiotics. Diarrhea is evident when there is a strong, unpleasant odor associated with the stool. A mucous consistency also is often an identifying characteristic of diarrhea. *We are required to exclude any child with diarrhea from group care as it is highly contagious and difficult to control hygienically.* If a child develops loose stools while in our care, we will closely observe that child to determine its cause. If the loose stool is repeated in that day, the parents will be called to pick her/him up as soon as possible. Children may return to school when the diarrhea has resolved. (The child has had a well-formed stool or twenty fours have passed.)

## **CONJUNCTIVITIS (OR PINK EYE)**

Conjunctivitis is very contagious and requires close attention as well as medication or some form of alternative treatment. A child with purulent conjunctivitis will be excluded from care until after treatment has been initiated. Purulent conjunctivitis is defined as pink or red conjunctiva (inner eyelids and white of eye) with white or yellow discharge. Any recurrence of symptoms will result in the child being sent home immediately.

## **VOMITING ILLNESS**

A child who has vomited two or more times in the previous 24 hours should be kept home until s/he has been free from vomiting for at least 24 hours. A consultation with the health care provider is strongly recommended.

## **CONTAGIOUS CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES**

Parents should notify staff immediately if their child develops a contagious illness. Staff is required by law to give notice to all families in a child's room that other children could have been exposed to the illness before or during its outbreak. The notice will include information about what to look for in detecting symptoms. (See **Health Policy** for more information.) We will send an e-mail to all parents when a contagious illness has been reported in the school. We will post the notice in the affected classrooms so that parents are aware that a child in their classroom has been ill.

## **MISCELLANEOUS (OR MYSTERY) ILLNESSES**

Other symptoms that might warrant exclusion or special attention include ear aches and/or ear drainage, unusual listlessness, unexplained rashes or sores, difficulty in breathing, headaches, croupy cough, etc. For any of these symptoms, we ask parents to consult their child's physician before bringing her/him to school. A follow-up note from the physician will be required if the symptoms persist even if a physician previously granted permission to attend school. If a child is not well enough to fully participate in all normal activities of the day, please keep her/him home.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION**

Non-prescription medication will be given only with written consent of the child's physician. The CECE will accept a signed statement from the physician listing the medication(s), the dosage and criteria for its administration. This statement will be valid for one year from the date that it was signed.

Prescription medication can be given to a child while in care at Fort Hill. Whenever possible, a parent should plan to come to Fort Hill to administer prescription medication if a mid-day dosage is required. When this is not possible, a staff member may administer the medication if

a parent has signed a Medication Authorization Form (available in each room). *The medication must be labeled and in its original container with the child's name, the name of the drug, and directions for administration and storage clearly indicated on the label.* No medications will be given if pre-mixed in food or a baby bottle.

## **ADMINISTRATIONS OF TOPICAL OINTMENTS OR SPRAYS**

Topical ointments such as petroleum jelly, salve for dry skin, sunscreen, bug repellent, etc. will be administered to children with written parental permission. The signed statement from the parent will be valid for one year.

We ask parents to apply insect repellent and sunblock when needed before children come to school in the morning. For children who stay for the afternoon, Fort Hill teachers will apply insect repellent and sunscreen with written parental permission. We purchase large quantities of specific brands, which are detailed in the permission form.

## **ILLNESS OR INJURY DURING THE DAY**

If a child should become ill or injured at school, parents will be notified immediately. If it is necessary, staff may ask a parent to come to take the child home or to a physician. If parents cannot be reached, those listed as emergency contacts will be called. Scratches and bumps are a normal part of any young child's experience. Parents will be notified about these incidents at pick-up time. (See **Emergency and Non-Emergency Medical Procedures** for more information)

## **K. OUTDOOR POLICY**

As teachers of young children, we believe strongly in the physical, emotional, and social advantages of fresh air and outdoor play. Children are happy to be outdoors as they benefit from the fresh air and exercise accompanying their play. We believe it is important for children to have an equivalent time for gross motor activity in a less structured outdoor environment as they do for fine motor activity indoors. Preschool and older toddler children spend much of their outside time on the playgrounds adjacent to the Fort Hill building and on exploratory walks in the area. Infants and toddlers also are outside for stroller rides as often as the weather allows. Because infants are confined to strollers and may be far from school when they are discovered to be cold, teachers use discretion taking infants out in cold temperatures.

Preschool children, however, play outside everyday, even if it is for only ten or fifteen minutes, in all types of weather with the exception of heavy rain or extreme temperatures. The school pediatrician has advised that even on a very cold day with proper clothing, children can be safe and comfortable. Teachers monitor children's comfort closely, and children who complain of being cold are brought indoors. We have discovered that warmly dressed children enjoy unstructured outdoor playtime even on very cold days. Our motto is a Norwegian saying: "There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing."

On rainy days children need rain jackets as well as boots or an extra pair of shoes to change into when they come inside. In cold weather, all children need hats, mittens, boots, and snow pants to enjoy their time outdoors. Generally, layered clothes are helpful as the temperature changes throughout the day. On the advice of the school pediatrician, we ask every child to have a head covering in order to maintain a warm body temperature. We have found that mittens, especially mittens made of material designed for outdoor activities rather than cotton mittens, are much warmer than gloves and allow the children to play comfortably in the snow and cold air. Many children wear neck warmers to school. These are versatile and children can wear them bunched around their necks or pull them up to cover their faces. Winter socks, such as those sold for skiing, help keep children's feet warm in their boots. Boots should fit snugly enough to prevent falling off during active play. Children who stay for the afternoon need two pairs of snow pants. Please clearly label every item of clothing; snowsuits and jackets can often look similar, and labeling also cuts down on lost clothing.

## **L. FOOD POLICY**

### **INFANTS**

Parents provide all the food necessary for infants, including baby foods and prepared formula or breast milk. All provisions are stored in the refrigerator. Infants' bottles need to be taken home and washed each day, as there are not adequate facilities for sterilizing bottles or preparing formula. Bottles of breast milk or formula are refrigerated until right before eating. Prepared bottles of powder formula should be discarded after 24 hours. We will cover, refrigerate, and discard after 48 hours any open containers of concentrated formula. Unused breast milk can be frozen for up to 3 months.

Infants are fed bottles either when held or in a sitting position. We do not prop bottles up nor do we allow children to carry bottles around. Teachers transfer food for babies from original containers to dishes at feeding time. Staff will not offer new food until after it has been given at home. All items from home such as bottles, food jars, and other containers must be clearly labeled with children's names.

### **TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS**

Parents of toddlers and preschoolers provide all the food (parents also provide utensils for preschoolers) necessary for lunch for their children. The school provides both a morning and an afternoon snack for toddlers and preschoolers. Parents can choose to sign up for their children to have milk provided or send beverages of their own. Water is always available.

Toddler lunches are stored in a refrigerator. Refrigerator space, however, is inadequate for three classrooms of preschoolers, so we ask that parents include a frozen ice pack to keep food and drink cold. We will return all leftovers in children's bags so parents will know what children have or have not eaten. Preschool children should put lunchboxes in their cubbies when they arrive in the morning.

We support the development of healthful eating habits and ask that, to the greatest extent possible, families provide nutritious lunches and food for the children. Families often bring a

special snack on their child's birthday to share with the class. Because each family makes choices about the foods they serve, we ask that when you bring food to share, you provide a nutritious snack and avoid foods that have high sugar or fat content.

Suggestions of healthy lunch foods for preschoolers and toddlers include: yogurt, cheese, sandwiches, leftovers from dinner, soup in a thermos, applesauce, fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts (as age appropriate), salads, bagels, slices of pizza, breadsticks, carrot (or other vegetable) sticks and dip. Some children prefer only a few foods, but all children can learn to eat a varied diet when new foods are offered more than once.

Because we encourage both preschool and toddler children to feed themselves, we ask parents to prepare children's food in small, manageable, "ready-to-eat" portions. Such portions are the easiest for children to handle independently. We also allow children to determine the order in which they will eat their food. Please pack only food that you are comfortable in having your child eat at any time. For example, if you pack a sweet treat, your child may choose to eat the treat before eating more nutritious food.

Please be aware that some children have allergies. For this reason, we ask children not to share food with others and may restrict certain foods from the building. Individual teachers may inform parents of any particular food allergies as necessary. We encourage parents whose children have food allergies to provide a supply of non-allergenic snack foods to be kept in their child's classroom. We have had children with severe allergies to peanuts and we have determined that *we will be a peanut-free school*. Alternatives to peanut butter include soy nut butter or almond butter.

All items from home such as lunchboxes, thermoses, food containers, or utensils must be clearly labeled with children's names. (See also **Snack and Lunch Philosophy and Guidelines**)

## **M. SNACK AND LUNCH PHILOSOPHY AND GUIDELINES**

Each preschool and toddler group has a morning snack, lunch (the preschool lunch begins at 12:30), and an afternoon snack (after 3:15). A large part of social learning and family living involves food. Teachers sit with the children during lunch and try to make these meal times relaxed and warm. In this way, the children begin to participate in the social aspects of eating.

An important part of a comfortable eating environment is the preparation of the food itself. There is a continuum of food preparation as children grow. For instance, infants need adults to provide completely prepared foods (usually warm) for them to eat. For children wanting to feed themselves, we ask parents to begin to provide food that is easy to pick up such as sandwiches or pasta. When children become fully able to feed themselves, we ask that parents send their food in individual lunch boxes. As children become more independent, less adult preparation is needed. For instance, by the time children are in preschool, they bring their own lunchboxes to the table and set up their own food as much as possible.

Toddler and preschool teachers strive to provide nutritious and balanced snacks for children. We serve a variety of different foods and present them in an enjoyable manner. A snack menu is posted in each room.

Birthday snacks are discussed in **Holiday and Birthday Celebrations**.

We ask parents to prepare lunches that are nutritious and appealing to the child. Keep the following guidelines in mind when preparing the child's lunch bag or box:

- Provide small portions, cut in pieces that the child can manage without assistance.
- Choose items you know your child likes.
- Send beverages in a thermos or juice box (no glass bottles, please).
- Do not send peanut butter, candy or gum.

## **N. HOLIDAY AND BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

### **PHILOSOPHY**

We respect the fact that families often have different holiday traditions, and we encourage parents to come into the classroom and share their family celebrations with us. Holidays in general have become quite commercialized and can be over-stimulating for young children. Aware of children's excitement surrounding such celebrations, we allow time for group discussion of their individual experiences without emphasizing holidays in the curriculum.

Most infant/toddler children are too young to learn about and appreciate the diverse celebrations, beliefs, and rituals of our families. We believe that holiday celebrations are best participated in and understood by infants and toddlers when they occur in the context of their particular family.

### **PRACTICES**

#### **Infant/Toddler Program**

Birthdays are honored with small celebrations to mark growth and change and reaffirm the importance of each individual. Please discuss with the teachers what kind of celebration would be appropriate and fit into the room's routine.

#### **Preschool Program**

We do celebrate children's birthdays in the preschool. Children often enjoy bringing a special snack to share. Children are greatly influenced by others' choices for birthday snack. We find that once a tradition of cupcakes, for example, is established, most children will ask for that same snack on their special day. This may result in many mornings of cupcakes for snack and we encourage families to consider alternatives to snacks with high fat and sugar content.

Please consider the nutritional content of the food that you will be serving the children in your child's classroom when you provide snack for the group.

Please notify teachers a week in advance if you plan to provide a snack so that you are aware of the individual allergies and dietary restrictions of the children in your child's class. We post snack menus a week in advance and according to state regulations, must notify families of the food their children will eat in school.

*If you are having a birthday party for your child, we ask that invitations be sent through the mail unless every child in the class is invited.* Invitations found in cubbies cause great excitement, and we wish to avoid unnecessarily hurt feelings for those children not invited. We encourage children not to discuss their out of school parties for just this reason.

Families frequently invite teachers to attend children's birthday parties. While we are honored by invitations, we discourage staff from attending children's birthday parties. This policy protects both children and teachers. It is likely that teachers will not be able to accept every invitation and we would like to eliminate the possibility that a child is disappointed because a teacher attended one child's party and not another's. The policy also ensures that teachers do not feel "pressure" to attend school-related functions on personal time. The policy prevents the perception that some teachers are more accessible, caring or involved than other teachers because of how they choose to spend their personal time.

## **O. TOILETING AND DIAPERING**

Parents provide diapers and ointments for infants and children not yet toilet trained. Children in diapers are changed at specific times during the day, but are also changed whenever necessary. We ask parents to check their children's supplies of diapers and extra clothing regularly. We will give reminders as necessary.

When toddler children do express interest in using the toilet at school, teachers offer them the chance to sit on the toilet at each diaper change. When children are out of diapers and staying dry most of the time at home, teachers are happy to begin the transition at school as well. Teachers will talk with parents about how best to support children's needs through this transition. We ask that parents use diapers until children are ready for underwear. Our experience with "pull-ups" is that they give children mixed messages about their toileting independence and make diaper changes more difficult in group care.

We find that the transition to using the toilet takes place most easily when children initiate the training process. This may involve extra patience and giving up of adult expectations. When children are ready, this process most often happens quickly and easily.

Children who have learned to use the toilet on their own will be encouraged to continue to do so. Children who are toilet trained are reminded periodically throughout each day to use the toilet. Child-sized toilets are located in the classrooms for the convenience and safety of the children. No child is ever punished, scolded, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet. Teachers can be a source of information and guidance in the toilet learning process.

## **P. NAP AND REST TIME**

Each preschool and toddler group has a rest time after lunch. Teachers promote rest time by darkening the room (shutting off the lights and pulling down shades), rubbing children's backs and by playing quiet music or story tapes. Children are not required to sleep but are expected to stay on their rest mats resting quietly for a set amount of time so as not to disturb those who do sleep. We have found that the children staying for a full day who sleep have a more pleasant, comfortable afternoon. We have arranged the schedule of our day to allow for children who take some time to fall asleep to be able to have a complete rest when they do. Children sleep as long as they wish and are not wakened by the staff. Children who are not asleep at the end of the rest period may leave the nap area to engage in quiet activities. If your child is asleep when you arrive to pick her up, you are welcome to stay with her until she awakens.

In the infant room, teachers work closely with parents in developing a routine that is both familiar and predictable. The infants follow their own individual rhythms of sleeping, eating, diapering, and playing. Predictable routines help children develop self-regulation and trust in their caregivers and their environment.

If sleep becomes an issue for your family, as it often does in early childhood, staff can offer resources and experience and would be happy to talk with you about it. (See **What Sleep Research Tells Us**)

We provide cribs for infants. When children are one year old, we begin transitioning them to nap mats.

## **Q. WHAT SLEEP RESEARCH TELLS US**

Sleep is a frequent topic of conversation for parents of babies and young children. In order both to offer parents advice and recommendations and to use best practice in our work with children, the staff at CECE researched the subject and made some important discoveries. Our philosophy is based in the research of William Dement, the author of The Promise of Sleep. He notes that his work is “akin to teaching the alphabet of sleep so that people can start learning to read. We are not healthy unless our sleep is healthy, and we cannot make our sleep healthy unless we become thoroughly aware of both its peril and its promise.” Our goal is to help children develop healthy sleep habits and to benefit from the “promise of sleep.” We also recommend the book Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child by Marc Weissbluth.

### **FOUNDATIONS OF SLEEP KNOWLEDGE**

- Up until the mid-twentieth century, physicians considered sleep to be a time when the body just “shut down.” Sleep was not an area of research because a time when nothing was considered to be happening was a time requiring no study.
- Researchers at the University of Chicago in the 1950's discovered REM (rapid eye movement) during sleep. Shortly thereafter William Dement, M.D. identified five

stages of sleep, revealing that significant physiologic changes occurred during the one third of life spent sleeping.

- A definitive purpose for sleep has not yet been discovered. Research thus far has given a number of clues:
  - Sleep appears necessary for our nervous systems to work properly as sleep deprivation can have many effects on concentration, mood, and stamina.
  - Sleep may give neurons used when awake the opportunity to shut down and repair themselves.
  - Sleep-deprived adults cannot hold off sleep forever; thus, the body has a clear drive to sleep.
- Research has confirmed, however, that sleep is an integral and inseparable part of the body's vital cycles – of energy storage and use, of defense against enemies within and without.
- Hormones, immune chemistry, the metabolic machinery, and sleep are all tied together in a complex web of biochemical interaction.
- Researchers are close to determining a connection between sleep deprivation and the breakdown of the immune system.

## **YOUNG CHILDREN AND SLEEP**

- There is clear evidence of the importance of sleep in infants and young children when the brain is developing and the body is growing.
- Growth hormone induces sleep and is released in a very concentrated fashion during deep sleep, suggesting that such sleep is a crucial period for its work.
- The sleep maturation process in early life follows a natural biological development:
  - Sleep begins in utero (fetus spends 16 – 20 hours a day sleeping)
  - Infants spend 50% of their total sleep time in REM sleep (contrasting with an adult's 25%)
  - Prior to 17 weeks of age, infants have no regular or set pattern of sleep: it appears that newborns' biological clocks have not matured enough to keep track of the time of the day
  - By about 3 to 4 months, daytime sleep has become organized into several sleeping periods during the day and a longer period of sleep at night.
- At the midpoint of the second year, a disturbance in sleep-wake cycles is a common developmental phenomenon. This may reflect an internal conflict in the child between emerging autonomy, coupled with new motor and language skills, and parental desires to maintain a regular sleep schedule.
- A difficult temperament, one well defined since infancy, is also a risk factor for sleep disturbance.
- Sleep at the toddler age may represent the ultimate repetitive form of separation and require an ability to self-settle while feeling secure.

## **WHAT SLEEP RESEARCHERS RECOMMEND**

- Sleep researchers recommend good “sleep hygiene” for both children and adults. Sleep hygiene refers to the establishment and maintenance of schedules and conditions conducive to healthy, restorative sleep.

- The best environmental conditions for childhood sleep include quiet, sufficient darkness, and a cool rather than warm temperature.
- Helping a child to organize a regular sleep-wake cycle includes the establishment of a consistent waking time in the morning, consistent nap length, and a regular bedtime.
- Pre-bedtime conditions that are conducive to good sleep are: no frightening TV or stories, no vigorous physical activities in the hour before bedtime, a consistent set of relaxing routines (snack, washing, brushing teeth, changing into pajamas), consistent soothing methods (stories, backrubs, cuddling, “transitional objects”), and putting a child in bed awake (helping a child to learn the self-soothing skills to fall asleep on his/her own).

### **SLEEP PROBLEMS, A WAY OF LIFE?**

- Studies have shown that the incidence of sleep problems in young children range from 15% to 40%. These problems include bedtime or sleep refusal, frequent night wakings, sleepwalking, night terrors and nightmares.
- It is clear that “with young children, sleep problems may be the rule rather than the exception.”
- Scientists studying sleep in children recognize that these problems present special challenges. When the stressful demands of work, family, and child-rearing converge with full force, the impact on sleep can be devastating.
- One of the biggest disruptions of sleep *in adults* is sleep problems and patterns in their children.

### **SLEEPINESS IN CHILDREN**

- An important finding by sleep researchers is that tiredness in children does not usually appear as drowsy, slowed-down behavior.
- Children get cranky, irrational, act out, and actually become more active and energetic when they are sleepy. (Overtired children generally will insist that they are *not* sleepy.)
- Researchers have noted that as overtired children become more active, they become less attentive and less focused. There is much interest now in the relationship between sleep, attention span, and learning ability.

### **WHAT ABOUT NAPS?**

- Napping is a part of the sleep/wake rhythms established in the first years of life.
- Night sleep, daytime sleep, and daytime wakefulness have rhythms that are partially independent of each other and have different functions:
  - Learning takes place in the wake cycle
  - Physical and emotional restoration in the sleep cycle
  - Daytime sleep leads to optimal daytime alertness for learning.
- Naps adjust the alert/drowsy control to just the right setting for optimal daytime arousal.
- Napping helps a child to learn well. The chronically sleep-deprived child becomes fitfully fussy or hyper alert in order to fight sleep and, as a result, cannot learn from his environment.

- Long naps occurring at the right times make a child feel rested: not taking a needed nap means that the body remains stressed.
- According to research, not napping actually means lost sleep. Over an extended period of time, children do not sleep longer when their naps are brief.
- A common cause for not napping is falling asleep too late at night.
- Research has shown, contrary to common belief, that napping does not affect the length of sleep at night. In fact, the opposite happens. The more a child naps, the more that child sleeps at night.
- It is chronic sleep deprivation that causes children to not be able to go to sleep.
- The seemingly wide-awake, restless behavior in children is behavior indicative of tiredness.
- Children who miss naps do not “make up” for it by sleeping more at night.

## **R. GROUP PLACEMENT DECISIONS**

The placement of children in classrooms at the CECE is a very careful and thoughtful process. We have several goals when we determine placements. As a primary goal, we plan, to the greatest extent possible, for children to stay together with their teaching team for their years in the infant/toddler level and the preschool level. Another goal is to ensure that children have appropriate social peers in their room. We solicit input from infant/toddler teachers and parents to place children in supportive social groups. An additional goal is to balance a variety of aspects of the group. This may include gender, age, individual needs and abilities, family circumstances and schedule requests.

The classrooms at Fort Hill collaborate with one another to a great extent. Children interact with children from other classrooms both formally and informally on the playground, in the studio and The Common and in the classrooms.

EVERYTHING  
YOU NEED TO KNOW...  
ABOUT YOU  
AND THE PROGRAM

## **A. SCHOOL/FAMILY COMMUNICATION**

### **PHILOSOPHY**

We believe that children benefit significantly when teachers and parents regularly and openly communicate and in the process develop positive relationships. Building relationships among parents and teachers helps to provide a strong foundation for children's positive experiences at school. Parents are encouraged to talk openly with teachers to establish these relationships.

For infants and toddlers, we believe in the importance of a primary caregiving relationship. Primary caregiving allows each child to develop an initial, trusting relationship with one particular caregiver. Teachers begin talking with parents at home visits about how these relationships will develop.

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit and to observe in their child's classroom. When parents visit, they communicate to children that they value the school. As parents build relationships with staff, other children, and each other, we can provide continuity between home and school, and the whole program is enriched. We welcome your comments and suggestions. An envelope is posted on the Parent Bulletin Board in the front hall for your ongoing suggestions and comments.

### **PRACTICES**

Early in the school year we hold a parent meeting. The community of parents and teachers meet and whole-school topics are discussed. Parents and teachers then adjourn to individual classrooms where parents have an opportunity to tour classrooms and teachers share information about the program and respond to parents' questions and suggestions.

Our website is an important mode of communication. The URL is [www.smith.edu/forthill](http://www.smith.edu/forthill). We encourage families to visit the website often as it is updated frequently.

In the infant/toddler classrooms, parents complete a short daily log when bringing a child to the classroom. The log documents information about a child's prior evening, night and morning at home. This information is essential for teachers to understand and care for very young children. We encourage you to speak with the teachers each day as well, especially about any special instructions or unusual events. Infant teachers record information about eating, sleeping, and diapering in the log as well.

Parent and teachers meet for conferences several times during the year. We strongly recommend that both parents attend. Parents who cannot attend a conference at a scheduled time may request a more convenient time. Conferences are a time to exchange information, discuss children's development and set goals. Teachers or parents may initiate additional conferences as needed. Initial conversations with parents will be held on the September professional day. Conferences will be scheduled again on the January professional day. Parents will receive a written report with an optional conference in April. Teachers are happy to meet at any time during the year. Please contact the teacher directly to schedule additional conferences.

Teachers prepare written progress reports to complement scheduled conferences and less formal conversations. These reports include information about a child's adjustment to school, each child's growth in many areas of development (social-emotional, language, motor, cognitive, etc.). The number and length of these reports correspond to the rate of growth of young children. For example, parents of infants will receive more frequent reports than preschool and toddler parents.

Teachers are always willing to meet with parents at their request. We value daily informal communication. We also encourage parents to call and share their questions, concerns, and suggestions as they arise. We ask that parents keep us informed of family events and circumstances that may affect their child. Changes that may seem routine or ordinary to an adult may affect a young child differently. It is also important that you notify the office staff of any changes of address, phone numbers (at home and at work), caregivers, or persons designated for pick-up.

A school-wide calendar is another source of communication between the school and families. *Please note on your personal calendar any holidays or early school closings or special school events.*

Individual classrooms send regular e-mails detailing classroom activities and upcoming events. These "documentations" are also consolidated on the website so that families may see what is happening school-wide. The "Daily Documentations" page is secure. The username password will be e-mailed to you. You may connect to the page from the "Parents and Families" page on the Fort Hill website ([www.smith.edu/forthill](http://www.smith.edu/forthill)).

We communicate non-confidential information through email to facilitate communication with families and to support a college-wide effort to reduce the amount of paper used on the campus. If you do not regularly check email, please inform the administrative assistant and s/he will distribute paper copies in your family's classroom mail pocket.

We also share information about the program and children's experiences in less formal ways. Please check the bulletin boards located in the hallway outside classrooms for information about school activities, daily schedules, lesson plans, and other information for parents. Displays of photographs or children's work in the halls and rooms throughout the building also document in great detail children's experiences and learning and can be a good starting point for conversations about school.

There is a Parent Bulletin board in the front entry. Please feel free to post information of interest to families on the board.

School-wide meetings are occasionally scheduled to discuss important issues.

Individual classrooms, parent organizations, or staff may schedule group events throughout the year. Parents are welcome to suggest topics for school meetings and/or plan a group gathering even if simply to enjoy one another's company.

Each year parents are asked to complete an evaluation survey form to provide formal feedback about the program. This survey is also an important communication tool.

## **TELEPHONES**

Each of the classrooms has a telephone. Ringing telephones can be disruptive and conversations on the telephone remove the teachers' attention from the children. For these reasons, all calls will be answered by voice mail. A prompt at the end of the message offers the caller the option to dial "0" to reach the administrative assistant. If the call is an emergency, we will interrupt the classroom and notify the staff to answer the call. Teachers will check the voice mail, pick up messages and return calls when the call will not be disruptive to the program. Please feel free to press "0" or dial the main number, 585-3290, if you would like to "check-in" and find out how your child is doing.

The telephone numbers are:

Main Office:	585-3290
Fax:	585-3292
Director:	585-4329
Program Coordinator:	585-4280
West Room:	585-4203
South Room:	585-4587
East Room:	585-4588
North Room:	585-4589
Group A:	585-4984
Group B:	585-4990
Group S:	585-4991
Studio	585-4992

## **B. PARENT PARTICIPATION**

Teachers invite parents to participate as much as they are able or would like to in the program. Parents may choose to go on outings, do special projects, to read to children, or simply to spend time in the classroom. We ask that parents follow classroom guidelines to provide consistency for all children.

When spending time in the classroom, we ask that parents honor the confidentiality of what they see and hear in the classroom. If parents wish to talk about their own children or about anything they observe during their visit, teachers are happy to respond to their questions when children are engaged elsewhere.

## **C. ADVISORY BOARD**

The Parent Advisory Committee is a vehicle for facilitating communication among the administration, teachers and families. The Committee includes parents, teacher representatives, and administration. When vacancies arise, we solicit volunteers and conduct a lottery, if necessary. If there is a topic or an issue that you would like the Advisory Board to

discuss, please e-mail one of the members. The Advisory Board meets regularly during the year.

## **D. PTO**

The Fort Hill PTO is an active group and sponsors many social, educational and fundraising events. All families enrolled in the program are members of the PTO and we welcome active participation. Sweatshirts, T shirts and coffee mugs with the Fort Hill logo are available through the PTO.

## **E. CONVERSATION GROUPS**

Regular Conversation Groups are held during the year to provide an opportunity for parents to meet with the Director and discuss topics of interest. The Conversation Groups meet at Fort Hill on the last Friday morning of the month from 8:30 – 9:30. These are informal gatherings and we hope you will be able to join the conversation.

## **F. CALENDAR**

A draft of the CECE annual calendar is sent to families in July. The final calendar is published and sent with the August mailings. The calendar lists closing dates and dates for all-school events. The CECE follows the Smith College calendar for holiday closings. The program also closes for the Smith College March Break and for monthly staff development meetings.

The closings for staff development days are scheduled as frequently as possible on days that there are no classes at Smith College or on days that the Campus School and/or local public schools are closed. Staff development days offer training and development opportunities for all staff members and enable staff to:

- work together to develop a comprehensive, cohesive curriculum from infancy to preschool;
- renew the classroom environment;
- engage in professional development activities;
- document children's learning;
- develop assessment and reporting tools;
- review best practices; and,
- build and strengthen classroom teams and community.

## **G. LATE FEE POLICY**

The late fee policy was developed by the Advisory Board and is as follows:

Late fees are charged after:

- 12:30 p.m. - Half-Day Program
- 3:15 p.m. - Academic Day Program
- 5:00 p.m. - Full-Day Program

Each family is allowed three late pick-up “warnings.” In an effort to discourage chronic lateness, upon the fourth late pick-up, the family will be billed a \$100.00 fee. A subsequent late pick-up will be billed at \$100.00 and will be accompanied by a meeting with the Director to discuss possible solutions.

Please note that we use an honor system to record pick-up times. There is an atomic clock adjacent to the sign-out board and we ask families to record the time on the clock. Once a parent signs out, s/he is responsible for the child. We ask families to refrain from “signing out” a child and then leaving the child to be supervised by the teachers or another family.

We offer three departure times and it is important to the well-being of all the children and teachers for families to leave promptly after they greet their child and collect their belongings. The classrooms continue to operate in the afternoon and it is disruptive to the classroom if families and children remain in the classroom or common spaces and socialize.

(See also **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES, MORNING ARRIVAL SUGGESTIONS, and DEPARTURE TIME SUGGESTIONS** for more information)

## **H. SIGN-IN/OUT**

Each classroom has a clipboard with a form to record the time your child arrives at school and the time you depart with your child. There is also a place to record any information you would like to share with your child’s teacher. Please complete this form every day when you arrive and depart, as we are required by licensing regulations to maintain these records. Please use the time on the atomic clock that is adjacent to the sign-in/out board to record the time.

*Please be sure to sign in and out every day. The log is used to verify attendance during times of emergency or evacuation.*

*Please be sure to leave a telephone number where you can be reached. It is very important that we are able to contact parents in case of emergency or illness. Please check messages frequently if you are away from your phone.*

## **I. PHOTOGRAPHS**

Parents frequently ask if they may take photographs or videos in their child’s classroom. We allow families to photograph, however to protect the privacy of the children and their families, this is only allowed for personal use and with the permission of the Director. If we receive a

request to photograph from someone other than an enrolled family, we require signed permission from families.

## **J. RESEARCH/COLLEGE STUDENT PARTICIPATION**

The Center for Early Childhood Education serves as a lab school for Smith College and faculty and students frequently conduct observations and research in the classrooms. Signed permission is obtained from families before children participate in research projects and children may choose not to participate.

Smith College students also assist teachers and participate as student workers, volunteers and interns.

## **K. SNOW DAYS**

The Center for Early Childhood Education follows the Smith College cancellation policy for delayed openings, early closings, or cancellations due to weather.

The Smith College Information Line at 585-INFO will carry a recorded message if there are changes in office opening or closing times. *The information line is the only “official” source of weather emergency information.* The CECE follows the schedule of the administrative offices at Smith College. Local radio stations also will carry information about Smith College delays and closings.

## **L. VEHICLE APPROACH TO THE FORT HILL CAMPUS**

*We ask families driving to Fort Hill to follow the safe traffic pattern detailed here.* Because Lyman Road is narrow and cars are often parked on the side of the road, we ask families to use it only for exiting Fort Hill. To enter Fort Hill, turn off of South Street onto Monroe Street, then turn left onto East Street, cross Lyman Road and arrive at the campus via the one-way entry driveway. Leave the campus via the one-way exit driveway, turning right onto Lyman Road.

Please drive very slowly through the Fort Hill campus.

## **M. PARKING AND ENTERING THE BUILDING**

Parking is available in the large parking lot for all Fort Hill families. A few spaces located near the building are reserved for families carrying infants. Other spaces near the building are designated for school van/bus drop-off and for handicapped parking.

For safety reasons, we ask that children walk next to their parents on the inside of the sidewalk that runs along the driveway. Please do not let children run ahead of adults on the sidewalk or in the parking lot. We have placed a large planter at the end of the sidewalk that leads from the school to the sidewalk. Please ask your child to wait by the planter and walk with an adult before proceeding on the sidewalk to the planter. When entering school, children are welcome to enter school independently once they have reached the planter. The planter is replaced with a sand box during the winter months.

If you enter or exit the school through the playground, please remind your child that only adults open and close the gates. Children should wait for adults at the gate and the adult should open and reclose the gate.

Please enter the building only through the front door. This practice helps to keep the classrooms clean as well as secure. Infant/Toddler families may exit through the back door at the end of the Little Common.

## **N. BABYSITTING POLICY**

We ask that teachers, long-term substitute teachers, and student teachers not provide childcare outside of the program for families enrolled in the program. Although developing appropriate personal relationships among teachers, children and families is an important part of creating a responsive school community, we also respect the professional nature of these relationships. As we strive to maintain a balance between the personal and professional, we have found that direct involvement with families outside the program has the potential for disrupting this balance. We believe it is in the best interest of staff, children, and families to uphold this policy.

In the fall, we publish a list of students at Fort Hill who are interested in babysitting for families. Please maintain the confidentiality of this list. Smith College does not screen or in any way evaluate the students whose names are on the list. The list is provided as a convenience to families, but not as a recommendation or “approval” of the students.

## **O. CHILDREN'S RECORDS**

The information contained in a child's record is privileged and confidential. The program will distribute or release information in a child's record only to those directly related to implementing the program plan for the child, unless we receive the written consent of the child's parent(s). If a child's record is subpoenaed, we will notify the parent(s).

A parent may request access to his or her child's record. The record will be available within two business days after the initial request. The administrative assistant will document the following information when records are released: the name, signature and position of the person releasing or distributing the information; the date; the portions of the record which were distributed or released; the purpose of the distribution or release; and the signature of the

person to whom the information was distributed or released. This log will be available only to the child's parent(s) and the program personnel responsible for record maintenance.

A child's parent(s) has the right to add information, comments, data or any other relevant information to the child's record, as well as to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in a child's record. If the parent(s) is of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify or correct objectionable material in the child's record, the parent shall have the right to have a conference with the director to make his objections known. Within one week of the conference, the director will, in writing, provide a written decision and reasons for the decision. If the decision is in favor of the parent(s), steps will be taken immediately to put the decision into effect.

When the child is no longer enrolled at Fort Hill, parent(s) may request in writing that the records be transferred to the parent(s) or to any other person the parent(s) identifies.

## **P. EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND REFERRAL SERVICE PROCEDURE**

The philosophy of the CECE is to provide early intervention strategies to support children's individual development.

When a staff member has concerns about a child, the following procedure will be used. Any written reports are of course confidential and are only available to the child's parents and school staff. Parents must sign a written release before any information can be shared with consultants or other agencies.

- Teachers document observations of the child.
- The teacher asks the director or consulting school psychologist to observe the child and meet with the child's teachers.
- The team will develop classroom strategies to support the child. This discussion will be documented and a copy placed in the child's file.
- If concerns persist, the teacher will arrange a conference with parents. The director may attend this meeting. The meeting will be documented and a copy placed in the child's file.
- During the conference the team may make a recommendation to the director to schedule a meeting or screening with a consulting psychologist or other school staff. The consultant will then observe the child in school.
- After the consultant observes the child, s/he will meet with staff to discuss the observation and make recommendations. These recommendations may include referring the child to the special education department of the public schools (children 3+ years) or REACH (an early intervention agency for children under 3 years).
- This meeting will also be documented and a copy placed in the child's file.
- A plan of intervention will be developed in consultation with the consultant, teachers and parents and will be documented by the consultant or by the teacher.

- The initial observation and conference with the consultant will be funded by the CECE. Any further evaluation and/or treatment is the responsibility of the parents.
- If a referral is made to the public schools, outside agency or specialist, the teachers and director will communicate regularly with specialists and will attend evaluation meetings. If a child receives services such as physical or occupational therapy, we welcome service delivery at school.
- If the parents choose not to participate in the evaluation or treatment plan, the director reserves the right to deny the family further participation in the school's programs. (See Termination Process Policy)

## **Q. TERMINATION PROCESS POLICY**

1. A child may be terminated from the CECE if:
  - The health and safety of the child or other children cannot be assured
  - The child's developmental needs are not being met at the school.
  - Tuition has not been paid according to contract.
2. Parents will be notified both in writing and at a face-to-face meeting, when possible, about the circumstances including the reasons for termination, and a copy of this letter will be kept in the child's file.
3. The director will inform the parents of the availability of information and referral for other services.
4. When any child leaves the school (whether initiated by the parents or the CECE), we believe it is important for the child and his/her friends and teachers to say good-bye and prepare for the departure however it is possible.

## **R. IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT PROCEDURE**

All staff members are mandated reporters according to Massachusetts law. If a staff member has a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child, he/she must file a report with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services.

The following are the steps for this procedure:

1. A staff member who suspects abuse or neglect must document his/her observations including the child's name, date, time, child's injuries, child's behavior and any other pertinent information. The staff member will discuss this information with the director.
2. The director or the staff member with assistance from the director will make a verbal report to DSS, to be followed by a written report 51A within 48 hours.
3. If a staff member believes that an incident should be reported to DSS, and the director disagrees, the staff member may report to DSS directly.

4. All concerns of suspected abuse and neglect that are reported to DSS will be communicated to the parents by the director unless a report is contra-indicated.

## **S. EMERGENCY AND NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL PROCEDURES**

The staff at Fort Hill are certified in CPR and first aid. First aid kits are located in the kitchen area of each of the classrooms, in the office and in the playground sheds in a prominent, labeled location. They are carried on field trips. The content of the kits is monitored by the supervising teacher and includes gloves, bandages, tweezers, sling, and antiseptic towlettes.

In case of **minor accident or injury**:

1. Staff will administer first aid to the child. If any treatment is administered, an injury report will be filled out by the teacher and signed by the parent. One copy will be placed in the child's file.

In case of **non-life-threatening emergency**:

1. The staff will immediately administer first aid to the child.
2. A staff member will contact the parent to come and pick-up the child.
3. If the parent needs assistance, a staff member will offer contact Smith College Public Safety to drive to the hospital and/or accompany the child.
4. If parents cannot be reached, we will call the emergency contacts and staff will continue to attempt reaching them.
5. The incident will be documented in writing with a copy placed in the child's file.

In case of **life-threatening emergency**:

1. The staff will immediately call Smith College Public Safety. The Public Safety officer will call an ambulance.
2. Emergency first aid will be administered by a staff member or Public Safety officer, if necessary.
3. A parent will be called and asked to meet the child and teachers at the hospital. If we cannot reach a parent, we will call an emergency contact, and we may call the child's physician.
4. The teacher or director will accompany the child in an ambulance to the Cooley Dickinson Hospital and bring the child's authorization and consent form.
5. If a parent has not yet been reached, staff will continue to attempt making contact.
6. The incident will be documented in writing with a copy placed in the child's file.

## **T. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

Emergency Exits are posted in each room, and staff is trained in emergency procedures. Fire drills are conducted once every other month.

In case of fire or other such emergency, the building will be evacuated as follows:

1. The fire alarm will sound in the building, at the Smith Public Safety office, and at the Northampton Fire Department.

2. Two teachers will lead/carry the children out of the building to a designated area where attendance will be taken. Infants will be transported in an evacuation crib.
3. One teacher from each group will check classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, etc. for children before exiting the building and will bring the class lists/sign-in sheets with them.
4. The administrative assistant will carry out emergency contact cards for the children.
5. If necessary, children will be brought to the Smith College Campus Center to await the resolution of the emergency and parents will be notified by phone.

## **U. ENROLLMENT POLICIES**

### **BILLING**

The Smith College Controller's Office sends semester bills in August (due September) and December (due January) for the academic-year. Summer bills are sent in May and due in June. Interested families may contract with Sallie Mae to pay monthly. Smith College employees may opt for monthly payroll deduction.

*Smith College Late Payment Fee Policy:* Beginning on the next business day after any payment is due, monthly late payment fees, which are based on the outstanding balance remaining after any payment due date, will be assessed at the rate of \$1.25 on every \$100.00 (1.25%) that remains unpaid until the payment is received in full, on or before the next billing month in which the family is invoiced. Please direct questions regarding charges or credits to the Office of the Controller (585-2200).

### **SCHEDULE CHANGES**

*Increasing time:* If you would like to increase your child's schedule, please see the program coordinator. If you increase your time and contract with Sallie Mae to pay tuition, please make the appropriate adjustments to your contract.

*Decreasing time:* The enrollment agreement is for the full academic-year or entire summer. If you wish to decrease time, please notify the program coordinator. She will place your name on a waiting list and if the space is filled, you will be refunded the appropriate tuition.

### **EXTRA HOURS – EXTENDED-DAY**

Children who depart at 3:00 may opt occasionally (up to three times per month) to extend their day until 4:45, if space is available. The fee is based on an hourly rate of the program. While families are welcome to pick up their child any time between 3 and 4:45, there is one fee for extended day. The additional time must be approved by both the teacher and the program coordinator. Please request additional time at least two days in advance by contacting the administrative assistant. The administrative assistant will bill families for the extra time. Please pay the bill in the office at Fort Hill and make the check payable to Smith College.

The option of an extended day is not available for preschoolers who depart at 12:15 because it is difficult for children to develop the routines of school napping on an occasional basis.

## **TUITION GRANTS**

Benefited Smith College employees are entitled to tuition grants. Please contact the Office of Human Resources for more information (x2260).

## **WITHDRAWAL**

Enrollment is for the entire academic-year or summer program. Withdrawals should be made in writing to the Director of the Center for Early Childhood Education. Children who withdraw on or after the first day of the program will be entitled to a tuition refund as follows:

- Prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the program 75%
- Prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the program 50%
- Prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the program 25%
- Prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> week of the program 10%
- Thereafter 0

The deposit is non-refundable. Information about tuition reimbursement for the summer program is included with the summer enrollment materials.

## **SUMMER PROGRAM**

We offer a ten-week summer program to families who are enrolled in the academic-year program. The details of the program are mailed to families in January.

## **V. WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM**

- **Concerns about finances or scheduling** – speak with the administrative assistant, program coordinator or the Controller’s Office.
- **Concerns about your child** – speak to the supervising teacher first. If necessary, speak to the director.
- **Concerns about a staff member** – talk to the individual person first, if possible. Speak to the director if necessary.

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care licenses the program. The regulations are available in the office at Fort Hill and at the website [www.eec.state.ma.us](http://www.eec.state.ma.us). Gail Towle is the licensing specialist responsible for Fort Hill.

The Center for Early Childhood Education is a department of Smith College. The director of the program, Martha Lees, reports to the Dean for Academic Development, Charles Staelin. The supervising teachers, studio teacher, program coordinator and administrative assistant report to the director. The rotating assistants report to the program coordinator and the assistant teachers report to the supervising teachers in their classrooms.

# A LAST WORD

We are always interested in learning more about better ways to support you and the children you have entrusted to our care. We take this responsibility and this honor very seriously. Please let us know if there is something you do not understand or if you have a suggestion. We cannot always make changes to accommodate everyone's concerns, but we are willing to consider ideas or recommendations. It's much better to address small problems as they arise than to let them grow into big ones. And, of course, we enjoy positive feedback as well!