



Policies and Procedures Manual

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PARENTS

Capacity

Our child center classrooms are designated to care for:

Classroom 1: 14 Preschoolers - 33 months - Kindergarten

Classroom 2: 15 School Age - Ages 5-10

Program Schedule

Our center programs will operate Monday - Friday from 7:30am-5:30pm year-round. We will be closed throughout the year for holidays, staff trainings, and other designated breaks. Our calendar will be set each year and provided to parents before enrollment. Weather-closure determinations will be made by the Director and staff and families will be alerted as soon as possible of any closure.

General Education Methods

At Roots and Wings Forest School, we believe that children are intrinsically motivated to learn. Our goal is to promote learning across all developmental domains (physical, cognitive, social, and emotional) by providing a positive environment that encourages discovery and exploration of the natural world in every season. Our preschool program is play-based and child-centered. We believe that children learn best through direct experience - and children experience the world through play! Our child-centered approach provides children with a sense of confidence, responsibility, and empowerment. We believe that by learning in and about the natural world, children will care for their environment and what happens to it. Spending time outdoors is critical to the physical, cognitive, and social development of children. We spend the majority of our school day outdoors in our forest classroom whenever possible. While we do not follow one learning method specifically, we incorporate Montessori, Waldorf, and traditional Forest School concepts in our classrooms.

- We are child-centered. The flow of the day depends largely on the children and their interests. While we have a general schedule, a large amount of our time is spent in choice play and learning environments where students are free to transition between activities as they wish. By following the child's interest, it is our goal to foster lifelong learners who love to explore and discover the world around them.
- We promote playful learning. We believe that children need ample time to explore, create, manipulate, and discover the world around them. By providing large chunks of uninterrupted play each day, children will be allowed to relax and enjoy the learning that is taking place, indoors and out!
- We are 100% nature-based. Children spend a large part of the day outdoors. In nice weather we will spend our entire day outdoors! We believe that overall, there is no such thing as bad weather. We play outside in heat, rain, and snow. During colder months (typically November-March), portions of our programming take place indoors - with the largest amount of time spent indoors during the thick of winter (December-February).

THE BEST LEARNING HAPPENS THROUGH PLAY.

Young children learn best through PLAY! We learn every moment of the day through play, discovery, and explorations in nature. We provide daily choice activity stations for students that include art, literacy, math, science, and more! When children learn through play, the learning becomes deeper and more meaningful than when they are forced to sit and learn a new concept that does not relate to their daily experience. Play-based learning also provides greater opportunity for social emotional learning among peers. We seek to provide experiences that align with the Minnesota Early Childhood Development Standards, and will provide progress reports of how our learning correlates to these standards, and how your child is progressing toward these standards, if requested.

NATURE IMMERSION EXPERIENCES HAPPEN EVERY DAY.

Nature immersion is defined as "unstructured free time in nature resulting in an intimate, deep and personal connection to the natural world." Allowing children to spend extended periods of time outdoors engrossed in play

has been shown to have immense benefits for health and development. By fostering a love of nature at a young age, it is our hope that children will continue to explore and adventure in their backyard and beyond as they go through life. Nature-based activities happen everywhere! Indoors, outdoors, in large groups and small, individual activities, planned and unplanned, guide directed and child initiated activities, and the best – SPONTANEOUS learning experiences.

PLACED-BASED, SEASONAL LEARNING DEVELOPS AWARENESS AND CONNECTION.

When children learn about the land they live on, they care about what happens to it. At our school, we base our learning and explorations on what is happening in the natural world right around us in our own backyard. For example, in September we may learn about apples - and then pick them from the tree to make apple juice! In January, we will search for animal tracks and learn about which animals stick around for the winter and which ones move elsewhere. In June, we may help the garden to grow, or learn about the bugs and insects that join us this time of year. Every season has lessons to be learned. We believe that this seasonal approach to learning helps cultivate an awareness and love for the natural world that does not always exist in today's indoor, screen-based society, fostering a generation of youth who care about the environment and our impact on it.

PROBLEM-SOLVING AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOP LIFELONG SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS.

We use a positive reinforcement approach in order to encourage positive behavior among our students. We do not utilize "time outs" or take away privileges, however we will let a student know if they need to take a break from an activity or help redirect them, comfort them, and/or discuss consequences of behaviors with them as needed. We encourage conflicts between peers to be resolved by all involved, and help children to work through issues rather than solving them for them. Negative behaviors may occur because a child is looking for attention, or they may occur because they feel unheard, because they got hurt, or because they got angry or frustrated and did not have other tools to respond. We work with students to not only solve the immediate issue, but to develop a tool box of things they can use to prevent a similar situation in the future. This method allows our students to begin to develop the social emotional and communication skills that they will need continually throughout their life. These skills include the ability to compromise and resolve conflict, consideration of other perspectives, friendship building, inclusion of peers, leadership skills, patience, a sense of belonging, teamwork, the ability to take risks and conquer fears, compassion, confidence, emotional regulation, empathy, increased focus, resilience, and self-empowerment.

TAKING RISKS AND OFFERING CHALLENGES PROMOTES CONFIDENCE, RESILIENCE, AND SELF-ESTEEM.

We believe that exposing children to moderate risk and allowing them to pursue physical challenges is beneficial for building confidence, resilience, and self-esteem. Engaging in activities like climbing, balancing and running allow children to grow not only physically but cognitively, as gross motor play increases sensory awareness and brain development.

Our full program plan is available and may be reviewed by any parent. Please ask staff to see the plan.

Documentation and Conferences

The intellectual, physical, social, and emotional progress of each child will be documented in the child's record and conveyed to the parent(s) during conferences. Individual parent/student conferences are planned and offered by program staff at least twice a year. Documentation will be made in the child's record that individual parent conferences were planned and offered. The status of the child's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development are to be reported to the parent(s) during the conference.

Health Enrollment Forms

We require a health care summary within 30 days of enrollment and an immunization record of a child at the time of enrollment. If your child does not have vaccinations for medical or personal reasons, the immunization form stating so must be notarized before being submitted. Please address any specific health concerns with our director.

Illness Guidelines

Certain symptoms in children may suggest the presence of a communicable disease. Children who have the following symptoms will be excluded from Forest School until (1) a physician has certified the symptoms are not associated with an infectious agent or they are no longer a threat to the health of the other children or (2) the symptoms have subsided. **Children must be fever and symptom free (without fever reducing medication) for 24 hours before they may return to school.** Symptoms include:

- Fever: Axillary or oral temperature of 100°F or higher or rectal temperature of 101°F or higher; especially if accompanied by other symptoms such as vomiting, sore throat, diarrhea, headache and stiff neck or undiagnosed rash.
- Respiratory: Difficult or rapid breathing or severe coughing: child makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sound after s/he coughs or child is unable to lie comfortably due to continuous coughing.
- Diarrhea: An increased number of abnormally loose stools in the previous 24 hours. Observe the child for other symptoms such as fever, abdominal pain or vomiting.
- Vomiting: Two or more episodes of vomiting within the previous 24 hours.
- Eye/Nose Drainage: Thick mucus or pus draining from the eyes or nose.
- Sore Throat: Sore throat, specifically when fever or swollen glands in the neck are present.
- Skin Problems - Rash: skin rash, undiagnosed or contagious; infected sores: sores with crusty, yellow or green drainage which cannot be covered by clothing or bandages.
- Itching: Persistent itching or scratching of body or scalp.
- Appearance/Behavior: Child looks or acts differently, unusually tired, pale, lacking in appetite, confused, irritable, and difficult to awaken.
- Unusual Color Eyes or skin: yellow (jaundice); stool: gray or white; urine: dark, tea colored. These symptoms can be found in hepatitis and should be evaluated by a physician.

If you have any questions or your child just tends to have a runny nose or a cough for days after an illness, talk to staff. If medication is necessary for your child, please give the medicine to a leader with clear instructions. Please DO NOT give child medicine to bring to school (even vitamins, cough drops, herbs & homeopathic meds)! If there have been contagious illnesses recently in your household, please inform us (flu, etc.).

If a child becomes ill during the day, s/he will be kept isolated from the other children. A staff member will remain with the child and make him/her as comfortable as possible. A parent will be notified and asked to pick up the child. If a parent cannot be reached, an emergency alternative number will be used. PARENTS ARE REQUIRED TO LIST 2 PERSONS WHO AGREE TO PICK UP THE CHILD WHEN A PARENT IS NOT AVAILABLE.

IF YOUR CHILD CONTRACTS A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE, YOU ARE ASKED TO NOTIFY THE SCHOOL WITHIN 24 HOURS. Communicable illnesses will be reported to all parents the same day the information is received. The staff will record the illness, incubation period, early signs to watch for, and exclusion recommendations. Reportable communicable diseases can be found on the website for the Center for Disease Control. The school will notify the Public Health Department (612-348-3925) within 24 hours should an occurrence of a "reportable disease" take place.

Keep in mind that we will spend time outdoors almost every day. If your child is not well enough to play outdoors, please keep him/her home.

Medications

Non-Prescription Medications: Written permission from the parent is required for the administration of any non-prescription medication such as Tylenol, insect repellent, and sunscreen lotion. These will be administered according to the manufacturers' instructions unless there are written instructions for their use provided by a physician or dentist.

Prescription Medications: We prefer that prescription medication be given to the child before arriving at school. If that is not possible, for prescription medications to be administered, the school will follow written instructions from a physician or dentist before administering. Signed authorization from the parent or guardian is also required; a special form is available and is included in your enrollment packet.

- Medications must be kept in their original container and be properly and legibly labeled with the child's name and current prescription information.
- Medications will not be given after the expiration date and any unused portion will be returned to the child's parent or destroyed.
- Parents must state dosage, time and duration medication is to be given. Medication will be kept out of the reach of children.
- Non-refrigerated medications will be kept in the first aid tote in a covered container. **DO NOT PUT IN CHILD'S BACKPACK.**
- Medications requiring refrigeration will be stored on a shelf of the refrigerator in a covered container. · Proper medication dispensers will be used to administer the medications.

Emergency and Accident Policies and Records

First Aid

Roots and Wings Forest School's director, staff persons, substitutes and unsupervised volunteers must complete pediatric first aid/CPR training prior to unsupervised direct contact with a child, but not to exceed the first 90 days of employment. A staff person trained in first aid will be on site during all hours of operation as well as field trips and when transporting children. Procedures for administering First Aid are posted in classrooms.

Safety Rules

We believe that exposing children to moderate risk and allowing them to pursue physical challenges is beneficial for building confidence, resilience, and self-esteem. Engaging in activities like climbing, balancing and running allow children to grow not only physically but cognitively, as gross motor play increases sensory awareness and brain development. Staff will complete daily inspection of potential hazards within the center and in outdoor activity areas. If a hazard is found, it should be fixed immediately. If the hazard needs further

evaluation (downed tree, bee nest, etc) the hazardous area should be avoided and the director should be notified as soon as possible. We maintain the following safety guidelines to reduce the risk of injury.

- Climbing: Children are only allowed to climb to twice their own height. Guides will monitor all climbing and assist a child if they ask for help. Children are not allowed to play underneath where another child is climbing, and we always encourage children to be aware of branches that may be prone to breaking.
- Sticks: Children are allowed to play with sticks, but we encourage children to be aware of their surroundings and their proximity to others within a space. Sticks longer than a child's arm length must have one end on the ground (dragging while carrying). Sticks are never allowed to be used against another child.
- Throwing: Throwing objects provides lessons in trajectory, body awareness, hand-eye coordination and physical and emotional release. We encourage children to be aware of their surroundings and to always throw objects away from other children, animals, etc. If classroom materials that may be prone to breaking are thrown, we will work with your child to find a substitute item to throw so that we do not destroy classroom property.
- Plants: Children are encouraged to observe, smell, and touch plants but are asked not to intentionally harm them. The collection of non-harmful, plentiful plants is allowed unless specified. Although teachers are diligent about keeping children away from plants that may be harmful to them, skin irritation from plants is sometimes unavoidable.
- Insects & Animals: Children are expected to respect every living being and to not intentionally cause harm, even when they are afraid. We want all insects and animals to feel safe in their home and for children to understand that we have a responsibility to care for them (mosquitoes, ticks, and wasps are an exception to this rule!). Although guides are diligent about keeping children away from insects that may be harmful to them, insect bites/stings are sometimes unavoidable. We teach children to check for signs of skin irritation and conduct a basic "tick check" each day during tick season (we also encourage a more thorough check for ticks upon arriving home!).
- Wandering: Our program is located on 40 acres of field and forest land, surrounded by additional fields and forests. It is important that each child is able to physically see and hear a guide at all times, however they are allowed to move within our outdoor classroom space as they prefer. During the day, we continuously keep count of children in our care. We often utilize a "hoot" call to bring children back together when it is time to gather for our next activity. Please see our lost child policy for additional details.
- Yelling and Screaming: When children are outdoors, they are encouraged to use their "outdoor voice", as long as they orient their voices away from others. We discourage children from screaming as it cannot be distinguished from a cry for help. We remind children that "screaming is for emergencies only." There will be times where children are asked to quiet their voices during nature observation and quiet time, and while indoors.
- Physical Contact: We encourage children to respect others' personal space and to be aware of their bodies in relation to others. We teach that each person has the right to determine who touches them or comes very close to them. Children are encouraged to check in with others before touching them in any way. We provide children with words to express their boundaries such as "I am feeling crowded," "Please don't touch me," or "I need space." We remind children that they must use their words when they are feeling upset or angry, rather than their body. Although physical play can be developmentally appropriate at this age, we discourage children from engaging in overly aggressive physical play. Children who regularly cause harm to others after being given appropriate reminders will follow above guidelines for Persistent Unacceptable Behavior and may be removed from our program due to safety issues.

- Extreme Weather: We utilize Child Care Weather Watch to determine necessary safety precautions each day (length of time spent outdoors, appropriate outdoor gear, sunscreen lotion application, hydration, etc.) When the weather is between 0-15 degrees, we will limit outdoor time for preschoolers and take indoor breaks as needed (older youth if needed). When the weather is between -10-0 degrees, we will go outdoors in wind sheltered areas for up to 20 minutes at a time. When the weather is below -10 degrees, programming will be completely indoors aside from a short walk/play time at drop-off and before pick-up. These are meant to be guidelines, and will be adjusted as needed. On days that are sunny with no wind, cold temps are much more manageable than when it is cloudy and windy!

In temperatures below 90 degrees, all programming will remain outdoors. Above 90 degrees, shade breaks and water breaks will be taken frequently. In temperatures above 100 degrees, we will stay in shaded areas as much as possible and take water breaks and indoor breaks as needed. Sunscreen will be applied in the morning and midday to avoid sunburns. Written permission to reapply sunscreen is necessary and this information will be listed in each classroom binder. Students should bring their own sunscreen, but extra will be provided if needed.

During a thunderstorm or tornado warning, all programming will be moved indoors.

Please note that programming will remain outside during rain, snow, and other “non-ideal” weather conditions.

- Tools: Tools that pose a danger to children will be kept out of reach in upper cabinets. Items include adult scissors, knives, glue guns, and any other items that have a high potential to cause cuts or burns. Items may be used by our school age students under direct supervision.
- Cleaning Supplies: All cleaning supplies will be kept in locked cabinets, closets, or out of children’s reach to prevent poisoning. Staff will ensure all areas are dry and safe for children to use when chemicals have been recently used.
- Choking Hazards: All hazardous materials will be kept out of the classroom and out-of-reach of children. Toys will be inspected regularly to ensure there are no broken pieces. All toys will be verified to be age-appropriate before being introduced to the classroom.
- Suffocation Hazards: All hazardous materials will be kept out of the classroom and out-of-reach of children.
- Traffic: To prevent traffic and pedestrian accidents, children will always be supervised in the parking area. Preschool children will not be dismissed from the building without a staff member, volunteer, or parent/guardian present. School age learners (ages 5+) are allowed to enter and depart the building on their own for drop-off and pick-up with signed permission from parents, after staff have confirmed a parent/guardian has arrived for pick up.
- Storage: All storage areas will be blocked off to children with dividers, doors or locked cabinets. Heavy items are not to be put on top of shelving in the reach of the children in case they pull it off onto themselves or others. (example – box of books, box of blocks, basket of blankets, etc.)
- Burns and Electrical Shock: All outlets not in use will be covered. Cords that are being used will be placed in outlets out of the reach of children. Use of electrical equipment in the children’s play area will be kept to a minimum. Items that produce heat will only be used by staff or under 1:1 staff/volunteer supervision and will be kept out of reach of children. Water at the faucets will not be more than 120 degrees to prevent scalding. Flammable items such as gas or lighter fluid will not be stored at the center. Storage areas will be kept free of combustible material and trash. Furnishings will not be highly flammable.

- **Poisoning:** All medication and toxic substances, such as household cleaners will be placed in/on shelves or in cabinets out of reach of children. All staff will be instructed on items that are toxic and on the proper storage of such items. Poison control may be accessed at 1-800-222-1222.
- **Animals:** Our program operates on property that has animals present. Animals living in the private residence (dog, cat, etc) may be outdoors during the day and may come in contact with students. There are also two horses located on the property. Children will have the opportunity to interact with the horses from the OUTSIDE of their pasture gate, and always with adult supervision. Children are never allowed to cross under, through, or over the fence and will never be in the pasture while the horses are there. Children are not to be anywhere near the horse pasture without a staff member present and guiding the activity. Children may give the horses snacks with the help and supervision of staff, from behind the safety of the fence.

Parental Permissions

Written parent/guardian permission will be required for field trips. A field trip permission form will be included in our enrollment packet to be filled out before the child begins. Field trip forms will be stored in the child’s file. Field trips on our school property outside of our licensed space will occur regularly. Parents will receive notice of any off-site trips at least one week prior to the trip. Parents must sign an off-site permission form for each trip that requires transportation from our school. Off-site permission slips will be signed at drop-off or pick-up before the trip takes place.

Parent notification and permission will be required before each occasion of research, experimental procedure, or public relations activity involving a child in our care.

Food and Water

All families will provide meals and snacks from home. Early bird students may eat breakfast between their arrival and 8:30am. Students are welcome to eat a morning snack anytime during free choice between 9-11am. A reminder will be given by 10:45am, or 15 minutes before the end of free choice, as a last call for morning snack. Students in our Night Owls or after school program may eat afternoon snack between 3:30-5pm. Lunch will be eaten as a whole class at noon each day. The center will keep on hand lunch items in case a student forgets to bring lunch. Roots and Wings Forest School will supplement any lunches brought from home to meet USDA guidelines. While daily food will be supplied by families, there will be instances throughout the year where the students prepare and eat food together as a part of our school curriculum (ex: eating fruits and vegetables grown in our garden, making a pumpkin pie). We ensure that procedures for preparing, handling, and serving food, and washing food, utensils, and equipment comply with the requirements for food and beverage establishments in chapter 4626.

Roots and Wings Forest School follows all procedures and practices that are in compliance with the requirements for food and beverage establishments in chapter 4626, which include: hand washing; maintaining hot and cold food temperatures at safe levels; washing of food, utensils and equipment; and serving of food.

Students are responsible for preparing and serving their own meals and snacks as a part of our learning curriculum. Snack areas will be monitored by staff during meal times to ensure all practices are followed (hand washing, etc).

Behavior Guidance Policies and Procedures

Roots and Wings Forest School is dedicated to providing nurturing, stimulating care to every child and family we serve. Our behavioral management system is implemented in a positive and consistent manner and designed to help our learners use appropriate behaviors. By providing the space, tools and opportunity for children to manage their own behavior we believe we can help children develop self-control, self-confidence, decision making skills, and the ability to communicate their needs effectively. We always consider the specific needs of the child and want to ensure that our forest school is a safe place where children can work through big feelings if needed. To meet this goal we have instituted the following general behavior guidance policies and procedures.

1. Ensure that each learner is provided with a positive model of acceptable behavior
2. Be tailored to the developmental level of the children that the center is licensed to serve
3. Assist learners in working through conflicts together, providing and prompting language as needed
4. Teach children how to use a toolbox of alternatives to halt and reduce problematic behaviors
5. Protect the safety of children and staff
6. Provide immediate and directly related consequences for a child's unacceptable behavior. Specific methods for behavior guidance follow a Positive Behavior Interventions and Support System as follows:

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is a research-based approach that encourages positive behaviors, as well as social and emotional development in early childhood. This approach is found to significantly reduce challenging behaviors. Rather than taking a punitive approach to children's behavior, this approach ensures children are able to learn and practice behaviors that meet their needs and are socially appropriate. This approach is tiered, meaning all children have access to Tier 1 and 2 supports, which are built upon with more specific, data-driven individualized interventions in Tier 3, when appropriate.

Tier 1: Proactive Measures to Promote Positive Behavior

Learners enter our program at varying ages and developmental levels. There is a wide range in the behaviors and skills that are considered "typical" for the children we serve. Each child is unique and requires individualization of skills and strategies used as programs advance children's learning and development across all domains. To support each child's growth, we implement the proactive, developmentally appropriate behavior guidance strategies described below:

1. Foster respectful, caring relationships among staff, children, and families.
 - Practice unconditional positive regard by communicating and acting on the principle that all children are capable of learning and making developmental progress. Always communicate care in your voice and try to distinguish the child from their challenging behavior.
 - Consistently use welcoming and positive language and tone, and ensure adults in the program interact positively with each other as well as with children. Children model the relationships they see between adults.
 - Consistently acknowledge and respond to children's emotions and communication, verbal and non-verbal.
 - Explicitly welcome families into the classroom environment and foster two-way communications between families and teaching staff.
 - Deepen knowledge of each child's skills, interests and needs through implementation of developmental screenings, authentic assessment, and regular conversation with families.

- Acknowledge and respect children’s rich backgrounds, cultures, and linguistic diversity and tailor our practices appropriately to meet these needs. This fosters not only trust, but positive identity development.

2. Practice flexibility and responsiveness to children’s skills, interests, and needs during planning and instruction.

- The flow of the day/daily schedule should be in a predictable sequence and include ample time for both child initiated and guide-facilitated activities.
- During child-initiated times of the day, empower children to self-select and engage with a variety of classroom areas, learning materials, and peers, encouraging play.
- Use information gathered from observations and authentic assessments to develop lessons and activities that build on children’s strengths and interests while addressing their needs.
- Support children’s active participation by encouraging children to plan, talk, and share their ideas for learning.
- Give children freedom of movement by allowing them to choose how and where they sit, stand, or move within small-group and whole-group learning experiences, as long as this does not interfere with other children’s learning. Limit the amount of time children are expected to remain sitting during facilitated activities to short periods of about 10-15 minutes at a time (for preschool age group), and up to 30 minutes (school-age group)
- If children do not appear to be engaged during periods of whole-group instruction, consider:
 - Including additional whole-group movement.
 - Increasing children’s participation through role play, singing, hand games, visuals, etc...
 - Shortening or changing the activity.
 - Reducing the frequency of whole-group activities.
 - If just one or two children are having difficulty, consider offering these children alternative activities to do that will not disrupt the whole group (e.g. puzzles, books, use of table toys, etc.)

3. Create supportive physical environments and activities that promote children’s development and foster positive relationships.

- Arrange the environment to allow children to utilize shared space collaboratively.
 - Stock centers with diverse materials that are suitable for the range of skills, interests, and abilities of children in the group.
 - All children should have opportunities to participate. Ensure children can access materials independently.
 - Ensure that each area of the classroom has sufficient space to allow for the number of children that will utilize the space at a given time. For example, if the science area allows three children, ensure there is enough space for 3 children to engage with the materials within the designated area.
- Use visual displays that support children in understanding how to uphold classroom/ group agreements and practice the social emotional skills they have been introduced to. These include visual daily schedule (flow of the day), interactive attendance charts, feelings chart, and job charts.
 - Other examples of visual displays include:
 - using labels for center and material organization to assist children in choosing or returning materials after their use
 - visuals showing self-care or routine sequences; i.e. toileting or handwashing

- visuals to remind children of specific behavior expectations such as a mouth that can remind children to use soft voices indoors
- Establish a cozy area reserved for quiet activity or create opportunities for children to find space for privacy and relaxation. This area offers children the chance to escape the classroom environment and relax in a soft space.
 - Offer extra support, attention, and modeling when children are engaging in a new activity and gradually introduce new materials and manage resource access to keep children from being overwhelmed.
 - Frequently monitor, or “scan,” the classroom, and proactively intervene in situations to avoid escalation. When a potential conflict arises, you can step in to support children in practicing the relevant social and/or emotional skills for the situation such as reminding them of calm down techniques, or giving language for them to use.

4. Communicate clear expectations for children that help them develop independence and self-regulation skills, and engage in respectful interactions with peers and adults.

- At the beginning of the year, encourage children to participate in creating a set of community agreements in the classroom. Revisit, model, and practice those agreements throughout the year.
- Provide regular opportunities to model, role play, and reinforce behaviors that meet the community agreements. For example, the agreement “We are safe.” may include expected behaviors like throwing away from our friends, remaining with the group, and having hands free while running.
- Expectations should be specific and positively stated. Young children need to know what action to replace their challenging behavior with: “Use walking feet.” not “Don’t run”. Very rarely, using negative language like “no” or “stop” may be appropriate to keep a child safe in an emergency.
- Explicitly teach children how to use and move through the classroom space/, treat their materials and environment with respect, and remind children of classroom expectations frequently, especially before transitioning to another activity and at the beginning of the year.
- Throughout the year, offer children instruction on key social and friendship skills like how to initiate play with others, different ways to take turns, considering the perspectives of others, and resolving social conflicts. This may include giving children simple phrases to use when asking to play, using puppets to model navigating a common classroom interaction, or using visuals that offer solutions for resolving conflicts.

5. Use developmentally appropriate instructional strategies to establish a positive classroom culture and keep children actively engaged.

- Use storytelling, literature, puppetry, etc. to engage children in thinking about the impacts of certain behaviors, and to extend children’s empathy and understanding of emotions.
- Use narration to demonstrate how emotions might be influencing yourself or a situation. This gives children a model and better understanding of how to navigate their emotions and relationships.
 - Narrate your own thought process, “I am sad that you ripped my picture up, I had been working hard on that. I am going to take a deep breath and get another paper, please keep your hands on your own picture.”
 - Narrate a child’s actions, “You tried to get a magnifying glass but there were none left! Your scrunched face tells me you might be feeling frustrated. Do you want help asking to use it when your friend is finished?”

- Engage children in interactive problem-solving regularly during play and establish the expectations that children talk with each other to resolve conflicts. You can “problematize” anything: how to distribute 2 kinds of fruit at snack, setting up the easel with different colors so children must engage each other to share, etc...

6. Plan for successful management of transitions.

- Give children reminders before major transitions so they have time to finish what they are doing and prepare for the next activity. Let them know 5 and 1 minutes before it is time to change activities. Consider using a visual timer like a sand timer or count down clock. Individual children may benefit from personal reminders as well.
- Make transitions or wait times fun and educational by singing songs, rhyming words or names, or going over the expected behaviors of the next setting. This will keep children engaged in learning and prepared for the next event.
- Minimize wait times during transitions in order to maximize children’s active engagement throughout all times of day. For example, during bathroom routines, rotate small groups of children so that all children can engage in productive learning activities for as much time as possible rather than waiting in line.

Tier 2: Reinforcement Strategies for Encouraging Positive Behavior

Positive reinforcement acknowledges and motivates further positive behavior. We reinforce the behaviors we want to see again. It is important to let children know that they are making progress toward a new skill and encourage their effort. Positive reinforcement can be done in many ways, and should be tailored to what is motivating to individual children. Children working on new and more complicated behaviors may need additional reinforcements. Developmentally appropriate reinforcements include:

- Using social reinforcements such as praise, smiles, encouragement, high-fives, or thumbs up.
 - Praise should be specific and provide meaningful feedback, especially when the behavior is relatively new to the child, (e.g. “You were very thoughtful to share the toys with your friend. He seems really happy that you included him in the game”). Avoid more general feedback (e.g. “good job”).
 - A high-five or thumbs up are appropriate non-verbal reinforcements for behaviors that are encouraged (e.g., the child has been working on sharing and you notice them share their toys from across the room), you catch their eye and give them a thumbs up immediately following the positive behavior.
- Using activity reinforcements as a reward for desired positive behaviors, such as being able to choose a song or activity for the group or during center time. This is a way to recognize behavior growth that goes beyond praise.
- Material Reinforcements can be used to reinforce a behavior that is particularly challenging for a child. Teaching teams should use free or very low cost items as reinforcements, and never use food. A small paper cut out, a note from the teacher, or a sticker can be used to let children know you saw them engaging in a really important skill that is tough for them. It is a simple, tangible way to say, “I see you working hard and I am proud of you.”

Tier 3: Responsive Strategies for Children

Nearly all children engage in unsafe or challenging behavior at some time, and we must be prepared to respond in a way that keeps our environments safe while giving the child an opportunity to practice a different way of communicating. All strategies for guiding children to appropriate behaviors should be implemented in a calm, consistent, and non-punitive way to support children's social and emotional development and approaches to learning.

1. Program staff members should work together with families and others to better understand the factors contributing to a child's behavior.

- Ask the question: "What is this child trying to communicate when they demonstrate this behavior?"

Factors contributing to a child's behavior may include:

- Programmatic structures or conditions such as the flow of the day/daily schedule, room arrangement, noise level, etc.
- The child's feeling of security within the classroom or their relationships with adults or peers.
- The child's unique circumstances. For example:
 - The child has not yet learned appropriate behaviors for social interactions and may be grabbing toys instead of asking or hitting when upset.
 - The child is going through a transition at home and experiencing emotional distress as a result (e.g. a new baby in the family) or has experienced trauma.
- Use Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) charts to understand what happens before the behavior, what happens after, and when behaviors occur during the day to help find triggers, patterns, and the function of the behavior.

2. Strategies for responding to and redirecting behaviors:

- Whenever possible, offer choices. Allow children control over their own behavior, such as choosing which toys to put away or where to sit at the lunch table.
 - When offering a choice, give two options that are both acceptable to you.
- Redirecting or providing acceptable substitutes to help children identify options for their behavior, such as when a guide may notice there are too many people at an activity table and suggest a child engage with a different activity while they wait for a turn.
- Supporting the child's sense of security and development of self-regulation or self-soothing skills.
 - Empathize with a child's emotions, reassure them of their safety, value, and care in the classroom.
 - Write a letter to a caregiver or hold a special object from home.

3. Limiting the amount of negative attention given to children by ignoring non-disruptive inappropriate behavior and focusing on the positive.

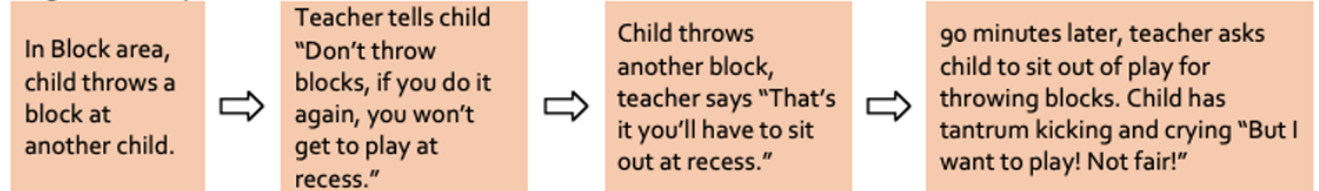
- Staff may choose to ignore non-disruptive behavior and continue to focus children on another learning activity. "Active Ignoring" means not looking at or acknowledging the behavior, and so, not rewarding it with attention. As soon as the child displays a positive behavior, it should be reinforced with positive attention immediately.
- A strategy of actively ignoring a child's behavior should not be utilized in isolation or to the extent where it becomes a detriment to a child's well-being. This strategy does not replace the expectation that teachers and program staff actively engage all children in the curriculum and encourage their participation in the program.

4. Implementing logical consequences, where a child's access to an activity or resource is restricted in direct response to an unsafe or disruptive behavior.

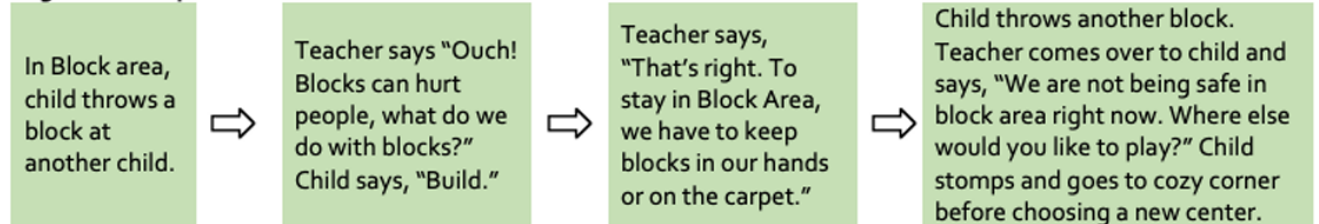
- The severity of the consequence should be appropriate and relevant (e.g. not being able to stay at the water table because they continue to pour water on other children).
- This strategy may be used along with redirecting, providing acceptable alternatives, and self-regulation skills.

Example of an Illogical vs. Logical Consequence:

Illogical Consequence



Logical Consequence



5. Helping the child develop appropriate replacement or alternative behaviors.

- Prompt the child to use strategies that have been introduced and practiced in the classroom that would help them in the moment, e.g. "We use gentle touches to stay safe, you could ask "Can I use that?"
- Use small groups with other children to give the child practice. E.g. you may play a turn-taking game with the child and narrate how she is utilizing her new sharing skills.
- Use visual cues like cards, personalized schedule, or Scripted Stories to help build mastery of the replacement behavior.

To help implement this PBIS system, here are some of the specific strategies used in our center:

- Focus on the positive: Acceptable alternatives must be given to a child acting in an objectionable manner in order to reduce conflict. Try to avoid telling children what not to do, and instead focus on what they should be doing. Example: "Feet on the floor" rather than "Don't climb on the table."
- Language: Use appropriate language at all times around the children. Try to be aware of how your words would sound to a parent or outside observer if they happened to walk in, and be sensitive to different levels of acceptability in different households. Example: A mom may ask us not to use the word "hate" (as in, "I hate it when my socks are wet!") around her child, as she does not want it to be a common part of his vocabulary.
- Keep up-to-date: Ask teachers about any new individual behavioral plans for children that you need to be aware of for behavior guidance and consistency. Example: If a child has

been using swear words, ask the lead classroom guide what the behavior plan is so you know how to appropriately respond when he/she is in your care.

- Physical altercations: If a child is hurting another child, separate them momentarily and tell the child what the inappropriate action was, why it was not ok, and what they can do instead. Help the child empathize with the hurt child. Never use words that shame or blame children for their actions. Let the children know you disapprove of the behavior, not of them. Example: "Ouch! Hitting hurts! Use your words to tell your friend you want the toy back. Look—our friend is sad. See his tears? I'm going to give him a hug to help him feel better. Please use gentle hands with our friends."
- Group activities: Children are strongly encouraged, but not required, to participate in group activities. If a child is playing contentedly on his or her own and does not want to join in, simply keep inviting him or her to join at intervals throughout the activity. The two exceptions are lunch time and outside times. Children need to come to the table for lunch, although we do not force them to eat. It is up to the classroom teacher's discretion how long children need to sit at the table. For supervision purposes, all children must go outside when the class does.
- Self-reliance: Encourage children to be as self-reliant as possible. Assist them when they need help, but take the time to show them how to do things and let them try to do it on their own. Example: Use the time getting ready to go outside as a teaching moment by encouraging children to put on their own boots/coats/hats and allowing them the time to try to do it for themselves.
- Child interactions: Play with the children! Remain on their level as much as possible, and interact with them. Be aware that commands from across the room are rarely listened-to, so be prepared to walk over to the child and help if you are asking him or her to do something. Example: You just asked a child to pick up the cars he's playing with across the room, and he hasn't. Say, "Should we sing the clean-up song while we pick up the cars? Here, I'll come over and help you find the right bucket for them."
- Follow-through: Whenever you give a child an expectation, such as "bring your cup to the bucket please," be prepared to follow-through on it if the child refuses. Remain calm and kind, but for consistency's sake stay firm even if they protest. Example: "Books are for reading, not throwing, so please go pick your book up." The child ignores the classroom guide and walks to the hallway door saying "hallway," so the guide goes to her and says, "As soon as you pick up your book we can go to the hallway. Would you like me to help you?" and takes the child by the hand over to the book.
- Give choices: Give children choices whenever possible to give them chances to have control over their own persons, just make sure they are acceptable choices so a power-struggle does not ensue. Example: It's time to go potty! Would you like Anna or Sue to bring you?" Here, the child is going potty with either choice, but they get to pick which classroom guide brings them so they can maintain a sense of control.
- Specific encouragements: Encourage children as much as possible using specific language and examples so that they are aware of the behaviors/actions you want them to be doing. Example: Say, "You did a great job using your crayon to draw lines on your paper!" rather than an abstract, "Nice job, guys!"
- Schedule changes: Give children a heads-up about what's next in the schedule, and give them a few-minutes warning before it is time to clean-up and head to the next activity so they can be prepared. Example: "In two minutes it will be your turn to go potty."

- **Control Your Reactions:** Respond to children calmly and matter-of-factly when they are behaving in an unacceptable manner and you need to redirect them. As hard as it can be, do not react with anger, a loud voice, or in a “large” way, as this may encourage children to repeat the behavior to get attention. Example: In a calm, firm voice, “We roll balls inside. When we go outside you can throw it. Here, sit with me and we can roll it back and forth together.”
- **Emotions:** Allow children to feel their emotions. Give the child a word for their emotion, such as “sad” or “mad,” and assist them in working through it. Example: child is sad that Mom just left. “You’re crying! Are you sad? Mom had to go to work, but she’ll be back after nap. She misses you too. Should we draw a card to give to Mom when she comes to pick you up?” -- feel free to talk the children through your own emotions so they can see how it’s done, and use the time to help promote empathy. Example: Ouch! My finger got pinched in the door! It makes me really sad when that happens. Does anyone want to give me a hug to help me feel better?

When guiding a child’s behavior we do not:

- ask children “why” they did it when they do something unacceptable. Instead, simply tell them what they can do and redirect to another activity. .
- force children to say they are “sorry” after hurting another friend. Instead, help them learn how they should behave by encouraging “personal space” and promoting empathy by discussing how their friend feels after being hurt.
- ask children “would you want me to bite/hit/hurt you?” as a way to make them feel bad for hurting a friend. Instead, tell them to be gentle and discuss how their friend feels after being hurt.

Persistent Unacceptable Behavior

No one plan will work for every child in every situation. Staff needs to be sensitive to the circumstances of each case, such as the child’s temperament, the child’s family situation, if the child is sick, tired, hungry, frustrated, etc, and brainstorm to come up with an appropriate, tailored response to each individual situation. The general course of action for persistent unacceptable behavior is as follows:

1. Increasing the amount of individual time, attention, and guidance devoted to that particular child. Redirection and follow-through when behaviors occur.
2. If deemed necessary, staff members will record unacceptable behavior observations on a form that is accessible for all staff and kept in a location that is confidential. The child’s behavior should be recorded as well as the staff member’s response.
3. If deemed necessary, a meeting will be held with center staff, director, parents, and other professionals when appropriate to develop a plan. Parents may be asked what types of behaviors they see at home, in the community, at other family member’s homes, etc, and what their methods are for dealing with the problem behavior. The observations and interventions will be shared. The group will brainstorm about possible solutions and create an Individual Childcare Plan. This plan will be shared with other staff members working with the child and kept in a confidential location in the classroom.
4. A referral may be made if necessary and with parental permission.
5. Removal from the program is a last resort if there is concern for the safety, need for 1:1 support, and/or the overall school experience for other learners is negatively affected often.

Prohibited Actions

DO NOT:

1. Subject a child to corporal punishment, including but not limited to: rough handling, shaking, shoving, hair pulling, ear pulling, pinching, spanking, slapping, kicking, biting, hitting
2. Subject a child to emotional stress, including but not limited to: name calling, making derogatory remarks about a child or child's family, ostracism, using language that threatens, humiliates, or frightens child, and shaming
3. Separate child from the group as a means of behavior guidance, except within rule requirements.
4. Punish children for lapses in toileting.
5. Withhold food, light, warmth, clothing, or medical care as a punishment for unacceptable behavior.
6. Use physical restraint other than to physically hold a child where containment is necessary to protect a child or others from harm.
7. Use mechanical restraints, such as tying.

Separation From the Group

Separations from the group as a form of discipline are never allowed, except within rule requirements. For example, a child may be separated when the child's behavior threatens the well being of the child or other children in the program. Separation may occur if the child is behaving in a dangerous manner towards staff, other children, or him/herself and less intrusive methods of guiding the child's behavior have been tried and were ineffective. Examples of less intrusive methods include redirection or calming down with a book.

A child who requires separation from the group must remain within an unenclosed part of the classroom where the child can be continuously seen and heard by a program staff person. The child must be told that he/she will be allowed back in the group as soon as the dangerous behavior has ceased and the guides must follow through with this. Children between the ages of six weeks and 16 months must not to be separated from the group as a means of behavior guidance.

If a child is separated it must be documented on the Separation Report Log (form DHS-5862-ENG). If a child is separated it must be documented on the Separation Report Log (form DHS-5862-ENG). All separations from the group must be noted on a daily log that must include the following:

- Child's name;
- Staff person's name;
- Time of separation;
- Date of separation;
- Information indicating what less intrusive methods were used to guide the child's behavior before the separation occurred; and
- How the child's behavior continued to threaten the well-being of the child or other children in care.

If a child is separated three or more times in one day, the child's parents must be notified and this notification must be indicated on the daily log. If a child is separated five or more times in one week or eight times or more in two weeks, the procedures for Persistent Unacceptable Behaviors must be followed.

Parent Visitation

Parents of enrolled children may visit the center any time during the hours of operation per Minnesota Statutes, 245A.14, subdivision 15.

Nap and Rest Policy

1. All Preschool children will have quiet rest time after lunch for one hour. School age children will have 30 minutes of reading, and may also have 30 minutes of quiet choice.
2. Confinement limitation: A child who has completed a nap or rested quietly for 30 minutes is never required to remain on a cot or in a hammock or bed.
3. Placement of equipment: Naps and rest are provided in a quiet area that is physically separated from children who are engaged in an activity that will disrupt a napping or resting child. Hammocks, cots, and beds must be placed so there are clear aisles and unimpeded access for both adults and children on at least one side of each piece of napping and resting equipment. Cots and beds must be placed directly on the floor/ground and must not be stacked when in use. Hammocks will be hung no more than 12 inches off the ground between two trees in our outdoor classroom. Naps will often take place outdoors. During severe or unsafe weather conditions, naps will always take place indoors (extreme weather guidelines are located in our safety policies). A cot will be provided for each child, hammocks will simply be an additional option for students.
4. Bedding: separate bedding must be provided for each child in care. Bedding must be washed weekly and when soiled or wet. Blankets must be washed or dry cleaned weekly and when soiled or wet.

Maltreatment of Minors Mandated Reporting Policy

See Appendix E for DHS issued Mandated Reporting Policy.

Grievance Policy

We expect regular communication between parents/guardians and program staff. If concerns arise, we would like for them to be addressed as soon as possible. Please address any concerns with your child's classroom staff. If issues persist, grievances may be brought to the Director, and ultimately the Board of Directors. If necessary, we will hold a personal meeting outside of operating hours to discuss concerns and work together to resolve them. Please contact your child's classroom teacher or the Director if you would like to arrange a meeting. Questions, feedback, or discussions of any kind are always welcomed.

State Licensing Contact

The telephone number of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Licensing is 651-431-6500.