



westport weston  
cooperative  
*nursery school*

# Family Handbook

## 2022-2023

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Westport Weston Cooperative Nursery School is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization  
EIN #06-0710496

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# School Overview

## Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School

Address: 10 Lyons Plains Road, Westport, CT 06880

Phone: 203.227.9318

Fax: 203.227.5633

Website: [www.westportwestoncoop.org](http://www.westportwestoncoop.org)

Wi-Fi ID: coop1955 Wi-Fi password: 1955

## Licensing

Licensed by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

License # 124557

## Accredited by NAEYC

National Academy of Early Childhood Programs

Program I.D. # 296644

## Organization

Nonprofit, private, non-denominational, early childhood program founded in 1955. The Co-op has an ongoing affiliation with the Bank Street College of Education.

## Management

The governing body of the nursery school is composed of early childhood professionals and parents of enrolled children.

## Funding

The school's tuition covers its operating expenses. Fundraising covers special programs, capital improvements, and scholarships.

**The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation in the administration of its educational policies and admissions.**

## Our Mission

Early education at the Co-op follows a child-centered approach, with individual attention given to each child's needs and sensibilities. The child's interests and questions are paramount in considering the curriculum content. The Co-op values children's play as the context for their learning. We believe that a learning process that includes self-discovery is most meaningful.

We recognize that there is an interdependent triangle that includes the child, the family, and the teacher. This triad has the power to directly impact each child's personal growth and development.

Our strong belief is that the family's willingness to participate in the functions of the school fosters an early example to their children that cooperation is an integral part of education.

The teacher's goal is to create a safe learning environment that inspires children to explore their classrooms and the outside world. Teachers provide nurturing support to the individual needs of the children in their care, recognizing and encouraging each child's physical, creative, emotional, social, and intellectual growth. The school believes that helping a child develop a positive self-image is the best foundation for his or her future education.

The Co-op strives to engage children, families, and staff in ways that model respect, acceptance, and equality.

## Co-op History

The Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School was founded in 1955 by a group of eight families determined to provide a strong supportive environment for the early education of their children. The term "Cooperative" was used to describe the school community, with parents working in classrooms both to create and sustain the school and honor its commitment to educating parents. The school took root in the years to follow and was one of the first nursery schools recognized by the Connecticut Department of Education. In 1960, under the direction of Margaret Sloan, the school left its first home, a farmhouse on Cross Highway, and moved into its present location at the Westport Unitarian Church. In this setting, the Co-op community enjoys the advantages of spacious classrooms and an outdoor environment that encourages exploration of nature.

In 1963, Patricia Nebel, who had been a teacher at the Co-op, became Director, a position she cherished for over 30 years. Pat had been educated in her native England and received a graduate degree in Early Childhood Education at Bank Street College in New York. Under Pat's direction, the Co-op acquired a philosophy that strongly embraced Bank Street's Developmental Approach to educating young children. This approach views the emotional, social, physical, and cognitive growth of each child as individual. This approach also views children's play as their work allowing children to experience learning that is relevant and therefore long-lasting. The Co-op is dedicated to inspiring in children an intellectual curiosity that views the world as a laboratory. This promotes the value of being a life-long learner.

By the mid-seventies, the Co-op was hiring trained early childhood educators to teach at the school. With parents no longer required to participate in the classrooms, the Co-op board voted in 1972 to change the name of the school to "The Westport Nursery School." Though legal documents made this change official, members of the community continued to refer to the school as "The Co-op." To avoid further confusion about the school's identity, the Board voted in 1974 to change the name of the school back to "The Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School." The Board explained that parent participation in the classrooms was only one element of a cooperative, and it determined that the school should be considered a "cooperative" as parents participate in many other ways, as it is a non-profit organization owned and administered by the parents whose children are enrolled in the school.

The Co-op has always kept a close ear to the needs and interests of the community, and a strong sense of the school as a co-operative holds true today. The school is administered by a Board of Directors, which consists of elected parent members who manage the school's finances and fundraising efforts. Parent involvement is welcomed and parental education and support continue to be an important part of the Co-op experience. Many social events are planned throughout the year to help the school meet its mission of supporting not just the individual but strengthening the community as well. We welcome you to join the Co-op community and experience a preschool that is rich in history and dedicated to the quality care and education of young children.

# School Programs

The Co-op provides half-day preschool programs for children ages two-years old to four-years-old. The Co-op programs interrelate each year in order to give continuity to your child's preschool experience. The Fours class will build on the experiences of the Threes class as the Threes builds on the Twos class.

## ***Two-Year-Olds***

There are two program options:

Tuesday and Thursday: 9:00am to 12:00pm

Monday, Wednesday, Friday : 9:00am to 12:00pm

\*A parent or caregiver is required to stay on the premises for the **first four sessions** of the school year. If COVID protocols are updated notice will be given to families at the start of the school year.

## ***Three-Year-Olds***

There are two program options:

Five days a week: 9:00am to 12:00pm

Three days a week: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:00am to 12:00pm

\* 3's Lunch Bunch option is offered on Monday through Friday until 1pm

## ***Four-Year-Olds***

Four-year olds meet Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 1:00pm.

\*4's Stay & Play option is offered Monday through Thursday until 1:55pm

## ***Early Bird Breakfast Club***

For families needing early drop-off, a teacher will meet your child at 8:15am and provide a light breakfast of bagels or cereal and fruit. There is an additional fee for this option and an **advanced arrangement is required.**

## ***Summer Program***

Summer Co-op is a six or seven-week program that runs from mid-June through July. Nature and our environment are emphasized in the curriculum. Weekly specials, water play, pizza lunches, arts and crafts and twice-weekly field trips for four-year-olds and Pre-K children are highlights (depending on health protocols). The Co-op philosophy is integrated into a relaxed, camp-like experience for young children. Many of our regular staff teachers stay on to work in this program. Enrollment for this program begins in February.



## Enrollment

The Co-op follows the policy set by the state of Connecticut in using date of birth as the only criterion for placement in our program. For example, December 31 is the last date a child would turn two in order to be placed in our Twos Programs the previous September. The birthdates of the children in our classes reflect the whole calendar year. This policy may be subject to review only in special circumstances as determined by the Director in consultation with the child's family.

The Co-op begins its enrollment for the next school year in November with an In-House Enrollment Period for current Co-op families to apply. These applications are given priority for placement in available spaces. When the In-House Enrollment Period ends, applications are then made available to the greater community. In-House applications submitted after the In-House Enrollment Period has ended will be included for consideration along with applications received from the greater community.

### ***Application***

A non-refundable application fee of \$150 is required for each application. Admissions are made on a first-come, first-served basis. Children are not interviewed. Children are accepted who are of any physical ability, race, creed, family status, ability to pay, or national origin. Every effort will be made to meet the child's needs in our program. In the case that parents/guardians and staff come to the agreement that the school is unable to meet the needs of the child or family, only then will the child be unenrolled.

### ***Agreements with Parents***

Any individual(s) listed as a parent(s)/guardian(s) on the child's application form must also sign the Member's Contract agreeing to abide by the tuition and policy requirements of the school, including but not limited to the returning and maintaining of up-to-date health and permission forms required by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. This contract also includes an agreement to support the fundraising efforts of the school as well as participation in parent education opportunities. The Co-op Board defines this support as contributing volunteer time each school year.

### ***Tuition Policy***

A \$1000 deposit is due with the signed Member's Contract, saving the child's place in the school. THIS DEPOSIT AND ALL TUITION PAYMENTS ARE NON-REFUNDABLE. Tuition must be paid according to the schedule set forth in your contract in order for your child to attend school: the first installment is due on March 1; the second installment is due on May 1; and the final installment is due on July 1.

Individual payment plans can be arranged with the school office. It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to contact the school office if they are unable to keep current with their payments. Tuition may be paid by check, ACH, VENMO or credit card (note there will be an additional 3% fee for all credit card transactions). Families with accounts more than 90 days past due will be charged additional late fees or they may be asked to withdraw from the program.

## **Scholarships**

Scholarship money is available each year to eligible families in financial need. Scholarship applications are available in the Director's office. Responses to requests for scholarship are made in writing to the applicant. All requests, applications, and financial information are kept confidential.

## **Withdrawal Policy**

The Co-op appreciates ample notice of a child's withdrawal for any reason such as moving to another community. This will help the teachers prepare both the child and the class for the transition. We asked parents to put in writing withdrawal information including the withdrawal date and send it to the office. As stated in the Member's Contract: Upon receipt of a \$1000 deposit there is no provisional enrollment period during which parents may withdraw their child and terminate their obligation to pay the annual tuition. Parents acknowledge that no reductions, rebates, or credit fees will be made in the event of the Child's absence or a Parent-initiated voluntary withdrawal from the School.

## **Classroom Policies**

### **Class Size**

The Co-op is mindful of maintaining a high teacher to student ratio. Our first concern is to accommodate the individual needs of the children in our program. As enrollment fluctuates each year, teacher ratios fluctuate to meet the needs of the class. **Teachers in each classroom are consistent throughout the school day and through the school year.** These same classroom ratios are maintained for outdoor play.

### **Home Visits**

Home visits to all twos & new families will be conducted by Co-op teachers. Getting to know the child out of school can be extremely helpful to the teacher. Many aspects of a child's experience are more readily understood in the context of the home environment. For example, children will enjoy ongoing talks with teachers about pets and toys that the teacher has seen. These visits are very informal and brief.

### **Absences**

Parents/Guardians should notify the school office by 9:30am if their child will be absent. The office manager will follow up on any unreported absences.

### **Arrival**

Promptness at both drop-off and pick-up times is significant to your child's adjustment and success in our program. Please make every effort to be on time on both ends of your child's day. At arrival time, your focus should be on your child and creating a smooth transition. Parents should take teacher's cues when hesitant about when to leave. Please wait until the teachers have indicated they are ready before you enter the classroom in the morning. Routinely, the Fours classes start their day on the playground.

After the first few days of school, goodbyes should be affectionate and short. Children are less apt to get involved while parents are still present. This is a time when we are trying to transfer the trust of the child to the teacher. Please note separation strategies below.

## **Separation**

All young children moving into new settings can be expected to express feelings of sadness and resistance to adjustment. Even as adults, we can feel uncomfortable or anxious when facing new situations. For children, adapting to new caregivers and classrooms can be overwhelming as they have far less experience in dealing with the unknown. It is important for parents and teachers to describe to children, in appropriate terms, what will happen at school: saying good-bye, discussing the routine of the day, and when you will return. Answer children's questions about school clearly and encourage them to talk about their feelings about their new experiences. Visiting the school prior to the first day will allow the child to explore the new surroundings in a calmer setting. Our teachers can offer parents suggestions to ease separation.

How adults handle transitional situations can set the stage for how well a child adjusts to challenges in life. If you are expecting your child to have some separation anxiety, talk to your child's teacher in advance to make a plan for the first few days of school. Those who love and care for children can help them adapt by making preparations in advance, clearly explaining the changes about to take place and listening if doubts or fears develop. Don't forget that transitions are also a time to celebrate your child's growth. Let them know how much they have grown by acknowledging his accomplishments.

- Tell your child that you love them and that you will be back to pick him up right after story or playground time (the last activity of the day.) Children are mindful of these markers of time during the school day.
- Smile as you arrive in the morning, and as you say good-bye and leave. Demonstrate that you are comfortable about leaving them with their teachers and friends at this wonderful place. Children sense ambivalence.
- Ask your child where they would like her good-bye kiss. Suggest a silly place like the elbow or nose so that your child may begin to laugh.
- Alert your child's teacher that you are leaving so they may move closer to give assurance and involve your child in an activity or conversation.
- If you plan to stay on the premises, stay out of sight until you are ready to take your child home. Reappearing and disappearing is confusing and starts the separation process all over for your child.
- If your child continues to cry, and cannot be distracted into play, the school will call you. Feel free to call the school office to check on your child's day.
- Through observing your child, teachers are able to share strategies with you that may help the transition to school. These might include leaving something of yours with your child. You can talk about this with your child and decide on something appropriate together (a family picture, a hankie with your perfume on it, etc.)
- Trust your child to succeed and acknowledge his success when you arrive at pick-up time.
- Trust that you have chosen a great preschool for your child. Know that your child will be held and comforted if they are sad.

## ***Dismissal***

Children will be ready for pick-up and handed off to parents/guardians at dismissal time. Parents/caregivers must sign their children out of school before leaving. This is an important time of day for your child. **Take the time to greet your child and listen to his comments about his day.** If you wish to speak to your child's teacher, please wait until all of the children have been dismissed.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Teachers are not permitted to dismiss a child to anyone other than the parent or designated caregiver, unless written, dated, and signed instructions are given. Digital pickup forms are available on our website or here [Pick Up Permission Form](#). If those picking up are unknown to the teachers, they will be asked for identification. We will not release children to anyone appearing under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

## ***Lateness***

Parents should notify the school if they will be late picking up their children. If the school is not notified and we have made every attempt to reach the parent, we will contact those designated on the Emergency Form. When all resources fail, we will notify the Westport Police Department and they will assume responsibility for the child. This is a policy recommended by the state licensing department and will be used as a last resort.

## ***Dress at School***

Because school is a time for active and creative play, we suggest that you send your child to school in comfortable and washable play clothes that allow for freedom of movement and use of materials without concern for spills and messes. Shoes should be sturdy with non-slip soles and covered toes and heels for running and climbing on the playground. Because we stress independence in dress, please consider clothing with velcro, working zippers, and snaps.

Outdoor play is scheduled daily in all types of weather. Make sure your child has appropriate outerwear. On cold days, please dress children in hats, mittens (better than gloves), boots, and snow pants or other warm pants. Even on some rainy days children may go out exploring, so please send boots and raincoats with hats or hoods. We recommend jackets with zippers, hoods that tie, hats, mittens (attached to cuffs), and oversized boots that your child can put on easily. **Please do not send umbrellas to school as they can easily pose a safety hazard.** Be sure that your child brings a backpack or tote bag to school each day. This is necessary for the safe carrying of the various projects and notices that are sent home daily.

At the beginning of the school year, we request that each child have a large plastic ziplock bag with a complete change of clothes. Each bag should have underwear, socks, pants, and shirts. If available, a spare pair of shoes that can remain at school is also a good idea. Please replenish as needed. **PLEASE LABEL ALL CLOTHING, BACKPACKS, AND LUNCH BOXES!**

The Co-op follows a policy for a **Commercial Free Environment** which prohibits clothing and accessories that depict media related characters. See below complete Commercial Free Environment Policy.

## ***Policy for Commercial Free Environment***

To continue the support of our home/school partnership and address the concerns of a community that shares values and responsibilities, the Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School has enacted a policy that strictly prohibits clothing or accessories that depict media-related characters. The policy encompasses all media characters targeted to children, especially those that promote violence. Our primary goal in enacting this policy is to filter out the commercial culture and its negative influences on play and offer a "safe haven" for the children while attending our preschool. While we feel that such a policy is not a panacea for all the negative effects of mass media exposure on our children, we believe it will have a powerful and positive impact on the children's experiences at the Co-op.

When a child comes to our school, they need to feel, "I am safe here, my body is safe, my feelings are safe, my thoughts, ideas, and words are safe, and the materials and the things I make here are safe." With safety comes trust, the most basic need of children and on which social, emotional, and intellectual development builds.

The foundation for how people treat each other is laid in the early years. Violence in any form leaves young children feeling scared, hopeless, and unsafe. Many children might seem unaffected by exposure to entertainment violence, however under the surface, there is the burden of discomfort and uncertainty that weighs on their minds.

Even minor exposure to violence can cause anxiety in the young child. The messages that children are hearing all around them in the mass culture (movies, T.V. etc.) include violent or sexually stereotyped approaches to problem solving. Children need many chances to try out and develop a range of positive ways to interact with others and to be constructive members of a social (or classroom) community. Teachers encourage children to create appropriate roles in which to feel empowered.

Our experience has shown that overexposure to media-related characters by owning many of the articles, violent or not, reinforces children's idea that the portrayed power of such characters is real. Our teachers have observed how they distract from the creative process in the classroom and can be used by the children to exclude friends that do not have them the same items.

To teach children in non-violent, non-sexually stereotypical classrooms, we strive to create concrete and meaningful rituals and routines. This will encourage an environment that helps children develop a sense of autonomy and empowerment and encourages mutual respect and interdependence.

## ***Toys at School***

At times a child may need to bring a familiar toy or object from home in order to ease separation difficulties. Children may also bring books, music, and items of interest to be studied by classmates and teachers. We ask you to help your child remember that toys remain at home and are not brought to school unless a special request is made by the classroom teacher. Guns, swords, or other toys resembling weapons must never come to school. When personal items come from home, they should be labeled with the child's name. Please avoid sending items of value or those easily broken to school. Please feel free to discuss this issue with your child's teacher should an individual circumstance arise.

## ***Snack***

Nutritionally balanced snacks, including two food groups, are offered daily. Some choices are cheese, yogurt, whole grain bagels, muffins, crackers or cereals, fresh fruits, and vegetables. Only water is served with snacks. To encourage environmental awareness, we ask that each child bring a reusable water bottle to school each day.

Information regarding food allergies and restrictions should be relayed to your child's teacher, as they are responsible for planning for all food in the classroom. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CO-OP STRIVES TO BE A NUT-FREE SCHOOL.** Snack menus are posted in each classroom for two weeks in advance. ***Due to the presence of life-threatening allergies, parents are not allowed to bring food into the school for sharing by others.*** For special occasions, please check with classroom teachers and they will purchase approved ingredients for cooking projects. Teachers plan for each child's safety. Any child with a specific feeding need teachers will document the type and quantity of food the child consumes and provide this information to the child's family.

## ***Lunch***

Children in our Twos and Fours programs have lunch as part of their daily schedule. Children in the Threes have the option of a Lunch Bunch add on that begins enrolling in September. We ask that you pack a healthy variety of foods for those staying for lunch. Please refrain from packing candy. **DO NOT PACK FOODS THAT CONTAIN ANY KIND OF NUTS.** It is our policy to allow children to choose from any food that their parents packed for them. Though teachers model good eating habits and make healthy suggestions, they do not invoke rules regarding order of consumption or finishing food. Unconsumed food will be returned in the lunchbox so that parents can be aware. Children staying for lunch should bring a sturdy lunch box with their names and dates clearly labeled. We encourage the use of reusable wraps and containers while packing their child's lunch. **The lunches are not refrigerated, so ice packs must be inserted.** A list of choking hazard foods to be avoided will be sent home.

## ***Birthday Celebrations***

It is a tradition to honor each child on their birthday. Each class celebrates birthdays in a special way. We ask that you discuss with the teacher in advance the details of the celebration. We request that parents refrain from sending special snacks to school. Please plan to join your child in school on that day to read a special book or help with the birthday activity. With COVID-19 protocols, families have been reading to the children outdoors. We welcome you and your child to donate a book to the class library in honor of his or her birthday. This is a great opportunity to spread the joys of reading and giving.

## ***Supervision***

Providing a safe school environment is our first concern. **The staff monitors the children by sight and sound at all times.** Each child's arrival time and pick-up time are noted on a daily record. All children are grouped by age in all programs. Periodic head counts are conducted throughout the hours of the program especially before, after and during outdoor play. There is a minimum of one staff person per seven children in the Threes and a minimum of one staff person per eight children in the Fours classes at all times. This ratio is also maintained on the playground. A minimum of two staff persons per eight children is maintained in the Twos classes.



## ***After School Playground Supervision***

In order for children to experience more consistency in their playground experience, we feel it is important that parents be aware of the policies that the Co-op teachers follow in supervising the children on the playground. Please keep in mind that the teachers are watching and listening to many children, and therefore controlled supervision is necessary to maintain the safety of each child.

- At dismissal, once the parent or caregiver has arrived at the Co-op, they become responsible for the child
- Adults should position themselves around the playground in ways that allow them to observe the children on all the equipment
- Shoes must be worn at all times
- Adults should be involved in and facilitate the children's play
- Children should not be on the playground without an adult supervising them.
- Unleashed pets are not allowed on the playground
- Children are not permitted to stand on the tire swing. Teachers or other adults push the tire swing as it is heavy and can knock over the children
- Children are sometimes weary from a day at school. Adults should be tuned in to signs of fatigue in their children and take them away from the play group. Crying, tantrums, hitting other children, and grabbing toys are such indications.

## ***Inclusion of the Special Needs Child***

The Co-op considers the needs of all children to be unique. We strive to respect, include, support, and nurture the emotional, intellectual, and physical capacities of every child we serve. We believe that all children should have access to quality early education, including the child with special health care needs. This group of children includes those with conditions such as allergies, special dietary needs, hearing or visual impairments, chronic illnesses, and developmental delays. There are many times when a Child Development Specialist is observing an individual child in one of the classrooms. This will always be scheduled with the approval of the Director and the knowledge of the teaching team. The Co-op makes every effort to integrate children with special health care needs in accordance with the policy stated as follows:

The Co-op accepts and includes children with special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided for the child. We will attempt to accommodate children with special needs consistent within the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

When the child, parent, or health care provider identifies that a child has special health needs, the Director and parent/guardian will meet to review the child's care requirements.

Parents/Guardians will complete an "Individualized Care Health Plan" form with their health care provider. This form provides teachers with information about the child's needs.

The School Nurse will help the Director and teachers in implementing the plan and help coordinate care with the family. Information concerning individual care plans is confidential.

Through careful observation, we are able to individualize curricula so as to scaffold each child's learning within his zone of proximal development (the gap between what children accomplish independently and what they accomplish when interacting with others that are more competent).

parents/guardians, teachers, and the educational resources of our community assist in planning for children's development and early education. Services may include, but are not limited to: speech and

language specialists, occupational therapists, social workers, child psychologists, and education consultants. A child's individualized plan may include the support of a specialized professional while here in our classroom. This professional would work with the classroom teachers in providing a supportive experience for all the children. Children diagnosed with special needs are welcome in our program. Every accommodation possible is made to provide an appropriate preschool experience that includes the needs of all children.

### ***Co-op Behavior Management Policy***

Discipline and behavior guidance are an important part of the learning process and are a consistent piece of the Co-op curriculum. It is an opportunity to set realistic limits that will allow children to express emotions in socially accepted ways. Expectations for the children's behavior are defined by principles of developmentally appropriate practice. Children adapt their behavior in ways that appear to meet the expectations of others. It is important that children know what is expected of them while at school. Teachers clearly communicate their expectations and explain natural consequences. In flexible cases, children are given choices. It is important to respect the child's decision.

We believe that positive discipline policy is necessary to eliminate (or limit) the use of suspension and expulsion or any other exclusionary method of discipline. Positive discipline is in the best interest of the child: it must be loving, consistent and just. It must be presented in a manner that maintains the child's dignity. Children need to know that a caring adult will step in to assist and guide when he or she is out of bounds.

It is important for adults to have realistic expectations for child behavior. Very young children often lack impulse control and have little understanding of the concept of cause and effect which can result in challenging situations. Children's development and temperament can also present behaviors that may seem extraordinary to some when, in fact, early childhood professionals anticipate such behaviors and address them in ways that give the child support and teach him skills for better choices. All adults should recognize that the children are learning to cope in a large group and that mistakes will happen.

The three most important concerns teachers have in giving guidance to children at school are:

- Keeping oneself safe
- Keeping others safe. (Being kind to friends.)
- Keeping our school safe. (Using toys and materials appropriately.)

When teachers recognize recurrent behaviors that are unsafe they may use some of the following techniques in helping the child choose appropriate behaviors:

- Re-involvement: Explain the inappropriate behavior and choices of appropriate behavior. Reinforce the proper behavior.
- Encouragement: Reinforcing the appropriate behavior increases the likelihood that it will return.
- Active listening: Clarifying the child's feelings to help him solve his own problem.
- Consequences: This helps the child understand that her actions have a result.
- Substitution: Making inappropriate behavior appropriate by changing the setting.
- Calm down time: There is no "time out" at our school. However, to stop inappropriate behavior a teacher may suggest, "Let's play over here." or "Let's go for a walk outside." The teacher will stay with the child until they can make appropriate choices.



Teachers choose a technique based on knowledge of the developmental level of the child. Teaching staff never use physical punishment, (e.g., shaking, hitting, spanking, isolating or rough handling etc.) psychological coercion (e.g., ridiculing, name calling, sarcasm, etc), withholding food or other negative methods that hurt, frighten, threaten, or humiliate when disciplining a child. The Co-op does not expel, suspend or otherwise exclude children as a discipline measure. Exclusion is only used when all other methods of discipline have been exhausted and would be necessary to keep the child or others from harm. Failure of any Co-op staff member to comply with these restrictions is cause for immediate dismissal and they will be reported to the CT Department of Children and Families for investigation. All discipline policies and practices comply with Federal and CT Civil Rights laws.

## ***Challenging Behaviors***

Our knowledge of child development tells us that very young children have not developed a sense of cause and effect relationships. They may push, grab, hit, or bite because they are frustrated, and this is a quick release. At the moment they are not even aware that it hurts the other child. Sometimes these behaviors are simply non-verbal expressions of anger. As the child grows in verbal abilities, these incidents usually decrease markedly. The child may be acting on an impulse that he has not yet learned to control. Our teachers are extremely vigilant in watching and supervising to prevent these incidents. When they do occur, our teachers react quickly to console and tend to the hurt child. Then the teacher will sit with the child who has done the hitting/biting while she regains control of herself, reminding her that she should use words and ask teachers for help. Both sets of parents will be informed. Accident forms are written up by teachers when a child has been injured. Parents sign these reports and they are kept on file.

When challenging behaviors persist:

- Teachers and the Director meet with parents to discuss patterns of behavior
- Strategies are developed to maintain consistent messages to the child between home and school
- Daily reports are given to the parent regarding the child's experience at school
- If challenging behavior patterns persist, the Co-op may engage additional support to help the child. For example, a staff member will shadow the child while at school or an outside consultant may be engaged for observation and strategy development.

## ***Plan for Consultations***

The Co-op staff is committed to working with each child and family to provide a safe and engaging environment for exploration, discovery, nurturance and support. The Co-op is acutely aware of our need to support children especially those with developmental and behavioral needs.

When developmental or behavioral concerns arise, Co-op staff meet with parents to develop effective strategies for helping their child to have a positive school experience. Our work with parents is ongoing and confidential.

Parents/guardians are always a part of child support strategies. Next steps may include but are not limited to:

- Individualized classroom support
- Intervention with a social worker

- Birth to Three assessment for toddlers
- Public school assessment for preschoolers
- Private service provider assessment

The Co-op has contracted with an early childhood education consultant, a licensed nurse consultant, a dentist and a social services consultant in order to advise and support our program staff and parents. They also review our school policies each year.

The school makes every effort to appropriately support the child who is struggling. The teaching team will talk with the family regarding observable behaviors interfering with the child's school experience. This will include discussion of current strategies in use. Decisions will be made as to next steps: the family pursuing outside consultants for guidance, or the Co-op engaging the appropriate consultants for formal observation and assessment of the child.

Following assessments, meetings will take place with the family to discuss new strategies, their implementation and a plan for follow-up meetings.

At no time in this process will the use of suspension or exclusion be employed as a disciplinary measure. The Co-op complies with all federal and state civil rights laws.

If at any time it is determined by all parties that the Co-op is not able to meet the needs of the child, the school will make every effort to advise and assist the family in finding an alternative placement and/or appropriate services for the child.

### ***Co-op Diversity Approach and Policy***

Traditionally in preschool settings, the focus with children has been on the many ways people are all alike. The thought is that the familiar is often sought out by young children. A toddler may seek out an adult that looks like their family member and a baby smiles readily at a familiar face.

Children accumulate information through their own experiences with others in their life, including both adults and other children. Children apply the accumulated information that they already know or understand about human differences, to new experiences and relationships. The number of experiences a child has with others varies of course. One child's experiences may be limited to immediate family. Another child may live in a home with extended family members or with caregivers. A child may travel a good deal with family and experience a variety of customs outside their own home. Families differ in the amount of their outside social engagement. This sets the pace for the child's understanding of diversity issues.

With each experience a child has with others, whether with an adult or another child, they apply what they already know. A new experience will confirm what they understood, or the child will adapt and/or expand a new understanding. For example, a child might know that their mother does all the cooking in their home. The child's understanding is that all mothers, or women cook. When visiting another home, the child may observe the father or a man cooking. The child expands their understanding about who cooks. When a child is presented with new information that does not fit into their existing understanding, they begin to reconcile the new Diversity: All of humankind. The many ways that people look, speak, dress, celebrate, worship, and prepare food. Gender is a part of diversity understanding as well as family structure. Individual abilities and economic circumstances also contribute to diverse circumstances.

The child's understanding of ethnicity, language, race, and family is emerging, or ongoing. The child will notice that groups can speak in different languages, wear different clothing and that families can look different than theirs, in skin color, gender and age.

For children to grow in understanding and empathy, it is important that children have occasions to observe differences in groups, to hear other languages be spoken, and to help a disabled peer in school. The child's active participation in hearing, in helping and in discussing differences will support their ability to reframe their knowledge with a broader understanding of diversity in their real world. Parents or other significant adults confirm the child's new awareness through their own positive comments and modeling of comfort within diverse situations and conversations.

Co-op teachers engage in continuing professional development on Diversity issues including appropriate language and activities to use with children in the preschool classroom.

Diversity: All of humankind. The many ways that people look, speak, dress, celebrate, worship, and prepare food. Gender is a part of diversity understanding as well as family structure. Individual abilities and economic circumstances also contribute to diverse circumstances. These differences are what make up our global society, the natural order of human existence.

### ***Sharing Traditions and Celebrations***

We believe that any event or holiday that is important to the children and families at the Co-op should be recognized, acknowledged, and shared in a way that is meaningful for the children in the class. We welcome the opportunity to learn about families and share in their celebrations and traditions. Though we have temporarily suspended parent visits to the classroom, many parents have done activities outdoors with the children. When we resume indoor visits, we will notify and invite parents to come indoors to share their rituals and celebrations or to read a story, sing a song, or cook a traditional recipe that is meaningful to your heritage, religion, or culture.

When the time comes, you can plan with your child's teacher when you wish to visit the class for such an occasion. Seek advice from the teacher as to the age appropriateness of your presentation. Teachers can guide you as to how to present your information in age appropriate ways as abilities and understanding of concepts varies with each age group. Parents should be aware that we stress the importance of process not product.

Child-initiated discussions of all holidays are always respected. Teachers encourage the children to share their excitement, ideas, and fears about all holidays.

### ***Volunteering in Classrooms***

Due to COVID-19, indoor volunteering has been temporarily suspended. Talk to your child's teacher about helping with an outdoor activity. When we resume, we welcome and encourage your involvement in the classroom. We recognize that the partnership between parents and teachers is enormously beneficial for the children. Please talk to your child's teacher to arrange a day to volunteer.

Some of the ways you can participate in the classroom are:

- Read a story to the children. Some classes enlist "Mystery Readers." This can be done outside.
- If you play an instrument, please bring it and play for us. We will sing along outdoors too!
- Help work on the children's journals.

- Do a “cooking or art” activity. We will provide supplies.
- Transporting and accompanying the Fours on field trips

The following are some important points to keep in mind when volunteering in the classroom:

- When participating in the classroom, you are there to assist all of the children. There are times when some children experience difficulty sharing their parents with peers. Should this occur, you may wait a while before volunteering in your child’s class again.
- While volunteering, if you observe any conflict between the children, please alert the teacher and allow them to handle the situation.
- If you have any questions about the day’s activities, please wait until dismissal to discuss them with the teacher.
- Teachers can discuss any questions, thoughts, or concerns you may have regarding your child. We know that you will respect the personal nature of discussing anything about your child’s classmates.
- Please shut off cell phones while at the Co-op
- Note that a First Aid Kit is available if needed. First Aid Kits are located in an upper cabinet in each classroom, labeled with a red cross. A teacher may call upon a parent to access the first aid kit while the teacher is in the process of caring for an injured child.

Please note that volunteers in the classroom are never left alone with the children. Our professional staff are present and supervise at all times.

### ***Diapering***

To meet state licensing requirements, staff members who change diapers must follow a strict procedure. Children must be placed on the changing tables provided at our school. Rubber gloves must be worn. Soiled diapers and wipes are bagged separately and removed to marked receptacles. Posted hand-washing procedures are followed explicitly before and after diaper changes. Even the child’s hands are washed after a diaper change. All staff members are informed of these procedures. **There is no specific age by which a child is expected to be toilet trained.** Those who have begun the process are encouraged by their teachers who will take them to the bathroom.

### ***Not Using the Toilet at School***

Occasionally an otherwise toilet-trained child refuses to use the toilet at school. Adults should calmly ask the child if there is a reason for this resistance. Is the toilet too high, too noisy, or lacking privacy? If there is no addressable reason, check with the pediatrician. If the child’s doctor is not concerned, all should relax. We never want to make a child self-conscious about this natural function or create further problems. The child will use the toilet when they are ready.

# Parents and the Co-op

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## ***Teacher Communication***

As we believe that good communication is vital in creating a positive learning environment for your child, we encourage you to bring your concerns and questions to our attention. Arrival and dismissal times are good times for only QUICK exchanges of information, though; it is too busy a time for teachers to become engaged in long conversations. If this is necessary, the teacher will be covered by additional staff and the conversation must take place in a private setting. All parent-teacher conversations about children should be considered private and take place away from the daily classroom or playground areas. Our teachers are accommodating and will suggest a convenient time for longer conversations. It is important that teachers and families develop a trust that all are working in

the best interest of the children. Again, we encourage you to bring any concern you may have to the attention of your child's teachers or the Director immediately. Kindness and respect should be the tone of all inquiries or comments.

### ***Respecting Children***

It is important that we offer children the same courtesy and respect we offer adults. Children are very alert to what is being said even if it seems they are not listening. Comments that adults make about a child's personality or behavior tell that child what we think of him or her, helping to shape their self-images. Teachers, parents, and caregivers should carefully consider what they say in front of the child. We want to talk to you about your child. If present, we will include your child in the conversation being careful of his feelings. For some concerns and questions, it is better to speak when your child is not present. We will arrange for such times whenever needed.

### ***Notices and Classroom Information***

Information in weekly newsletters as well as your child's artwork are excellent stepping off points for engaging your children about their experiences at school. Often very young children forget what they have done at school by dismissal time. Each classroom has a "mail" system for sending home children's artwork as well as other information. Check your child's classroom "mailbox" or their backpack regularly for important items. In order to reduce our negative impact on the environment, teachers email weekly newsletters to parents. The school office also uses email for relaying important notices to families. Please be sure that the school has your current email address and that you check your email frequently for school information. If this is not a convenient way for you to receive information, please let us know and an accommodation will be made.

### ***Parent/Teacher Conferences***

Two formal conferences are scheduled each year, one in the Fall and one in the Spring. School is closed on conference days allowing teachers the time necessary to meet with each family. A less formal opportunity is given at mid-year for parents/guardians to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress. Advance notice is given, and parents/guardians may schedule their conference on a Google doc emailed to each class. Flexibility is offered in scheduling to accommodate work schedules. In addition to these conferences, your child's teachers are willing and available to meet with you to address any issues concerning your child. Feel free to make an appointment.

### ***Policy for the Protection of Confidentiality***

Our professional ethics and the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, require that each employee maintain the highest degree of confidentiality with regard to enrolled children and their parents. We all share a common interest in making sure that nursery school information, including children's records, is not improperly or accidentally disclosed. We respect every family's right to privacy.

In order to maintain professional confidence, no employee shall disclose parent information or school matters to outsiders, including other families or third parties. The Co-op has documents that attest to those who have legal responsibility and educational decision-making authority for each child in the program. The staff shall use two-way communication with those involved with the decisions relating to the child (including those legally designated, as well as specialists and consultants working with the child) ensuring confidentiality of sensitive information. Any disclosure of child's records beyond those



designated shall require the written consent of the Parent/Guardian (except in the case of abuse or neglect).

Child records are kept locked in the school's Administrative Office. Only the Director, Office Manager, teachers, and the School Nurse have access to child records. On the occasion of a State Licensing site inspection, or NAEYC Accreditation visit, random child files may be viewed for currency and completeness.

It is important to develop relationships of mutual trust and to create partnerships with the families we serve. Any questions regarding confidentiality should be addressed with the Director.

### ***Parental Access to child's records***

Parents/Guardians shall be provided reasonable access to educational records and information maintained by the Co-op. Any individual listed as a parent/guardian on the child's application and Member's Contract shall be considered a parent/guardian. Notices regarding a child shall be sent to the contact information included in the child's Member's Contract. The parent/guardian has full access to both the child, including permission to remove the child from school grounds, and records/notices concerning the child. If the Administration of the Co-op is provided with appropriate written evidence of a court order, state statute, or other legally binding document, the Co-op will abide by such documents. Parents shall be permitted appropriate access to their child in the school setting and on school grounds.

### ***Fundraising Policy***

Traditionally, fundraising is a vital component at the Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School; we fundraise in order to enhance the quality of our program. Therefore, each family is obligated to volunteer and participate in at least one area of the many fundraising projects the school has planned. Volunteer obligation is defined by the parent run Board of Directors each school year.

To ensure the consistency, integrity, and appropriateness of the fundraising activities undertaken on the behalf of WWCNS, a framework has been developed to guide all fundraising activities including solicitation of donations, sponsorship, etc. Parents agree in writing of their commitment and understanding to fulfill this volunteer obligation and represent the school appropriately. Parents may choose to opt-out of this obligation in writing, agreeing to pay the \$500 opt-out fee in lieu of volunteer service hours.

### ***Parent Communication***

The Co-op uses various forms of communication to inform and connect with Co-op families. Our main form of communication is through email. Information – including an updated school calendar – can always be accessed via our website at [www.westportwestoncoop.org](http://www.westportwestoncoop.org).

Urgent information will be sent via opt-in text alerts.

Families can follow the Westport Weston Cooperative Nursery School on social media via our Facebook page and Instagram. News/information specific to each class is communicated weekly by the classroom teacher/s. Calendar updates are emailed. The Co-op calendar features upcoming local Community events. If a parent/guardian would like to share information about an upcoming event to be included, please contact the office manager.

The Co-op Board emails a newsletter to all families. If parents/guardians would like an item to be included in the monthly Board newsletter, email [board@westportwestoncoop.org](mailto:board@westportwestoncoop.org).

## ***Parent Education***

Traditionally the Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School Parent Educations Series strives to bring experts from the community to speak with Co-op parents on any topic relevant to parenting. The Co-op sees parenting as a fluid profession, and what works for one child might not work for another. As parents we need to constantly adapt and learn so that we can provide the very best for our children. Topics covered by the Parent Education Series range from CPR to mindfulness to behavior challenges to literacy.

The Parent Education Chair(s) sends out a survey at the beginning of each school year to gain an understanding of the current parent population's interests, from which topics are selected. Once the topics are chosen, the speakers are selected through recommendations from the school, parents/guardians, and from known experts in the community. If the speaker provides handouts or materials, the Parent Education Chair(s) make them available, by leaving hard copies in the lobby or by scanning them to be emailed out to everyone. At the end of the year, another survey is distributed by the Parent Education Chair(s) to evaluate the Education Series provided during that school year in order to improve upon the following year's series. In addition to gaining valuable insight from professionals, this series also brings parents together to connect with one another and share similar experiences and questions in a non-judgmental environment, creating a stronger community within the school.

## ***Co-op Board and Committees***

As a cooperative, the nursery school offers parents/guardians an opportunity to participate in their child's early education. The nursery school is owned and administered by a Parent Board of Directors and its committees. While the schools' education policies and practices are the responsibility of its Director and teaching staff, administrative policies are implemented by the Parent Board of Directors which also determines its future development. The Board is responsible to the entire parent membership of the school. Each class has Parent Representatives who act as the class liaisons to the Board. The Board functions throughout the year raising funds to defray the cost of running the school and to plan social activities for parents and children. Parent involvement not only helps maintain the quality of the school, but also helps bridge the gap between home and school. Descriptions of these positions can be found at the end of this handbook.

## ***Annual Survey***

Each spring parents/guardians are asked to evaluate the school program. A questionnaire is distributed to each family online via Survey Monkey. We ask that you give this evaluation serious consideration and respond promptly. This feedback is important to our understanding of the needs of the Co-op community and to reflect on our own practice. It helps us in making plans and setting goals for the school. It is necessary to our Accreditation standing that all parents respond to this survey. The results of the survey are discussed at the monthly General Board Meeting. Completed surveys are kept in the school office for parents/guardians to view.



## ***Grievances, Conflicts, and Suggestions***

The Director, Staff, and Parent Board members are in agreement that all parent/guardian concerns should be addressed as soon as they arise. If a parent/guardian has a concern related to her child in the classroom setting, the teacher should be the first source of communication. The Director is available at all times for additional consultation and discussion on all issues concerning the school. If you feel you have a problem with your child's teacher, we encourage you to discuss it with the teacher directly. If this approach is not satisfactory, please contact the Director and/or Personnel Chair to the Board. Parents are invited to bring any suggestion and questions concerning school policy to General Board meetings on the first Wednesday of the month. Class Representatives act as liaisons to the General Board for all parents/guardians in the school. Policy suggestions, concerns, or complaints should be brought to their attention also. We ask that parents/guardians bring all concerns forward in a positive and proactive manner immediately in order to affect a positive resolution.

Our program is licensed under the authority of Connecticut General Statutes 19a-79-1 through 19a-79-8, inclusive. Most problems within child-care centers are non-life threatening and can be resolved by:

1. Discussing the problem with the classroom teachers
2. Discussing the problem with the Director
3. Discussing the problem with the school's Executive Board or General Board.
4. If the problem is not resolved, contact the Department of Child and Youth Services – Daycare Licensing Unit

In cases of emergency, notify the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood as soon as the emergency is under control. In cases of abuse/neglect or life-threatening situations, contact the Department of Child and Youth Services – Daycare Licensing Unit at: Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, 410 Capitol Ave., MS#12DAC, P.O. Box 340308, Hartford, CT 06134-308 or phone toll-free 1-800-282-6063.

## ***Cell Phone Free Zone***

Bringing your child to school and reconnecting at the end of the day are very important to your child's experience. Your child needs your attention when saying goodbye as well as when greeting her at pick-up time. It is confusing for children, the teachers, and other adults to have parents or caregivers on their cell phones in the school. We ask that you turn off cell phones, including hands-free devices, when you arrive at the Co-op parking lot.

## ***Parking Lot***

During drop-off and pick up of children, please note that the parking lot is one-way proceeding around the building and back onto Lyons Plains Road. Please go slowly as children can dart out from between cars.

We ask that you do not leave your car idling when you pick up or drop off your child. Please do not hesitate to call the school office to have your child brought to your car or picked up at your car when needed. Sick or sleeping siblings or being sick yourself are all good reasons not to come into the school.

## ***Policy Changes***

As the Co-op Director and Board continue to provide quality programs for our children, the need may arise to change policies described in this handbook. School policies are continuously being reviewed

and evaluated. If there are any changes as described in this handbook, families will be notified via email of any changes as they occur.

## Weather related closings/delays

The Co-op generally follows the Westport Public Schools snow/weather policy decisions.

- If the Westport Public Schools are closed, the Co-op will be closed
- If the Westport Public Schools have a two-hour delay, the Co-op will open at 10:00am
- The Co-op will notify families specific information about a closure or delay after 7:00 am

The Co-op may choose to close if it is felt that roads are too hazardous for driving. It is left to the individual judgment of each family to determine whether children will attend school in inclement weather. Many of our staff travel a significant distance to get to work and therefore might be subject to different weather conditions or traffic difficulties en route. These factors may also contribute to the delay or cancellation of school.

Early Dismissal: Please inform the school of your location on threatening days, as early dismissals can be problematic. When unusual weather events necessitate closing the school early, the administration will attempt to reach each family. Please make sure we have all emergency contacts.

## Civil Preparedness Plan

Our Civil Preparedness plan is as follows:

- The Director is responsible for the preparation and execution of all emergency plans. In the absence of the Director, the Office Manager or Head Teacher will assume responsibility.
- During any civil emergency (environmental hazard due to weather or hazardous materials: fire, flood, bomb threat, explosion) the staff will monitor the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) radio station for our area.
- We will take one or more of the following actions as quickly as possible:
  - Take shelter within the facility away from all windows (the bathrooms). Turn off all lights, close all windows and doors, and shut off other means of ventilation (fans).
  - Temporarily evacuate to the outside as per fire evacuation plan.
  - Evacuate facility by calling parents and guardians to transport children.
  - Evacuate the area by walking children to designated shelter (Temple Israel). Staff Members, wearing orange emergency vests, will lead children by foot. Staff will keep children in a safe line along the road. Emergency cards, emergency medications clipboards, and emergency kits will be taken.
  - The school's answering machine will be changed to reflect the emergency plan. A sign will be posted on the school door stating where the children are located.
  - Head counts will be taken regularly throughout the emergency.
  - The director will determine the reopening of the facility based on advice from emergency personnel.
  - In the event of a Police designated lockdown, we will take shelter within the facility away from all windows.

## ***Fire Drills***

The Co-op practices our evacuation procedures monthly. In the beginning of the year, drills will be done without the alarm sounding for the children to get comfortable with the procedure. Once classes have learned the procedures, the alarm sound is added to the drill.

## ***Lost Child Policy***

In the event a child is missing, the following actions will be taken by the Co-op staff:

- Check attendance to be sure the child has been signed in
- Search the facility and grounds
- After re-check of the facility and grounds, the police will be notified for further instructions
- Staff not involved in search will continue their normal supervision of the children

## ***Abuse and Neglect Policy***

The Co-op is committed to providing children with opportunities, activities, and experiences that support emotional, physical, social, and cognitive growth. Such commitment includes the responsibility of all employed here to prevent child abuse and neglect of all who are enrolled.

Our teachers, because they are in regular contact with the children, are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect. As “mandated reporters,” they are required by Connecticut General Statutes to report suspected abuse or neglect orally and within 12 hours to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. This report must be followed by a written report within 36 hours. Anyone who reports suspected child abuse or neglect in good faith is immune from civil and criminal liability. However, failure to report could result in being fined up to \$500. It is not the responsibility of the reporter to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred. Reports will be made when a teacher at the Co-op has reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused, neglected, or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm by a person responsible for the child's health, welfare, or care, or by a person given access to the child by the responsible person.

Child abuse is defined as a child who has non-accidental physical injury inflicted upon him other than by accidental means or has injuries which are at variance with history given of them, or is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation and exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment, or cruel punishment. (CGS 46b-120).

Child neglect is defined as a child, who has been abandoned, is being denied proper care and attention physically, emotionally, or morally or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances, or associations injurious to his well-being. (CGS 46b-20)

As mandated reporters, our teachers are given detailed instructions for reporting child abuse.

## ***Emergency Care Plan***

- Trained Staff personnel will assess the situation and administer appropriate treatment (e.g. first aid, medication, CPR). Note all Co-op teachers are trained in first aid, CPR & epipen administration.
- Another staff person will notify the Director. The Director will call 911 to give the status of emergency.

- The Office Manager will call the parent/guardian of the child – refer to emergency records or emergency information in the classroom or office. Parents/guardians will be notified of the child's status thus far and the Office Manager will request the parent's attendance at school or meet the child at hospital.
- A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and remain until the parent or emergency back-up person arrives.
- If parent cannot be reached, call emergency back-up persons designated on emergency card until a responsible person is reached
- If no back-up persons are located, the office manager will call child's pediatrician/dentist for instructions
- After incident, a staff member will complete a Pupil Incident Report and MAR (if medication was administered)
- The Director will notify CT office of Early Childhood within 24 hours of incident (if child admitted to hospital)

The child is to be comforted and cared for by a staff member in an isolated area until a parent or emergency back-up person arrives. Staff classroom ratios are to be maintained by calling for the floater.

IN CASES OF FIRE, SMOKE, OR ANY OTHER DANGER THAT INDICATES THE NEED FOR EVACUATION:

- Pull fire alarm
- Take a headcount of children
- Call 911
- Take emergency cards, emergency medicines, clipboards, and emergency kits
- Check all bathrooms and close all doors
- Leave building with the children to designated areas as practiced in fire drills

ILLNESS OF A STAFF MEMBER:

- The Director arranged for substitute coverage in classroom
- Trained person will administer First Aid or CPR
- Call to staff person's physician on how to proceed
- Call 911 to arrange for transportation if needed
- Call staff person's family

## Curriculum

### ***Our School's Approach to Early Education***

The philosophy of the Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School, an early childhood educational program, is that young children are curious, active learners. The staff recognizes the unique qualities of

each child and seeks to provide learning experiences to meet the individual needs and current state of development of each child.

The school values play as children's natural way of learning. The school also recognizes that children naturally learn through investigation. Therefore, it is the central role of the teachers to help the children acquire interest in a wide variety of topics and to set the stage for the children to explore and investigate these topics with close attention and a deep understanding. All children are encouraged to test ideas, build personal resourcefulness, and to savor the joys of accomplishment.

Each classroom at the Westport-Weston Co-operative Nursery School is designed to make the children feel comfortable. There are activity centers throughout the room that are easy for the children to approach and are observable by the teachers. Young children thrive in a routine which offers them security and variety; a daily schedule balancing active learning experiences and quiet times is followed. There is opportunity for the children to participate in activities independently, in small groups or as a class.

Curriculum themes are based on the interests of the children and the seasons of the year. Seasons and the outside environment lend themselves to many child-centered activities. In addition, topics such as nutrition, self-awareness, the five senses, transportation and construction, community life, dinosaurs, sea shore (etc.) can be intensely interesting to young children. The length of the focus for each topic varies because it is dependent on the children's interest level. The integrated curriculum includes science, art, drama, language, manipulative play, music, gross motor activities, math, and storytelling.

An integral part of the Westport-Weston Cooperative Nursery School is the partnership between the staff and the parents. Throughout the year teachers, administrators and parents work closely together communicating, sharing ideas and observations and information. We believe that children thrive in a positive climate and this can be accomplished when mutual trust and respect is developed between the home and the school. Individual conferences and parent participation provide more opportunities for parents and teachers to exchange ideas, plan and communicate.

## ***Assessing Children***

The first five years of your child's life are very important as they set the stage for success in school for years to come. The teachers at the Co-op engage in ongoing formal and informal assessment approaches in order to obtain information on all areas of children's development: social/emotional development, gross and fine motor development, and language and cognitive development. Some of the assessment methods used are: teachers' daily observation and anecdotal recording; portfolios/journals compiled for each child over the school year; checklists and rating scales as provided by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Documentation and Observation for Teaching System or DOTS; and the individually parent-administered questionnaire Ages and Stages.

The Co-op uses assessment primarily to evaluate our program's effectiveness and to affirm that each child is progressing in development and skill building. Assessment is closely connected to the curriculum. Observing the children at play, teachers watch and document developmental milestones, recording what they see. Checklists help teachers assess what skills the child has mastered and what skills are emergent or becoming evident.

Teachers use observations to facilitate, adjust, or individualize curriculum when needed to support children's progress. For example, the child that is tentative about finger painting on the tabletop, may be more comfortable using a brush to paint on the table at first.

Each child's Journal also provides purposeful evidence of a child's progress. Journals include dated samples of the child's work, work the child is proud of and wishes to include in their portfolio. Also included are photos of the children actively engaged in play, plus documentation of conversations, stories, and ideas that the child dictated to a teacher or adult volunteer.

It is essential for families to be involved in the assessment process. Family's perspectives about their own children are an important resource for teachers. The Co-op engages parents in the assessment process by inviting them to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), a child-centered screening tool used to assess their child's development. This is done at the beginning of the school year in September. The questionnaire includes questions about what your child can and cannot do with regard to language and communication, physical skills, problem-solving, and personal social skills.

The Co-op teachers and Director share the results of assessment and both informal observations and more formal checklists and questionnaires with families at private conferences. Conferences are offered the first week in November, a mid-year check in, and the first week in May. In addition, teachers are open to scheduling a meeting at the parents request at any time of year. Parents can ask at conferences, or any time of year, questions regarding how our assessment methods can meet the needs of their child. If assessment shows possible concerns about a child's development, we will provide information about a more involved assessment for the child. All information about children is kept confidential and locked in the school's office. Teachers, the Director, the school nurse, if needed, and the licensing agent of the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood are the only persons with access to child files. Any further assessment or intervention is done in cooperation with the child's parent/guardian. Information with outside consultants and agencies is shared after parents/guardians have signed a request form and granted permission for sharing information. This form is available in the Director's office.

### ***Local School Systems***

The Co-op Director and teachers work closely with the local school systems in many ways. Transition to kindergarten is an important topic we discuss with parents and individual school systems. All information given to the Co-op regarding kindergarten, times of meetings, and forms to be completed, are shared with parents in order to make sure that all timelines are kept. Once a child turns 3 years old, special services are offered and may come through local school systems. The Co-op works with the public school in these various ways, assuring your child's best preschool experience. Please be sure to discuss with your child's teacher or the Director any questions you may have regarding services your school system may offer.

### ***Asking Questions about Your Child***

It is very important that you feel comfortable in coming to your child's teachers with questions or concerns you may have. Our teachers are well-educated in child development and their experiences may be helpful to you in understanding your child's behavior whether at home or at school. Similarly, teachers will ask families questions about their children in order to better understand them or to better meet their needs. Teachers will seek specific ideas from families for working with their children at school.



## ***Occupational Therapist***

The Co-op works closely with Ellen Martino, MS OTR/L in advising the teachers as well as working directly with the Threes and Fours in creative and fun activities each month. Through group play and exploration in the classroom, these activities incorporate core strength and stability, fine motor skills, prewriting skills and sensory motor integration. Ellen is available to consult with parents also. Her information is in our school office.

**\*\* “Educational and Support Resources” are posted on the parent information board.**

## **HEALTH POLICY**

The Co-op follows the licensing regulations of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. Our school's Health Care Consultant, Patricia Lamb, MA,RN, works throughout the year with our staff and families to ensure our continued compliance with all regulations set by the state.

Regulations require a current physical examination by a physician, physician assistant, or APRN and the completion of medical forms; [CT Early Childhood Health Assessment Form](#)

**NO CHILD CAN BE ATTEND SCHOOL WITHOUT THE COMPLETED AND CURRENT MEDICAL FORMS.**

If your child starts the day with a sore throat, stomachache, persistent cough, fever, or other symptoms of illness, please keep him or her at home. Call your healthcare provider with any questions you may have about your child. Please call the school office if your child will be absent from school. It is important to us that we know of any contagious illness in our school so as to notify other families of exposures.

### ***Illness at School***

Please see the separate Co-op's COVID-19 Protocol document for up to date information concerning children who become ill at school. It is important to note that all Co-op teachers take a certified CPR course as well as training in Medicine Administration and Epi-pen. Teachers who have these training sessions are with the children at all times when they are at school.

Should your child become sick during the school day, your teacher will call and notify you. You should arrange to pick up your child as soon as possible so as to limit the exposure to the rest of the children. We ask you to update any emergency contact information if it changes during the school year. In addition, you should notify those on your emergency list that you have given us their names.

The following procedures have been recommended by the school nurse:

- **FEVER:** If your child has a fever, he/she should be kept at home 24 HOURS after it has subsided.
- **VOMITING OR DIARRHEA:** If your child vomits or has diarrhea, he/she should remain home for 24 HOURS after all the symptoms have subsided.

### ***Health Exclusion Policy***

Please see the Co-op's separate COVID-19 Protocol Document for current information on this illness. Aside from COVID-19, when children are ill it is important that they rest at home. If your child exhibits any

of the following symptoms, we will contact you to pick your child up at school in order to best provide comfort and prevent contagion of other children and staff.

- Fever of 99 degrees
- Any rash suspicious of a childhood disease
- Vomiting
- Uncontrolled diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis or “pink eye”
- Mouth sores
- Head lice
- Constant and uncontrolled nasal discharge
- Uncontrolled cough
- Difficulty breathing, wheezing
- Lethargy that prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities as determined by the childcare provider
- The illness results in greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children as determined by the childcare provider

The final decision whether to exclude a child from school is made by the school.

Once a child has been excluded from school for any of the above reasons, in order to return, these procedures must be followed:

- If your child has been sent home during the school day with a fever or vomiting, she cannot return to school the next day.
- The child must be fever-free and without vomiting or diarrhea symptoms for 24 hours.
- Any child taking antibiotics for a bacterial infection must take the prescription for 24 hours before returning.

\*Individual health situations not referred to here must be discussed with the Director before a parent may leave a child so that the best possible consideration can be given to all the children at the school.

### ***Policy for Administration of Medicines at School***

If your child requires medicine while at school including topical creams, inhalers, tablets, or liquids, including over-the-counter medications, you must complete an “Authorization for the Administration of Prescription Medications by Day Care Personnel” form for our files. Children requiring such medications may not be left at school without the school having the necessary documents and medications. No medications will be administered without these completed forms.

If discrepancies are found in the paperwork or on the prescriptions, no medications can be administered and the form and the prescriptions must be returned to the parent for correction. In compliance with the guidelines of the State Department of Health and the policies of the Westport Board of Health, medications will be administered by the Director or a teacher who is currently authorized and trained with the expressed authorization of the parent and physician. Medications must be in the original container provided by the pharmacy with the child's name, physician's name, and dosage printed on the label. All medicines must be current. For medications in liquid form, an



appropriate, graduated dispenser (i.e. medicine dropper or spoon) shall be provided by the parent with the child's name and dosage marked on it.

The following procedures are followed by staff trained in medicine administration:

1. The Co-op will not administer the first or second dose of any medication. This must be done by the parents to ensure that the medicine does not cause a reaction.
2. Those administering medications must wash hands thoroughly and have the patient wash their hands.
3. Patient and the medicine administrator will go to a quiet area.
4. The Medicine Administration Records and Medications are to be removed from the labeled box where they are stored.
5. The medicine administrator will check for the "Five Patient Rights:" Right Patient, Right Medication, Right Dose, Right Route, and Right Time.
6. The medication will be administered.
7. The medication will be recorded in ink on the "Controlled Drug Use Record."
8. The medications will be relocked with the records and returned to their storage place.

The following types of prescription and non-prescription medications may be administered at school:

- Oral medications
- Topical medications
- Inhalant medications
- Injectable medications by a regulated injection system to a child with a medically diagnosed condition who may require emergency treatment.

Our administering an injectable medication would be followed by a call to Emergency Medical Services or 911 for support.

The following medication will not be administered at school:

- Narcotics (including cough medicines with codeine)
- Medication requiring injection (except those listed in part A)
- Any medication not yet approved by the FDA
- Other medications as determined by the Co-op staff

Whenever possible, any required medication should be administered by parents at home or outside of school hours. **IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN GIVEN MEDICATION PRIOR TO ATTENDING SCHOOL** (even children's Tylenol/Advil/Motrin), a "Notification of Medicines Administered at Home" form needs to be filled out at drop-off. Your child's teacher can provide you with this form. Teachers will report to parents any observable side effects. If side effects are observed, additional medications will not be administered without written approval from a health care provider.

Non-prescription Topical Medications:

A physician/dentist's signature is not required for diaper changing rash ointments that are free of antibiotic or steroid components and medicated powders. These can be applied when the "Parent/Guardian Authorization of the Administration of Non-Prescription Topical Medications by Daycare Personnel" form is filled out by the parent. These must be stored away from accessibility by children. When the weather requires, we ask that you apply sunscreen to your child before they arrive. This is typically sufficient for the duration of the school day. If you require teachers to reapply sunscreen

you will need to fill out the "Parent/Guardian Authorization of the Administration of Non-Prescription Topical Medications by Daycare Personnel" form.

All unused medications shall be returned to the parent or destroyed if they are not picked up within one week following the termination of the order. Allergy medications that are kept on hand in case of exposure will be returned to parents at the end of the school year.

## **Tick Policy**

Living in Connecticut poses a concern about tick bites as our children play outdoors. Parents are responsible for checking their children each day for ticks. At the Co-op, the children play on our playground, on our lawn and may also take a supervised walk around the grounds, usually along the established paths.

Teachers are aware that there are ticks in our environment. They are also mindful as they care for the children, that a tick could get into the classroom. The following is the protocol that teachers will follow:

- Teachers do not check each child for ticks. If a teacher sees a tick on a child that is NOT attached to the skin, the teacher will remove the tick and save it in a plastic bag to show when informing the parent.
- If a teacher sees a tick on a child that IS attached to the skin, the parent will be called. The teacher will not remove the tick.

You can decrease the chances of being bitten by a tick with some precautions:

- Perform daily tick checks after being outdoors. Your child's bath time is an excellent time to check the skin's creases and folds, as well as the scalp.
- Bath or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors, preferably within 2 hours, to wash off and find any ticks that may be on you.
- Keep to the center of trails when walking in the woods.
- Use insect repellent containing a 20% concentration of DEET on clothes and on exposed skin. Insect repellent should be applied before arrival at school.

Attached ticks should be removed with tweezers. Avoid crushing the tick's body. Grasp the tick firmly, as close to the skin as possible. With a steady motion, pull the tick's body away from the skin. Wash the area with an antiseptic.

References:

*Lyme Disease: What You Need to Know, Dept. of Health & Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

*Lyme Disease and Associated Diseases: The Basics, The Lyme Disease Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Inc.*

## **School Nurse**

Our school nurse, Patty Lamb APRN, is on site monthly or as required by the State of Connecticut regulations to review and give advice on the health component of the program. She is available to discuss all individual health plans for children with families and staff. She also gives health care training to our staff. Parents can reach Patty by phone any time to discuss school-related health issues.

# Co-op Curriculum Framework

## ***Cognitive Development***

**Vocabulary and Language:** Goals for children's language acquisition will be demonstrated through observation of increasing numbers of their conversations. Vocabulary goals will be demonstrated through children's increased use of new words related to topics of discussion and through growing clarity as children express ideas.

Opportunities for Literacy and Vocabulary enrichment will include but not be limited to:

- Informal conversations each day with teachers and peers. Firsthand experiences hearing and saying words
- Listening to books read aloud and talking about the story. Using new words heard in stories in relevant context
- Listening to expressive language of adults and peers with attention to tone and body language
- Classroom discussion of and research into Topics of Interest for classroom study

When English is the second language spoken in a child's household, teachers and parents will work together to formulate word lists of common words in both languages to be used in the classroom. Word lists will include a picture for toddlers. In these cases, first language word lists will be used in the classroom for all children to learn and use.

**Phonological Awareness:** As children engage in conversations to express ideas or ask questions, they begin to use more words that they have heard relating to specific topics. Teachers guide children by modeling pronunciation and introducing new words. Goals will be demonstrated through describing different word sounds. This includes rhymes, beginning word sounds, and ending syllables. Phonological awareness will also be demonstrated through hearing awareness as well as the child's understanding of and /use of beginning word sounds and rhymes, or end sounds.

Opportunities for Phonological Awareness will include but not be limited to:

- Singing songs, repeating rhymes, using finger plays, puppets and word games to gain children's interest and develop oral motor strength for articulation
- Talking with children about word sounds: What sounds each letter makes. The letter sounds that are in their names. What sounds are similar and different
- Reading books that include repetitive word sounds for children to hear letter and syllable sounds. Encouraging children to join in chorus when reading books with repetitive sounds such as works by Dr. Seuss and Robert Munsch

**Printed Word:** An important integral for children in pre-reading is making the connection between the spoken and printed word. Raising the child's awareness of this connection can spark the child's interest in writing as well as reading. Goals will be demonstrated through recognition that printed letters, words, and pictures/symbols translate into spoken words. This includes relating labels to objects in the classroom and recognizing that pictures have correlating oral language.

Opportunities for Printed Word awareness include but are not limited to:

- Providing wordless books for children to begin to decode pictures to tell stories.

- Teachers taking dictation as children tell their stories, demonstrating the transfer of oral to written word
- Encouraging children to “write for meaning” in dramatic play scenarios, such as office and restaurant, by providing appropriate writing materials for these settings
- Providing a journal for each child in the school that documents their year in photos, art work, and opportunities for the child to “write” entries. Journals provide evidence of a progression in the child’s development across all domains
- Children observing teachers writing on charts demonstrating left to right, top to bottom sequence and pointing to words as they are read
- Talking about the part of a book: cover, beginning, end, author and illustrator notes.
- Providing appropriate materials for making books with children
- Labeling items in the classroom to increase awareness of names and the written word

### **Letters and Words:**

The most important word a child learns is his/her name. Teachers help children learn name recognition by using name cards to point out the architecture of each name: some have tall letters, some have round or crossed letters, or maybe dotted letters. As children see their name written, they begin to make the connection that isolated letters and their sounds combine to make words. The goals for Letters and Words will be demonstrated by the child’s increased abilities and interest in recognizing letters, then names as well as words, as they learn letter and sound combinations.

Opportunities for Letter and Word recognition will include:

- Exposure to alphabet letters in written and in tactile forms
- Posting children’s name in the classroom in many contexts
- Providing writing materials in all classroom centers and outdoors
- Including samples of the child’s “writing” in journals and on artwork
- Playing word games that focus on phonetic and rhyming sounds
- Helping children to write appropriate signage when needed for their projects

**Comprehension:** As children learn that words combine to make stories, they become interested in putting their own ideas into words and then into stories that have a beginning, a middle and an end. Children begin to see that words are used in many contexts: books tell stories, words on boxes can be directions or tell about what is inside, and signs in the environment can help keep us safe. Goals will be demonstrated through the child’s understanding of stories, conversations, directions and picture sequences as well as initiating telling their own stories.

Opportunities for acquiring Comprehension skills will include:

- Discussion and questions when stories are read aloud
- Encouraging children to make up stories
- Taking dictation of children’s stories
- Acting out favorite stories as well as the children’s original stories
- Looking at different signs and discussing their message
- Looking at packaging for clues to contents.

**Literary Appreciation:** As children choose books, are read to, or tell their own stories, they acquire an interest and hopefully a love of stories and reading. Teachers model their appreciation of books through

handling care, enthusiasm and eagerness in reading and re-telling stories. Goals will be demonstrated through children's interest in hearing stories, pretending to read or follow pictures in books, making up stories and making books.

Opportunities for Literacy Appreciation will include:

- Creating an inviting library area with a variety of book genres
- Talking about authors and illustrators as part of the "read aloud" experience
- Creating a writing area in the classroom with a variety of materials for making books, copying letters and words, and pretending to make and write documents
- Reading aloud the children's own stories as part of the classroom routine

**Number Concepts:** Children begin to recognize quantities in the context of less and more. As they move to more specific identification of these quantities, they begin to recite numbers and then to recognize the written numbers. Goals will be demonstrated by children's understanding that a specific quantity is represented by a number symbol. Children will grow in understanding of relationships between quantities and numbers through one to one correspondence activities that are in context to their everyday lives.

Opportunities for acquisition of Number Concept skills will include:

- Singing counting songs and rhymes to learn the correct sequence of numbers
- Counting during all daily activities, such as attendance, equitably distributing materials
- Surveying and graphing relevant attributes or opinions to create visual impression of quantities
- Comparing and contrasting using quantitative terms: longest, shortest, most, least, highest, widest, etc.
- Provide numbers in written and tactile form

**Patterns and Sequences:** Simple patterns and sequences are fundamental to both math and reading. Left to right sequences designate beginning to end in reading and math. As children do these types of activities, they become more accustomed to this order in organizing letters, words and numbers. Goals will be demonstrated by children's interest and skill at recognizing, imitating, and creating patterns as well as predicting and continuing patterns. Children will also build skills in following a sequence in activities.

Opportunities for increased Patterns and Sequencing understanding will include.

- Creating clapping and patting patterns to be followed in simple to more intricate patterns
- Creating patterns with everyday objects for the children to discern and describe:  
shoe-mitten-shoe-mitten-hat
- Provide materials that can be arranged in patterns
- Look for patterns in the outdoor environment
- Creating activities that require a specific sequence of events to complete:  
jump-skip-jump-skip-squat

**Sorting and Contrasting:** Sorting and contrasting items helps to build the child's ability to discern differences and similarities. This skill is necessary to distinguish attributes in both math and literacy concepts. Goals will be demonstrated by the children's increased interest and understanding in comparing and sorting objects by a variety of attributes, both real and pictured. Children will begin to use appropriate words for spatial relationships such as inside, behind, next to, on top of, etc.

Opportunities for increased understanding of Sorting and Contrasting will include:

- Providing a variety of building materials for stacking and constructing: blocks, tubes, boxes, Unifix cubes, Duplo and Legos
- Using correct words for geometric shapes in children's work
- Describing spatial relationships, "in side of," "next to"
- Providing writing and tracing materials to draw and describe their work
- Looking for objects in nature to compare and sort: kinds of plants, trees, rocks

**Measuring:** Goals will be demonstrated through the child's interest and increased understanding of comparing and measuring, even timing. Children will use conventional as well as non-conventional objects to measure items.

Opportunities for Measuring will include:

- Providing and encouraging the use of items that can be used for measuring: blocks, tubes, rulers, string and other items found in the classroom and in nature
- Continually counting objects
- Providing tactile materials such as sand, water, rice that can be used for measuring and pouring
- Use words denoting time: "Two minutes until clean-up." "What takes longer?" "First we wash hands."
- Providing items to be arranged in sequences or with other like items

**Physical, Earth & Life Science:** Goals will be demonstrated by the children's increased interest and curiosity about their environment.

Opportunities for experiences in Sciences include:

- Providing science materials such as magnets, rocks shells, pulleys, mirrors, magnifying glasses to encourage investigation and exploration.
- Talking about animal habits, habitats, and life cycles and how to take care of animals
- Talking about health and nutrition in a relevant context
- Providing materials that will change: melt, stick, blend, expand, sink and float in order to observe and note changes
- Noting changes in nature: weather, seasons, growing, day and night
- Providing recording materials, clip boards, pencils, notebooks, to record findings and make predictions
- Graphing comparisons in order to present a visual context
- Providing gadgets and simple machines to explore technology in daily routines

**Social Studies and Community:** Goals will be demonstrated by the children's increased awareness of their place/role in the larger organizations of family, school/friends, and community.

Opportunities for experiences in Social Studies and Community will include:

- Inviting families to share with the class their traditions, celebrations, stories, recipes and artifacts
- Facilitating dramatic play scenarios where children are able to create a home-like setting or community centers such as restaurants, libraries, schools, medical offices, markets and other familiar businesses
- Facilitating the understanding of life roles in these scenarios by providing props and costumes that are appropriate to the theme.
- Facilitating discussion and problem solving using vocabulary related to the scenario created



- Inviting community workers and family members to the school to discuss or demonstrate their work
- Taking field trips to relevant community centers of business, arts or governance
- Facilitating in problem-solving as questions or conflicts arise

## ***Personal and Social Development***

**Self-awareness:** Self-awareness is the ability to recognize and name one's feelings and begin to cope with them. Children first learn about feelings when they become aware of the external aspects of their lives; being a member of a family, or part of a classroom of children. The child then becomes aware of the internal aspects of self, including feelings. Goals will be demonstrated by the children's increased ability to work independently and within a group. The child will grow in ability to express feelings and negotiate with others. The child will also grow in awareness of himself within his family and the greater community.

Opportunities for Self-awareness include:

- Modeling appropriate expressive language so that children hear words relevant to everyday situations with the group
- Providing self-directed as well as teacher directed activities
- Encouraging children to use appropriate words to express their ideas and feelings to others
- Demonstrating respect for differences
- Encouraging children to be helpers to others
- Sharing real life experiences and individual emotional experiences that happen every day in the classroom
- Encouraging families to come into school and to share their stories and traditions

**Social Development:** Goals will be demonstrated by the child's increasing ability to identify their feelings and express their feelings to others. Children will take part in decision-making processes as they become more independent in the classroom and begin to collaborate with peers.

Opportunities to support Social Development include:

- Teachers modeling appropriate expressive language and care-taking
- Providing activities that help children identify/name emotions
- Providing activities that require some negotiating with others
- Providing guidance to children when negotiating with peers
- Providing groups time where there is turn-taking, waiting and sharing
- Providing opportunities to children to aid in establishing rules and routines
- Teachers supporting awareness of safety as important to well-being
- Providing group projects and topics of study that allow the children to respect and collaborate with others, feel that they have contributed positively and succeeded

**Mood Management:** As children's emotional language grows, they are better able to express their feelings. Expressing one's feelings in an appropriate way strengthens one's ability to manage their mood or temperament in challenging situations with peers and adults. Goals will be demonstrated by the child's increased ability to respond appropriately and proportionately when conflicts arise.

Opportunities for support the development of Mood Management skills will include:

- Providing experiences and activities with various mood states; role playing, songs celebrations etc.
- Acknowledging an action or behavior and letting the child name the associated feeling
- Organizing routines to sooth the child's behavior when possible: "You will see mom right after story time."
- Creating a space and allowing for "alone" time when a child requests this

## ***Creative Expression***

**Building and Constructing:** Initial and primary attempts at "creating" for children may come when placing and replacing items or materials in different arrangements. Stacking or aligning items may trigger a memory and the child feels they have created something relevant and experiential. Goals will be demonstrated by the child's increased interest and abilities to use a variety of materials to construct purposefully.

Opportunities to support Building and Construction will include:

- Providing an inviting block area with an ample number of assorted sized and shaped blocks for individual building as well as collaborative projects
- Providing props (toy animals, vehicles, people, ramps etc.) in the block areas to enhance the child's building scenario
- Providing conventional construction activities such as Legos, Duplo, Bristle Blocks etc. for building
- Providing unconventional building materials such as boxes, carton, fabric, large rocks, etc. for building larger projects
- Providing tools, tool belts, safety goggles and other props to extend the child's experience
- Documenting the work through photos and the child's description of his/her journal and or documentation panels

**Art Experiences:** Children learn about the creative process through exploring a variety of appropriate materials. Through this exploration, children learn the feel, look, and other unique qualities of materials and can experiment with their use, singularly or in combinations. Children are able to test the properties of paints, glues, tape, and a variety of collage materials and see the visual results. Goals will be demonstrated through the child's increased interest, experimentation, and purpose with a variety of art materials as a means to express their feelings and ideas. Goals will also include increasing fine motor dexterity in using art tools. Children will increase their awareness of physical properties of art materials as well as develop appropriate language/vocabulary in describing their work.

Opportunities to support Art Experience include:

- Using traditional materials (paint, markers, glue) as well as non-traditional materials (recycled and nature materials) in the process of creativity and experimentation
- Going outdoors to experience nature as a part of the art process; light, shadow, colors and using rustic materials
- Encouraging self-direction and independence in experimentation with materials
- Encouraging problem-solving skills in the child's creative process and allowing for multiple attempts by the child to attain satisfactory outcomes
- Supporting experimenting with abundant materials in order to achieve success



- Providing tools that will support small motor development, rolling pins, scissors, mallets, hammers, etc.
- Discussing the child's art with the child in order to increase their awareness of their process and to help them reflect on it
- Displaying the child's art respectfully for others to see
- Displaying examples of fine art as well to increase children's awareness of art in the world
- Nurturing the child's appreciation of art as part of becoming life-long learners

**Music and Movement:** Interest in the rhythm of music and movement comes naturally to most children. It is an outlet for creative energy that helps children develop across all domains. The standard of this experience will be demonstrated through the child's increased listening skills, participation in group activities and recognition of rhythm, songs and instruments.

Opportunities for support in Music and Movement will include:

- Singing a variety of songs for various occasions during the school day, including a greeting, clean-up song, or good-bye song
- Making up original songs with the children
- Using a variety of musical instruments, including child-made instruments, to create rhythms and to accompany songs and dance
- Providing appropriate props, such as scarves, puppets, ribbons, etc. to extend the child's understanding of rhythm and music appreciation
- Providing space for movement activities in the classroom and outdoors
- Encouraging children to create their own movement activities with songs, music CDs, or instruments.

**Dramatic Play:** When children engage in dramatic play, it deepens their understanding of the world. Their pretending in different roles, allows them to make up scenarios that they can regulate beyond the restrictions of reality. Through pretend play, children are able to make deeper sense of roles and situations in their own lives. They learn to problem-solve in creative ways and to think more abstractly as they envision scenarios and re-enact them. Goals for Dramatic Play will be demonstrated as the child becomes more comfortable at role playing, using conversation and relevant props. Children's own understanding of various life roles becomes apparent in observing their dramatic play.

Opportunities for Dramatic Play will include:

- Providing props and dress up clothes that reflect the cultural context of the children's lives
- Adding appropriate props to support and extend the current topic of study in the classroom
- Observing and suggesting in order to support interest and extend ideas in a positive way
- Providing opportunities for child initiated and regulated dramatic play that extend into all centers in the classroom
- Encouraging and supporting children's cooperative efforts with friends as they work together on ideas for play
- Talking with children and participating in play in order to extend their ideas

## ***Physical Development***

**Outdoor Play:** When children play outdoors, they develop a sense of accomplishment as they engage in and develop competence in purposeful activities. Outdoor play develops coordination and large

motor muscle strength as the children run, climb, ride, push, balance, pull pump and dig. It also enhances small motor skills as the children make mud pies, pick up leaves, connect pipes, stir and pour sand and water. Children increase cognitive awareness as they observe and explore nature. They observe seasonal changes in their outdoor environment. They become aware of how these change their ideas for play, the presence of ice and snow, the new bloom of leaves to be added to their mud recipes. When outdoors, children also become more aware of safety rules.

Opportunities for Outdoor Play include:

- Using the playground for child-initiated and regulated play; developing dramatic play scenarios such a playing house or construction site
- Providing appropriate equipment and toys that safely challenge children to use large motor muscles; climbers, ladders, bikes, wagons etc.
- Organizing games and activities that promote use of gross motor muscles; Mr. Fox, Red Light, various ball games
- Engaging children in setting up activities that require certain equipment such as carrying water buckets, hauling hollow blocks and boards, rolling logs or pumping water
- Discussing safe use of equipment and toys, as well as child behaviors, that will keep the outdoor play safe
- Increasing the child's knowledge of natural elements; weather, wind, precipitation, shadows, plants and trees etc.
- Exploring nature on walks, making graphs, collecting natural items and drawing outdoors

Opportunities for Indoor Play include:

- Dancing and moving to music with the music specialist twice a month as well as part of the daily classroom activity when relevant and appropriate
- Engaging in specific big body exercises and games with the occupational therapist
- Lifting and carrying hollow blocks, ramps and other pieces of equipment as block play progresses
- Engaging in planned and spontaneous movement games such as Simon Says with the class

**Fine Motor Development:** When children engage in purposeful activities that use the small muscles in the hands and wrists, they increase their dexterity. Dexterity helps children to gain confidence in self-care abilities; eating with utensils, pouring, buttoning, zipping etc. Fine motor exercise is important to the skill development with writing tools and scissors. Spatial awareness, necessary for balance and body control, is also developed through the development of fine motor skills. Goals will be demonstrated through the child's increased dexterity, control and interest in activities that require small muscle use.

Opportunities for Fine Motor Development include:

- Providing activities and tools that engage children so that they will increase strength in small muscles, for example play dough, Legos, and puzzles
- Working and playing planned fine motor activities with the occupational therapist
- Provide a variety of tools for the engagement of medium experimentation; brushes, squeegees, rollers; for use with paint, shaving cream or clay.
- Encouraging and guiding children in self-help tasks; dressing, food preparation, opening packaging
- Providing a variety of writing tools for children to experimentation; pencils, pens, paintbrushes, crayons
- Providing safe cutting tools for experimentation; scissors, hole punches and paper punches

- Providing tape, pipe cleaners, string, and paper clips for children to fasten objects together

**Health and Nutrition:** Children increase their awareness of food groups and making healthy choices through classroom activities and discussion. Food recognition activities as well as tasting opportunities help children experiment with a variety of nutritional foods. Teachers also guide and encourage children in appropriate personal care and hygiene habits. Goals will be demonstrated through the child's increased awareness of healthy food choices and increased abilities in self-help tasks.

Opportunities for Health and Nutrition awareness include:

- Providing opportunities to try new foods by presenting a variety of healthy food choices for snack.
- Providing opportunities to prepare foods in the classroom: following recipes, cutting fruits, vegetables and breads, using juicing tools for juices
- Providing activities, posters and books that familiarize children with food groups
- Providing guidance in appropriate hand washing and toileting
- Providing guidance in nose-blowing, covering coughs, disposing of tissues etc. to raise awareness of germ containment
- Providing opportunities for the School Nurse and Dental Consultant to visit the classroom to discuss age appropriate hygiene habits
- Fostering independence as children develop skills in dressing and undressing
- Encouraging children to participate in caring for the classroom environment by putting away materials and keeping classroom space safe

**Safety:** Children increase their awareness of safe practices as they become more comfortable in their environment. Children become more aware of cause and effect relationships as they experience this space. For example, toys left on the floor may cause tripping and falling. Children's senses also become more acute as they begin to distinguish smells, tastes, sounds and sights, some that may cause them concern. Children become discerning when these senses raise cautious concern, for example if they smell smoke. Teachers support awareness of reasonable caution in daily experiences.

Opportunities for Safety awareness include:

- Practicing monthly fire drills so that safe practices will be followed in emergencies.
- Discussing appropriate rules for keeping the classroom safe for everyone
- Discussing safe habits in the classroom that provide hands on opportunities for the children to keep the space safe and clear of hazards
- Inviting police, fire and EMT professionals in to talk with the children about safe practices as well as to build comfort with uniformed first responders.

## ***Resources and References -Curriculum Development***

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