



cooperative
nature school

at The Trustees Moose Hill Farm

Family Handbook – Summer 2019

The Cooperative Nature School at The Trustees Moose Hill Farm admits students of any race, color, national origin, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, religion, cultural heritage, or disability to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

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Program

The Cooperative Nature School at The Trustees Moose Hill Farm provides families and their children with a nurturing, safe, and educationally appropriate environment in which to grow. The school is in session for ten months from September through June and offers a summer program for seven weeks during July and August.

The school offers full day programming 5 days a week from 7:30 AM until 5:30 PM. Although family members are always welcome, they are not required to participate. The maximum group size is 30 children with 3 educators. Families have the option of enrolling their children 3 to 5 full days a week. Children must be 3 years 5 months to attend and do not need to be toilet trained to attend the Cooperative Nature School.

Families are encouraged to visit the school and speak with the educators, families, and the Director. To visit, please call (781) 806-6156 or email us at sharonnatureschool@gmail.com.

Vision

Through child-driven and open-ended learning in an outdoor environment, The Cooperative Nature School at The Trustees Moose Hill Farm aims for its children to become curious, thoughtful, active learners who love the outdoors and who believe in celebrating and protecting it. By partnering with families, the school creates a strong community that transcends the preschool years and protects the distinct character of our communities by inspiring a commitment to environmental education.

Goals For Children

The school seeks to:

1. Infuse children with a desire to discover, explore and learn about our world.
2. Help develop the world of the child (in all domains – cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and aesthetic) and the development of an ecological identity or environmental ethic.
3. Help children develop self-efficacy skills with opportunities to discover their personal strengths.
4. Help develop foundational skills including large and fine motor skills, self-regulation, learning to follow directions, and learning how to think through problems.
5. Develop the ability for children to advocate only not for their own needs and interests but also those of their community.

Goals For Families

The school seeks to:

1. Cultivate a network of families, creating a community linked by friendship, respect and children through participation and family events.
2. Learn about and share the irreplaceable natural and cultural treasures we care for.
3. Partner with families to collaborate with people and partners all across the Commonwealth to preserve the quality of life in our communities and with it, the special places that make this the place we want to call home

Licensing

The school insures that the highest quality services are maintained by complying with all regulations of its licensor, the [Department of Early Education and Care](#) .

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Family Involvement

The school has an open door policy for families who are encouraged to visit announced or unannounced for short visits or long visits whenever they can. Mystery readers, lunch dates, and playmates are always welcome. Please see any educator or the Director for details. The school's commitment to the Cooperative philosophy utilizes the many talents of its families to augment, maintain and improve the services it provides. Families are asked to commit a minimum of 3 hours a year to the school as volunteers.

Family Surveys

Annual family surveys are used to measure the quality of the program and guide the Board and Director in setting goals and making improvements. Feedback is always welcome – please feel free to contact your child's teachers, the Director or the Board of Directors at any time with suggestions and comments.

Board of Directors

A Board of Directors comprised of current/alumni parents assists the Executive Director in implementing policies and procedures that insure that the program remains true to its mission and vision.

The Board not only represents the families but each member serves in a professional capacity bringing professional expertise that covers all aspects and needs of its operations: educational, legal, governance, financial, human resource and marketing.

The Board meets monthly and has created a variety of subcommittees that are comprised of members who represent the school's larger population: strategic planning, finances, and governance. Interested parents are encouraged to contact the Executive Director about current opportunities.

The Educators

The educators facilitate and present activities that incorporate the [NAEYC standards](#) and the [Massachusetts state guidelines](#) for preschool education. They also work as teams with families and specialists as needed and requested for children with special needs.

The educators are supported professionally in a variety of educational organizations that provide workshops, courses and publications that keep them informed and up to date on the most recent research. Educators are reviewed throughout the school year to provide mentoring and assist them in achieving professional goals.

[The educators](#) have been carefully chosen for their professionalism, talent, dedication and abilities to form connections with children and families. Opportunities are provided starting with enrollment for families to meet and get to know and from family-school partnerships with their child's educators.

Student/Educator Ratios

The school provides opportunities for children that are age-based. Our staff/child ratio is low and never exceeding 1:10 and insures that educators get to know and work with children on an individual basis. All of the educators know all of the children as well.

The physical dimensions of the school determine the number of children enrolled and the

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arrangement of groups. The square footage of 35 square feet per child is a condition of our DEEC license.

Daily Schedule

7:30 – 8:30	Children may arrive
7:30 – 8:30	Free play, snack, and/or breakfast brought from home
8:30 – 9:00	Meeting before outside explorations
9:00 – 12:00	Outside explorations
12:00 –12:30	Lunch
12:30 - 1:30	Rest - children will rest and/or sleep as appropriate to their age and needs. Children who are awake may engage in quiet activities.
1:30 – 2:00	Wake up, clean up and snack
2:00 – 5:00	Outside explorations
4:30 – 5:30	Dismissal

Daily Activities

The school's professional educators are devoted to creating the highest quality educational environment supporting the cognitive, social, and physical development of each child. We celebrate the uniqueness of each child and intentionally create developmentally appropriate experiences, which enable children to achieve through exploration based on their interests, temperament and learning style. We use a combination of teaching practices, ongoing assessment and information and goals from families to design individualized experiences for each child.

Each family can see the daily activities posted on the class blog and within each classroom. These activities will provide a regular routine with sufficient flexibility to meet individual children's needs and meet the expectations stated within the school's program goals.

Special Events and Programs

Special events and programs will be scheduled throughout the year. Families will be notified in advance of these events. Children who are not regularly scheduled at the time of an event may attend the event with adult supervision. Please see your child's educator for details.

Curriculum Philosophy

The Cooperative Nature School at The Trustees Moose Hill Farm believes in the benefits of child-centered, outdoors-based learning. Through effective observation strategies and through questions children present, teachers come to understand the unique characteristics each child brings. We believe that a child's interest, strengths and needs drive learning in the domain areas of language, mathematics, arts, science and technology, social studies, fine and gross motor skill, and social emotional growth. The curriculum philosophy is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Pre-Kindergarten to Twelve. The developmentally based and child directed curriculum is a fluid, dynamic curriculum.

The critical role of the environment is also very important. Educators will facilitate outdoor experiences along with open-ended activities in a project approach. Documentation through examples of children's work hung around halls and classrooms and daily blog posts to families full of pictures serve to make learning visible, spark discussion, extend ideas and further learning.

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- ❑ **Developmentally based:** children at all developmental levels can access each activity. Activities are open-ended with a variety of possible outcomes. What is important is the process, not the end product.
- ❑ **Team planning:** each educator contributes to the planning of the daily activities. Families are encouraged to contribute their own personal skills and hobbies as well as their cultural and personal identities to enhance and extend activities and to plan enrichment programs that will be open to children enrolled in the school.
- ❑ **Child centered:** With a thorough understanding of individual children's interests and readiness, educators select activities that are relevant and exciting and that encourage exploration and discovery while enhancing children's emerging skills. Educators monitor the level of engagement and will extend activities if a particular subject emerges about which the children show a great deal of interest.
- ❑ **Community:** Special visitors and family events are planned to enrich daily classroom activities and to develop family support within the school community.

Birthdays

Children look forward to celebrating their birthdays but each family has their own traditions and boundaries that we recognize and appreciate. Families are asked to celebrate birthdays while not in school. Therefore we ask that no foods, invitations or other birthday related items come to school. If you would like to come in and read a story and/or do a project to celebrate a special day, please do.

Transitions and Kindergarten

Children have a minimum of daily transitions and can depend on a consistent team of educators who help them to achieve their goals.

Transitions between activities must:

- Be completed in a safe, predictable and unhurried manner.
- Be supported by visual, verbal, and auditory cues to support children.
- Planned and coordinated with activities in advance to avoid long waits.
- Known to children prior to their occurrence and be smooth and flexible.
- Not always include all children moving together as one group.

As developmentally appropriate, children will move between groups. The school's educators as a team embark on a thoughtful, in-depth analysis of the best placement for each and every child and their needs and interests. We consider the social/emotional needs of each individual, as well as the way that child interacts with teachers and peers, and in what setting that child will flourish. Educators will work together as needed to insure that any move is smooth and successful for each child. Through the blogs and regular communication, families will be alerted to the child's activities, growth and development.

Transitioning out of the Cooperative Nature School to kindergarten is an exciting time. When children are eligible by age to attend kindergarten, educators will work with families to help them move smoothly to their next school. If the family decides that their child needs another year before

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kindergarten, the school can help the family find an appropriate transitional kindergarten program for that year if they choose not to stay with us.

Behavior Management

The educators provide positive, consistent guidance based on the children's individual needs and development. We emphasize positive social interactions between all members (adult and child) of our school community by:

- Thinking about the needs of others
- Listening to each other
- Respecting each other
- Telling people how we feel
- Taking care of each other
- Creating our own classroom rules as groups and renewing them regularly

The environment, schedule, and routine have been carefully arranged to allow children to function easily and safely within understandable boundaries and will consider:

- The children's interests, needs, and abilities
- A balance of both active and quiet time
- A consistent yet flexible routine

The educators will

- Recognize children and their positive behaviors and actions in a positive way
- Be aware of children's activities at all times and try to intervene before a problem arises
- Offer support, guidance and alternatives to children who need assistance
- Intervene as needed in the form of redirection
- Assist children in the process of problem solving
- Will allow children to come to their own solutions

Educators will help children regain self-control and a child may rejoin the group when they feel ready. No child will ever be isolated or left unattended.

Families can assist in creating a consistent and expected routine by following the rules of the school as noted above. For your child's safety, we ask that you follow these rules, too, at pick up and drop off. When home and school both agree and act consistently, children respect and understand the rules.

- Walking not running in the halls or on the paths outside the building.
- Adults only open doors both inside and outside.
- Holding hands in the parking lot.
- Playing in the classrooms only when an educator is present.

The school prohibits:

1. Spanking or other corporal punishment of children
2. Subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse,

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- neglect, or abusive treatment
3. Depriving children of meals or snacks
 4. Force feeding children
 5. Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet
 6. Forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing
 7. Forcing a child to remain on the toilet or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.

Outdoors

Our campus is made up of lots of wonderful and interesting places and spaces. We ask that families respect the property as well as the working farm. Please read and follow the signs posted on the property so that everyone, animals and people, are safe.

Application Process

All families are asked to visit the school before enrolling their child. At this time they will be given access to the program goals, fee sheet, parental rights and application form. All applications must be submitted with a non-refundable registration fee. Please see the [Application Process](#) for details on enrollment. No child may start school until an application, payment and enrollment forms have been received, and the family and child have toured the school.

Alumni and currently enrolled families have preference in enrolling and will be notified about enrollment in October of each year. Registration is closed to new families until the night of Open House, usually held in October or November.

Tuition and Fees

We are a small non-profit school that budgets for the entire year based on enrollment. Tuition is based on the days your child is scheduled whether your child is in attendance or not. When enrolling, you agree to pay a yearly tuition fee that will be broken down into ten payments. Invoices will be emailed to you or mailed to your home address at your request. You may make payments by mailing them to the school, dropping them off at the school, or by electronic payment. Please see the Tuition Payment Policy for details. You may pay the invoice in full or make installments towards the total as long as the current amount of this invoice is paid before the 1st of the following month. Payments after this date will be subject to late fees.

Upon enrollment, a non-refundable registration fee must accompany two months' advance tuition. This advance tuition will be held as the last two months' tuition. Tuition assistance is available; please see the Executive Director for details.

When a class is full, additional applicants will be placed on a waiting list. In order to deal fairly with the waiting list and meet the school's expenses, those families who are more than a month behind in the payment of tuition will be terminated with notice.

The Cooperative Nature School reserves the right to change tuition rates but must notify parents of tuition increases one month in advance of any changes taking place.

Occasionally a special event or visitor may require a fee. The fee is to be returned with the permission slip to your child's educator.

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Grants supplement the school's tuition revenue and fundraising and have provided for capital as well as program improvements. Families are encouraged to participate in our grant writing and fundraising activities to support the children's experiences and education.

Withdrawal from school

If it is necessary to withdraw your child from school, it is required that you notify us in writing sixty days before your withdrawal date so that you do not lose your escrow payment. With sixty days written notice, your escrow payments will be used as your last two months' tuition.

Additional Days

Once a child's schedule is set, additional days may be requested and allowed as possible. Please see your child's educator for approval. Whole days are \$60 and payment is required on the additional day. Switching scheduled days is not permitted.

Late Pick Up

Additional charges will be incurred for late pick up and will be billed according to the Fee Schedule. The school closes at 5:30 but families are requested to arrive no later than 5:15 so that conversations and transitions for children are completed by 5:30.

School Calendar

The school calendar is based on the Sharon Public School calendar. The school is open during the three public school vacation weeks. Please see the school calendar for details. [Moose Hill Audubon Sanctuary](#) currently offers alternate programming the three weeks we are closed.

Handbook and Enrollment Forms

The school handbook including the school's statement of purpose, program services, referral policies, procedures for family conferences, visits and input to school policy, procedures relating to children's records and procedures for providing emergency health care will be given to the family and made available on sharonnatureschool.org. Families and educators must comply with all conditions therein.

Specific enrollment forms must be completed before a child may start school. These forms include: a child's current physical with all DEEC and DPH required information, a developmental history, first aid and emergency forms, transportation and tuition agreements among others. All forms are valid for one year to the date of signing and must be updated annually as required by state regulation. All forms will become a part of the child's record and will be kept confidential, secure in locked file cabinets in the school office and on file for 5 years.

Annual Physical Forms for all Children

A valid physical:

- Has all required-by-the-state immunizations for each child or if such immunizations conflict with the family's religious beliefs or are contraindicated, families must provide the school with a written verification of this conflict or a physician's statement
- Has one lead test with results performed since birth

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- Has the doctor's signature and date it was signed
- Includes the date the physical was performed within one calendar year
- May be the physician's form as long as it contains all required information. The date must be within one calendar year.
- Must be updated annually by the child's physician and submitted to the school. Once the physical is expired, you have one month to update it. If not updated, your child may not attend the school until a new physical has been submitted with all relevant information.

Back to School Night for School Year Families

This handbook details the policies and procedures for the school. It is the families' responsibility to read them over carefully. Before school starts, a Back to School Night is held to review information covered in the handbook and to give the families the opportunity to ask questions regarding the information within the handbook. All families are required to attend and also make arrangements to meet with their child's teachers one-on-one before the start of school. These meetings will:

- Provide the chance to meet the educators and other families,
- Provide information and answer your questions,
- Give you the opportunity to start your involvement in the school by volunteering for committees, and school events.
- Review the daily routine
- Review the behavior management protocols
- Review the toileting procedures
- Review the emergency evacuation drill and plan
- Review the safety and health care policies
- Review the assessment system and its purpose

Please be prepared to ask questions regarding any issue with which you are concerned or unclear. The handbook will be emailed to all families, posted on the classroom blog and on sharonnatureschool.org.

It is the desire of the school to have parenting workshops, discussion groups, and guest speakers for the benefit of all families and the greater community. If you are interested in helping coordinate these events, please see the Director.

Clothing and Supplies for all children

All children should be dressed in washable clothes – they will get dirty. When selecting clothes, please keep in mind the ease with which children will be able to dress themselves. Clothes that are easy to get into and out of make toileting a more independent process. Open-toed sandals, necklaces, scarves, tie shoes, belts and sweatshirts or clothing with strings are not allowed in school, as they are unsafe especially on the playground where they catch on climbing apparatus.

Please bring in:

1. A complete change of clothes and a sweater or sweatshirt, all labeled with the child's name in a well-marked bag (at the beginning of each season).
2. For children who are not yet toilet trained, families must provide a package of wipes, disposable diapers and any non-prescription ointment or powder you normally use with the child's name clearly labeled on all items which will be stored in the school and you will be notified when they need replenishing.

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3. A reusable handle bag that easily fits projects, lunch boxes, etc. (daily). Please no backpacks, they are always too small and harder for preschoolers to use.
4. A nutritious lunch and a drink with utensils and an afternoon snack. All lunchboxes and containers must be labeled with the child's name and include icepacks for food safety. Please label foods such as soy butter or liquids in unmarked containers so that we know they are safe (no known allergens) to provide. (daily)
5. The school follows a carry in– carry out policy meaning that anything a child brings in for lunch and snack will be returned in the same lunch bag.
6. Appropriate outdoor clothing for each day's weather. We will be outside every day unless it is dangerous to do so. (daily)
7. A small travel sized pillow, child sized fleece blanket, their favorite snuggle toy for rest time. No sleeping bags, full size pillows or bulky blankets, please. All should be brought in a labeled zippered plastic or vinyl bag. (Everything must be washed weekly per state regulation)
8. The school will provide a small yoga mat for each child.

Please remember to put their name on everything!

Food and Food Preparation

We are a peanut and tree nut free school. This includes anything processed in a facility that processes tree nuts, peanuts, etc.

Lunches and Afternoon Snacks

Families provide all lunches and afternoon snacks; please see our [handout](#) for ideas. If you want to send a warm lunch in for your child, please use a Thermos. Food will not be warmed in school. Children learn how to identify proteins and healthy foods and are encouraged to eat until they are satisfied. Educators eat with the children and help model good manners and conversation. All food not consumed at a meal will be replaced in a child's lunch box. When a child does not have a lunch or snack, the school will provide one. Families are reminded periodically of good nutrition via the newsletters and daily sheets.

Water is always available and provided at snack and lunch as an alternative to any beverage being served.

The school uses disposable plates, cups and sturdy plastic silverware, which is discarded after each use. Beverage pitchers when used are washed with soap and are sanitized before re-use. All tables are washed and disinfected before and after each use

Morning Snack

Morning snack is provided by the school and is served between 7:30 and 8:30am. Children are served open snack or family style and allowed to eat at a reasonable rate according to the [USDA guidelines](#).

- No child is denied food (unless by medical directive).
- No child is force-fed.
- Children are encouraged to try new things and eat a well balanced diet.
- Snacks will only consist of prepared foods in store packaging based on whole grains with clearly labeled ingredients or fresh dairy or produce.

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- The snack menu provides a variety of simple, child friendly options and water is always available to drink as well.
- Snacks are purchased and served with the intent to protect all with allergies present in the school's current population.
- A snack menu is posted in the school and kept on file for 5 years.
- All foods requiring refrigeration are kept in a refrigerator with a thermometer maintaining that the refrigerator is between 32 and 45 degrees.
- Educators monitor the allergy, dietary and medical checklist before serving food and make substitutions as necessary.
- In addition to allergens, educators will monitor the intake of food to insure that food being served meets the individual medical, cultural, or religious needs of children being served.
- Once food provided by school is opened, it will be kept in clean, sealed containers for freshness before being replaced in refrigerator or snack closet.
- All food provided by school meets the USDA's standards and dietary suggestions and will be free from spoilage and safe for human consumption.

Organizational Chart and Grievance Procedure

A Board of nine Directors, each serving a three-year term, oversees the school. Board members are elected from the community annually after submitting a paragraph of interest. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws are available upon request.

Board of Directors of the Sharon Cooperative School:

Jennifer Zhang, Sharon, MA

*Meghan Graham, Sharon MA

* Aaron Agulnek, Sharon

*Pete Ford, Sharon

Tom Nasti, Sharon MA

*Kira Jastive, Sharon MA

Linda Cveckova, Sharon MA

Noah Oshry, Sharon MA

Abigail Marsters, Sharon MA

*Denotes Director Services Committee

This school is licensed by The Dept. of Early Education for Children 508-947-1133

In the event that an employee or a parent of an enrolled child should have a grievance against a staff member or another parent, the person should address his/her concern in writing to the supervising teacher (see flow chart below). If the complaint is against the Executive Director, the employee or parent should contact the Director Services Committee of the Board as noted above:

SharonCoopBoard@gmail.com. They will receive a response within 24 hours.

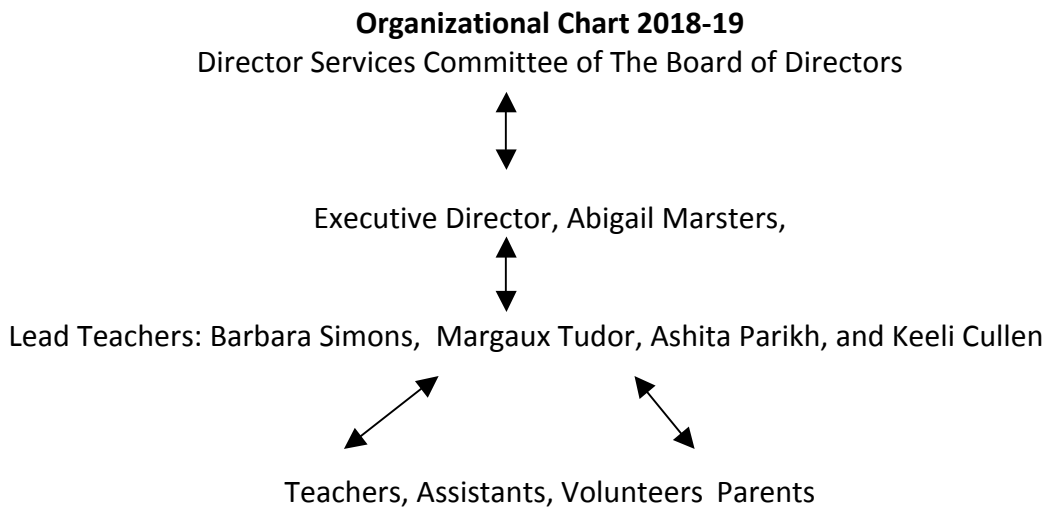
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A meeting will be arranged for discussion of the grievance. Once a resolution has been reached, the resolution will be put into writing and signed by all parties involved. It will be placed in the employee's file or in the case of the parent, in the child's file and kept on file for 5 years.

If a resolution cannot be reached, the issue can be placed by request of the person making the complaint on the agenda of the next meeting of the Board of Directors.

The DEEC as Licensor will be the final arbitrator.

All grievance procedures will be conducted in a manner that is compliant with DEEC regulations and policies. During all grievance procedures at all times the confidentiality of students, families and staff must be maintained.



Grievance Flow Chart



Parental Rights

As families, before enrolling your child into our program, you have the right to meet with the Director and your child's educators. At this meeting, you will be provided with the school's statement of purpose, services provided; procedures for family conferences, visits and input into school policy; procedures relating to children's records; and procedures for providing emergency health care. You will be provided the opportunity to visit your child's classroom at this meeting or at a later date.

As parent/legal guardian you have the right to:

1. Make unannounced visits to the school at any time while your child is present.
2. Offer suggestions for the improvement of the school's policies, procedures and programs. These suggestions should be made in written form and be given to the Director. If your suggestions are not adopted, you have the right to request an explanation in either verbal or written form and the school must respond to your request.

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3. A written progress report to be done periodically but at least every six months. A copy of this progress report will become a part of your child's file and will be kept on file for a minimum of five years. For children with disabilities these progress reports will be done every three months. The progress report will be based on observations and documentation of the child's progress in a range of activities over time and will address the domains of cognitive, social/emotional, language, fine and gross motor skills and life skills. The educator will bring special problems or significant developments to your attention as soon as they arise.
4. Request a conference and meet with your child's educators on an individual basis at any mutually agreeable time either in person or by phone.
5. Access your child's file at reasonable times. At no time shall your request be delayed more than two business days and the complete file must be presented to you. Children's records will be kept for 5 years

Your child's record will be treated as confidential and privileged. The school will not release or reveal information contained in a child's file to anyone outside or unrelated to the child's program without the written consent of a parent/guardian. The school will notify a parent if a child's records have been subpoenaed.

If you wish any or all of your child's records to be released to another party outside of the school, you must make this request in writing. The school will charge a reasonable fee for duplicating all or parts of your child's records for dissemination upon receiving your written request.

The school will maintain a written log in your child's file that lists: the name, signature, position and date of the person doing the copying; the portion of the records that were copied and disseminated; the purpose of the dissemination/release and the signature of the person to whom the information was released. This log will be available only to the child's parents/guardians and the school will be responsible for record maintenance.

Upon request of an employee of The Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) involved in the regulatory process, the school may make available any information required to be on file by the DEEC regulations or reasonably related to its regulations. Authorized employees of the DEEC shall not move identifying case material from the school's premises and will maintain the confidentiality of individual records.

A copy of the [DEEC regulations](#) will be kept on the schools premises and will be made available upon request. Families may always contact the local DEEC office for a copy of the school's regulatory compliance history.

Amending a Child's Record

As parent/guardian you have the right to amend, add information, comments, data or any other relevant materials to your child's records. If you are of the opinion that adding information, comments or data is not sufficient to explain or clarify or correct objectionable material in your child's file, please schedule a conference with your child's educator or the Director to make your objections known. The school then has one week after the conference to respond in writing to your objections. Their decision must be in written form and state the reason for their decision whether it is in favor of your request or not. If the decision is in favor of your request, the school will take immediate steps as may be necessary to put the decision into effect.

It is the responsibility of the school to notify you of these rights when admitting your child into

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their program and at least once a year thereafter as long as your child is actively enrolled in the program.

Upon written request, the school will transfer your child's record to you or any other person identified by you in writing when your child is no longer enrolled in the school program.

Language Acquisition

- The school recognizes that language acquisition is the culmination of multiple factors: social, emotional and cognitive, and supports each child in attaining and recognizing their full potential by providing a supportive, enriching environment.
- The educators support all children in the process of language acquisition.
- Recognizing that there are many ways to communicate supports language acquisition. For all children, including bi-literate children, cues for understanding spoken language are provided through tone of voice, inflection, pictures with multiple language labels, daily schedules depicted on picture boards and nonverbal expressions such as gestures and sounds like laughter which provide additional communication clues to insure that children are not isolated from social interactions.
- The school recognizes that bi-literate children also require assessment tools that are appropriate and sensitive to their needs.
- The importance of maintaining a home language is recognized as a vital factor for children in preserving their cultural identity and family relationships.
- The school believes that family literacy practices are linked to success in reading. We therefore encourage families to read to their children in their home language, to engage their young children as readers and to help them recognize letters and spell words and provide rhyming words, tongue twisters and other forms of word play with their children in the home language. We believe that these early reading activities in another language are helpful and that early literacy skills learned in one language can transfer to another.

Pet Policy

- To protect both children and educators, reptiles, fowl, and fur bearing animals are not allowed as classroom pets.
- Animals, brought onto the premises for preschool demonstrations, must be controlled by the handler at all times and should be suitable for preschool children.
- Pets or visiting animals must have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animals are fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and that the animal is suitable for contact with children.
- Educators will supervise all interactions between animals and children and instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals.
- Children wash their hands after coming in contact with any type of animal.

Family-School Communication

Educators will keep families aware of their child's daily activities. Please remember to read and respond to comments or questions as appropriate. Educators will publish blog posts describing activities and notices about events as well as daily updates. Families should feel free to check in on your child at any time by calling the school and asking to speak with an educator. To speak with all educators, please

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schedule a time to call so classroom coverage can be arranged.

Neither the busy drop off or pick up time nor when class is in session is the time to start conversations that either your child would overhear or might require a lengthy conversation. All educators and the Director are eager to communicate with families. Written notes or requests for family conferences either in person or by phone are the best way to address any of your questions about your child's needs and progress.

In order to keep the lines of communication open, families are asked to send messages of any significance by email to the educators or Director. Messages on how children slept, ate, any new medication taken, exciting events at home or anything that would effect your child's day ahead that would be of benefit for their educator to know should be communicated.

Note: Families are asked to call their children in absent as soon as they know they will be. The school will call families by 8:30am if children are absent without notification.

Children's Assessments

Our assessment process begins with the Family Welcome questionnaires we send families to complete before school begins that provide information that allows us to get to know you and your child. Your feedback becomes a part of your child's file and starts the collaborative process we seek to achieve with you.

In early winter and late spring, educators will host conferences, either in person or by phone, to review screenings, family conference forms and children's portfolios. Screenings will be done at the beginning of school and the assessments will be done twice a year for all children and every three months for children with special needs. Families may request a conference or meeting with their child's educators or a Director at any time. We hope that the family conference will represent a realistic and informative picture of your child's progress and support the family-school partnership, as families will be invited to help set goals for their child.

The school has a number of specialists as consultants as well as a list of resources and referrals as needed and if you are interested.

Transportation

The school does not provide transportation. Educators must be informed in writing if someone is picking up a child other those on the child's Transportation and Emergency Forms. Children will not be released to anyone other than those persons designated on the Transportation and Emergency Forms. An educator will not release a child without a valid proof of identity such as a driver's license or other form of identification with picture for someone they do not know.

Please be aware of transportation safety. Please reference the [Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Program](#).

Drop Off and Pick Up

Please park in any of the spaces in the parking lot to pick up and drop off. Follow the path to the door leading into the school.

Each family has their own code to use to enter the school. Please do not share the codes with children of any age or others who are not regularly picking up your child. If the person picking up your child does not have the code, please have them call us from the parking lot and we will let them in. Your

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child's safety is our utmost concern.

Safety in the public parking lot is very important. Depending upon the time of day and the activities around the area there can be cars driving, parking and passing through the lot. Please:

- Hold your child's hand when coming into or out of the school.
- **Remember only adults are allowed to open doors.**
- Never leave children unattended in a vehicle. If you need assistance dropping off or picking up your child, please call the school and an educator will come out to assist you.

The educators spend a lot of time teaching all of your children safety while moving around the building and property. Please help us keep your child safe by reinforcing the rules. Your support reinforces our care.

When you drop off or pick up your child, you must sign the child in or out with the time on the daily attendance sheet. Please make sure an educator sees you and knows your child has arrived or is leaving.

School Cancellation Policy

Very occasionally, the school will need to be closed in the event of severe weather or major facility failures (heat, power, water, etc.). The decision to close the school will be made by the Executive Director. When making the decision we consider the need to be able to get children, teachers and families to school safely, keep them safe while in school and be able to evacuate safely in the event of an emergency (have a place to shelter: other buildings on the property).

If the Sharon Public Schools are closed:

If the Sharon Public Schools are closed, the Cooperative Nature School will be closed. Alert notices will be put on sharonnatureschool.org, be sent out by email and blog post and be updated on the school's voice mail at 781-784-2966.

If the Sharon Public Schools have a delay:

If Sharon Public Schools have a one-hour or more delay, the Cooperative Nature School may or may not be opened dependent upon the circumstances.

1. If the Sharon Public Schools have an hour or more delay the school will not open until after 8:30 AM due to the need to clear paths and driveways.
2. Families are asked to please call the school at 781-784-2966 before 8:30 AM and leave a message to notify the school if your child is going to attend or not.

If the Cooperative Nature School needs to close early:

In the event of an early closing, parents or the people designated on your Emergency Release Form will be notified by phone to come pick up your child. All families are required to have someone who can pick up quickly (under 60 minutes) in the event of an emergency.

The cooperation and understanding of all guarantees everyone's safety, which is our first priority in times like these.

Evacuation and Emergency Procedures

Authority and overview:

In the event of an emergency situation, the Director shall implement an emergency evacuation plan. In the case of the Director's absence, the Director will designate a person in charge who will assume his/her role and will leave contact information in case of an emergency. This designated educator shall

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assume the authority to take action in an emergency or event that requires evacuation of the premises and act as the coordinator for the evacuation. All educators and the Director are responsible for insuring that all children with special needs are evacuated safely along with their peers.

Children are instructed in outside and inside emergency evacuation procedures. Emergency evacuation drills are conducted by the school administration bi-monthly and by the Sharon Fire Department four times a year.

These protocols are reviewed regularly in educators' meetings, published to all members of the school community, posted in the classrooms, shared with Town of Sharon safety officials, and practiced at least once a year.

Evacuation of the Building:

In the event of an emergency situation that requires an evacuation of the school, the educator in charge of each group when evacuating shall take their emergency bag containing:

- An accurate attendance list
- Emergency contact information for the children in their care.
- Emergency medications and consent forms as appropriate for all children.
- A count of all children and educators at every transition and at all times.
- Supplies and materials to keep children busy as needed.
- A cell phone to be used for emergency notifications.

Each teaching team is responsible for insuring that all children are evacuated safely and for meeting the designated coordinator of the evacuation at the specified location. All educators and the Director are responsible for insuring that all children with special needs are evacuated safely along with their peers.

Notifications:

Families will be notified of the circumstances and the location of the children in any of these events, by phone call, email, school voice mail, school blogs, etc. The DEEC will be notified as soon as possible in the event of an evacuation or emergency.

Outside emergency evacuation drills:

1. If the emergency allows us to stay on the property, children will meet at their designated places on the front lawn. Teachers will take attendance, report it to the person in charge, and everyone will wait until allowed back into the school. If a class is outside already, they will gather and take attendance there and move to the front of the building if directed to do so.
2. If the environmental emergency is confined to the immediate area of the school, e.g. fire or toxic fumes, and the children cannot stay on the premises, the children will be brought to another building on the property where they will remain accompanied by educators while families/emergency contacts are notified and arrangements for transportation home are made.
3. In the event of exposure to toxic materials or gasses and a physical examination is recommended,

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children will be transported by the Sharon Fire Department to Norwood Hospital or another local hospital where they will be examined and families/emergency contacts will be notified.

4. If the environmental emergency is more widespread and encompasses a larger area such as a neighborhood or several homes, due to a non-confined environmental threat, e.g. toxic fumes from a spill, floodwaters, brush fires, etc., and the children cannot remain in the area, the children will be brought to Moose Hill Audubon Sanctuary where they will remain accompanied by educators while families/emergency contacts are notified of the situation and arrangements for transportation home are made.
5. In the event of a major environmental hazard that necessitates a larger area evacuation such as several neighborhoods, the town or geographical area, due to a large non-confined hazard, e.g. a nuclear incident, earthquake, hurricane, etc. the children will be transported to a Red Cross designated shelter by the Sharon Fire Department where they will remain accompanied by caregivers while families/emergency contacts are notified of the situation and arrangements for transportation home are made.

Indoor Safety Drills/Sheltering in Place:

In some emergency situations it may be safer to remain on site until the emergency has ended. Once alerted that there is a situation, the town emergency service personnel will help the Director or educator in charge make the determination of whether to remain in place or to evacuate.

Indoor safety drills are conducted regularly during the year. The Director or educator in charge will quickly and quietly alert each classroom that we are doing a safety drill. When notified that there is a drill:

- Teachers close and lock their doors from the inside and pull down the shades.
- Children get under or behind tables and out of view. Attendance is taken.
- Everyone is silent.

If told to, educators can also shelter the children in the school bathrooms, which can be locked from the inside. Classrooms and bathrooms have access to water and educators will have their emergency bags. Educators will remain in this state until the Director or educator in charge or the police or firefighters releases them.

Missing Child:

In the event of a missing child, the educator in charge will call an inside safety drill. Classes will follow the procedures for sheltering in place. When the attendance is confirmed for all other children, the lockdown will be released, and educators will remain inside with children in ratio. At this point, one educator will call 911 to report a child missing. All other educators will commence a building and property search starting within the school and moving room to room and then outside around the building. The missing child's family and the DEEC will be notified as soon as possible.

Injury Prevention and Safety

- Classrooms are inspected daily by educators for safety hazards.
- The Building Inspector, Health Care Consultant and Fire Department make periodic announced and

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unannounced inspections.

- Safety caps cover all electric outlets when not in use. Electrical cords are inspected and caution is used to insure that they are kept out of reach of children.
- Rugs and large pieces of furniture are secured to prevent slipping or tipping.
- All chemicals and cleaning compounds other than hand soap are kept in secured closets out of reach of children in the classrooms.
- All medications and first aid supplies are secured and out of the reach of children.
- Children are instructed in safety rules for inside the classroom and outside on the grounds.

Supervision is provided at all times.

- Children are instructed in emergency evacuation procedures. Emergency evacuation drills are conducted bi-monthly as individual classes, the entire school or unannounced by the Sharon Fire Department.

Housekeeping

A professional cleaning company cleans and sanitizes the school on a daily basis. Educators are responsible for keeping classroom materials and supplies clean and sanitized at all times. At no time while children are present in the classroom may major housekeeping activities such as vacuuming, washing floors, windows, etc. be carried on.

Health Care - Please notify us if:

1. Your child will be absent and for how long. Call 781-784-2966 or email sharonnatureschool@gmail.com or your child's educator.
2. Your child has contracted contagious childhood diseases, so that we may take any necessary precautions and alert other families. All personal information is kept confidential.

Sickness at home

It is inevitable that preschool children will have a cold, virus or any of the multiple childhood diseases that will go with this age.

Your child **may not** come to school if he or she has had:

1. A fever of 100° F or higher with 24 hours
2. Diarrhea within 24 hours
3. Has vomited within the last 24 hours, or
4. Is showing signs of illness (unexplained rash, hives, aches and pains, etc.).

It is not fair to the child, the other children or the educators. The one thing we don't want to share is germs, please use your discretion as to your child's health, and consider the well being of their classmates.

Sickness at School

Occasionally a child's symptoms will come on suddenly, in which case we will call the family immediately. If you cannot be reached or cannot pick up the child within an hour of receiving the call, then the people on your emergency list will be called and asked to pick up your child. We will keep your child as comfortable as possible until their departure. No child may remain at school if deemed ill by

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their educator.

Medications at School

If a child has recovered and is well enough to return to school but still needs to finish a prescription medication prescribed by a doctor, the educators will administer such medication if the following criteria are met:

1. Educators will be annually evaluated and authorized to administer medication.
2. All educators will make themselves familiar and aware of the school's Health Care Policies and agree to meet the procedures set forth in the handbook.
3. No educator will administer the first dose of any medication to a child except under extraordinary circumstances and with familial consent.
4. All medications must be given directly to the educator and safely stored.
5. Families have filled out and signed an Authorization for Medication form and a photo of the child is attached.
6. Each time a medication is administered, the educator must document in the child's record the name of the medication, the dosage, and the time and the method of delivery along with who administered it. Missed and refused doses will be noted as well.
7. All medications must be in their labeled container and accompanied by a physician's statement specifying the dosage, times and conditions under which it is to be administered. (Some families find it easier to have the pharmacy put prescriptions in two bottles, one for school and one for home).
8. Non-prescription medicines such as pain relievers or cough medicines may only be administered to a child with written familial authorization and a written order by a physician, which states the medication name, dosage, and criteria for administration. This authorization is only valid for a year from the date on the order.
9. The family will be notified before any non-prescription medication is administered other than first aid or ointments such as diaper cream.
10. The completed Authorization for Medication form will be placed in the child's file when medication is complete.
11. When possible, all unused, discontinued, outdated, finished, or unfinished prescription medicines will be returned to the family and such return documented in the child's record. When return is not possible or practical, such prescription medication will be destroyed and recorded as destroyed.
12. Topical non-prescription medications such as petroleum jelly, diaper rash ointments and antibacterial ointments that are applied to wounds, rashes or broken skin, must be stored in their original container and used only on an individual child. The container shall be labeled with the child's name and only administered as described above.
13. Sunscreens and insect repellents should be applied before coming to school. If families want them reapplied, Medical Authorization forms must be completed and kept on file.

Individualized Health Care Plans

The application, health forms, developmental history, and emergency forms give information concerning a child's allergies and special health considerations.

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The school must maintain as part of a child's record, an Individual Health Care Plan for each child with a chronic medical condition, which has been diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner. These plans are required for any child with a stated condition. The plan must describe the chronic condition, its symptoms, any medical treatment that may be necessary while the child is in care, the potential side effects of that treatment, and the potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not administered. The educator may administer routine, scheduled medication or treatment to the child with a chronic medical condition in accordance with written parental consent and licensed health care practitioner authorization.

Tooth Brushing

Visiting dentists instruct children in dental hygiene through special programs. Curriculum can include brushing, flossing, visiting a dentist and eating healthy foods for proper dental health. Educators will insure that all children who brush teeth after lunch will do so in a safe and healthy manner. The school provides brushes and toothpaste as required by state regulation.

Accidents and Emergencies

In the event of an accident, emergency or injury, the same procedures will be followed as if your child became ill at school: you will be called and if not reached, the next person on your Emergency Form will be called.

All educators are certified in First Aid and CPR. Educators may administer minor first aid and will attend to minor incidents and injuries and an Incident and Accident report will be completed. Two copies of the report will be made: one for the child's record and one for the family. Please sign both copies. You will be called whenever and if ever your child requires first aid.

In the event of a more serious injury requiring a 911 call, educators will administer first aid until relieved by EMS. In this case the classroom educator of injured child stays with the injured child. Other educators will stay with the other children in a separate area. Educators will call the EMS and the child's family or emergency contacts. If the child needs to be transported, the ambulance will transport the child to the nearest hospital deemed by the EMS able to stabilize the child. An educator will accompany the child in the ambulance and will stay with them until family arrives.

Head Lice

The school has a No Nit Policy that encourages each family to do its part at home with routine screening, early detection, accurate identification, and thorough removal of head lice and nits. Early intervention provides the needed assurance for those who have successfully eliminated an infestation that everything possible is being done to prevent new outbreaks when children return to groups where close contact is inevitable. If nits are present upon screening or re-screening, the child is dismissed from school immediately for follow-up.

Health Care Consultant

The Sharon Public Health Nurse is the school's health care consultant and annually reviews the policies and procedures as stated in the handbook and is a source for consultations whenever needed. She approves First Aid training for educators.

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First Aid Kits and Emergency Medications

First aid manuals and kits are located in each room at the sign of the Red Cross and with the educators when they are outside. Ice packs are in the freezer. Emergency information for children is kept in each attendance books. First aid supplies are checked monthly for expiration dates. All EMS numbers are posted in each classroom. All known allergies for children and educators are posted on each classroom door.

Epi-pens and other emergency medications will be kept readily accessible but out of children's reach in the classroom per state regulations. Children requiring emergency medication must have an Individualized Health Care Plan per state regulation detailing all measures to be taken as needed and any qualifications or training required of the educators that administer the medications.

Plan for Managing Infectious Diseases

- Each child has a health record indicating immunizations for notification as needed.
- Families are told that if a child is unwell, has an unexplained rash or has vomited, had a fever or diarrhea in the last 24 hours, the child is not to be sent to school.
- If a child has unexplained rash, a written note from a pediatrician is required that satisfactorily explains the skin condition to be non-contagious.
- If an educator suspects a communicable disease, the child may be excluded until picked up by a family and seen by a physician.
- If a child has been absent, a note written by the family is required to explain the absence. A physician's note is required if there are any unusual circumstances or necessary precautions that must be taken upon the child's return to school.
- If a child appears to be sick, a family will be called to pick up the child. If the family cannot be reached, the designated person on the Emergency Contacts list will be contacted and the child will be kept quiet and comfortable until their dismissal.
- If a child vomits, has diarrhea or an urination accident while in school, the child's educator will immediately remove the child from the classroom. She will clean the child up and change her clothing if necessary. The soiled clothing will be placed inside two plastic bags and sealed. The child will not be scolded. Vomit, diarrhea, urine or blood is sprayed with a bleach solution. Cleaning is done using gloves and disposable materials that are either flushed or bagged appropriately.
- If a family notifies the educator that their child has become ill with a contagious childhood disease, the other families are notified as soon as possible by posted note, letter or by email preserving confidentiality as required.

Plan for Infection Control

- All hard surfaces are washed with a bleach solution/disinfectant after each use.
- Floors are swept and washed, bathrooms are cleaned and disinfected daily by a janitor.
- All potty chairs are immediately emptied into the toilet and bleached after use.
- All cloth toys and smocks are washed and disinfected monthly, unless a contagious disease has been introduced in the classroom at which time all toys are immediately disinfected or discarded before being used again by children.
- Any toy mouthed is bleached before being returned to the classroom.

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- Sleeping mats and blankets/pillows are taken home for washing at the end of every week.
- Disposable cups, napkins, and plastic utensils are used for snacks and lunch.
- Educators wash beverage pitchers and any containers used for snacks thoroughly after each use with soap then bleach and water.

Hand Washing

Children are instructed on [how to wash hands](#) by use of friction, soap and water and drying with paper towels. The hand washing protocol is posted in the bathroom, monitored by staff and assistance is given as needed.

1. Use warm water and liquid soap
2. Rub your hands together scrubbing backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails
3. Rinse well under running water
4. Dry hands with paper towel
5. Turn off water with towel before throwing away
6. Discard paper into lined trashcan

Children and educators must wash hands:

- Upon arrival
- After going to the bathroom or changing soiled clothes
- When sneezing or coughing in hand or using a tissue
- Before and after eating snacks or lunch
- After playing on the playground
- After handling pets of any kind
- Before and after water play
- After cleaning

Toileting

All children are allowed to use the bathroom when needed. Educators will encourage children to use the bathroom regularly (i.e. before going to the playground, before lunch, after rest, etc.) and will check a child still in diapers or pull-ups at least every 2 hours and as needed to see if they need changing. All diapering and changing of diapers and clothing will take place only in the children's bathrooms.

Any child soiled or wet will be made more comfortable using the school's diapering procedure. Soiled items will be sent home daily and a replacement set should be sent to school the next day. The school has a limited supply of spare clothing. Any clothing supplied by the school must be laundered before being returned.

Children who are toilet training must be wearing clothing that they can pull off and on easily by themselves. Families of children who are toilet training will receive information in the daily email regarding their progress.

Potty chairs will be immediately emptied, feces and urine flushed and the chair washed with bleach and disposable towels. Gloves and towels used for this procedure will be bagged, sealed, and placed within a bag in a container with a lid.

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All families will provide a complete change of clothes for their child to be stored at the school. Families of children who are toilet training will provide 4 sets of clothes.

Clothing or sleeping things soiled by any bodily fluid will be placed in a double plastic bag, sealed, labeled and stored apart from other items to be sent home.

Toilet training will never be coerced and will be done in accordance with a family's request and will be consistent with the child's physical and emotional abilities.

Educators will abide by the procedures as outlined in the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table posted in the bathroom.

Toileting Procedures

1. All children will be allowed to use the toilet when needed.
2. Children will be supervised during toileting but allowed as much privacy as is appropriate.
3. No child will be punished for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
4. Children must wash their hands with soap and running water after toileting and before snacks, meals, or meal preparation.
5. All educators must wash their own hands after assisting a child with diapering/toileting. Individual paper towels will be used to dry hands.
6. Disposable gloves will be used whenever cleaning feces, urine, blood, or vomit.
7. Contaminated areas will be cleaned and sanitized with bleach to water solution DEEC approved disinfectant solution.

Diapering

Families are responsible for providing diapers, diaper wipes, and any nonprescription ointments they wish used on their child. Families will be notified when and if the supply needs to be replenished. Families who supply cloth diapers are to also provide a tightly covered container for storage of soiled diapers. Cloth diapers shall consist of an absorbent inner lining and be covered with an outer layer made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of urine or feces. Both diaper and outer covering will be changed as one unit. Cloth diapers and outer coverings will be bagged and placed in this container kept in the janitor's closet. The family must remove the container of soiled cloth diapers at the end of each day; the container will be emptied and sanitized at home before being returned to school.

Diapering Procedure

Note: Educators whose primary function is preparing food, do not change diapers until their food preparation duties are done for the day.

1. Wash hands and put on disposable gloves.
2. Gather necessary supplies. Cover diapering surface with disposable paper towel. Surface used may not be a food preparation area or used for other purposes.
3. Either stand child securely or place child on covered diapering surface. Always keep one hand on the child at all times. Clean child's bottom from front to back with disposable wipe.
4. Fold all contaminated disposable items into the soiled paper and into a plastic bag and discard into lined covered trashcan. Diaper and dress child. Wash the child's hands.
5. Clean diapering area with paper towel and disinfectant solution. After each use the changing table will be bleached.

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6. Wash hands thoroughly. Return supplies to child safe storage area.

Children With Special Needs

Prior to admitting a child with known special needs to the school, the educator and Director will meet with the family and the family will visit the classrooms. The handbook given to the family will include the school's statement of purpose and policies on services, referral, family conferences, children's records and procedures for providing emergency health care.

In determining whether to accept a child with a disability, the Director and educators may, with familial consent, request information pertaining to a child's participation in program from the local educational agency, Early Intervention, or other health/service providers.

Based on the information and with the family's input, the Director and educators will identify in writing any specific accommodations necessary to meet the needs of the child including, but not limited to:

1. Change or modification to child's participation in typical center activities
2. Size of group to which the child is assigned and the proper staff/child ratio.
3. Any special equipment or physical accommodations, materials, ramps and aids.

Within thirty days of receiving information received from families and pertinent agencies, the Director will notify the family in writing of the reasons why a determination has made that the school cannot meet the child's needs without undue burden to the school. This notification will specify that the families may contact the DEEC to determine if the school is in compliance with the regulations. If every effort whether physical, financial or educational has been researched, yet a hardship for the school exists, the written communication will inform the family of its efforts and the facts gathered which resulted in this finding. A meeting with the family will be suggested by the Director to discuss the findings and to further discuss the means by which the school may be helpful in providing all necessary observations, documentation, available information and referral for other services that the family may request.

The school will keep a copy of this notification in its records. The factors listed below as issued by the DEEC will be used as a basis for determining if the school can accommodate a child with a disability.

1. The nature and cost of accommodations needed to provide appropriate services to the child at the program
2. The ability to secure funding for of services from other sources
3. The overall financial resources of the school
4. The number of persons employed by the school
5. The effect on expenses and resources or the impact otherwise of such action upon the school

Admitting a Child With Special Needs

After admitting of a child with diagnosed special needs, the school, Director, and educators, with family permission, will cooperate with Early Intervention, health or other specialized service providers or consultants to plan an individual educational program for the child. The educators assigned to the child's room will be designated as the liaisons for the child and will coordinate communication and services with other organizations as needed. Any child receiving services provided by personnel other than the educators must have the family sign a written consent form so that the educators may consult with any agencies or specialists in order to review, develop and/or revise plans and services for the child. Using

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the family questionnaires, progress reports, and conferencing, educators, and families will work together to provide the best setting and strategies for the education and care of the child. The school offers support for families in the form of referrals to agencies that can provide consultants, but the ultimate choice belongs to the families. The school does not pay these consultants.

Progress reports will be written every three months by the outside agency and the school educators. Educators will attend as requested or needed the evaluation meetings with specialists to support families and children, and discuss the services being provided.

Referral Services

If after a reasonable observation period, a child is deemed to be exhibiting behaviors that suggest a physical, emotional or learning disability, the educators will notify the Director. The Director and educators will consider the initial observations and recordings of the educator along with further observations recording and review allowing for a consensus of observations and documentation.

A letter and referral form will be sent to the family based noting observations made of the child. Included will be the reason for recommending a referral and any efforts that have been made to accommodate the child's needs. A list of available resources, agencies and individuals as well as their rights (including the right to appeal under ST. 1972, c. 766) will be included. This letter from the Director may make suggestions of available resources but the family will make the final choice of agency or professional to consult. It is the child's safety, needs and well being that are considered foremost in making this recommendation. Therefore it is the family's responsibility to make an appointment for a professional screening within 30 days of receiving letter and referral information from the school. If a screening appointment is not made within this time frame, the Director has the discretion to terminate enrollment of the child due to the inability to insure that the safety and needs of the child are being met.

The educator of the child has the responsibility for documenting observations of behavior, accommodations, and efforts made and placing this information in the child's file as well as the letter of recommendation and the referral form.

After the family has considered the recommendations for referral, a meeting can be arranged with the Director and educators to confer on observations and for clarification of the recommendations. The school will work with any agency or professional individual in regards to the children's needs with written consent from the family.

Guidelines for the requirements of referral and termination will be followed as required by the DEEC.

Termination/Suspension of a Child From School

If at any time it is determined that the school cannot meet the specific need of a child, the child may be terminated or suspended from the school. Suspension will occur when the educators, after meeting and working with the family, determines that the child's needs would be better served by removal from the school for evaluation, reconsideration, health or safety issues. During the suspension period it is the family's obligation to address and resolve the conflict satisfactorily by meeting with educators and other professionals as may be necessary.

To avoid suspension or termination, the school will pursue options for supportive services to the program and family, including consultation of specialists and educator training. Educators may develop a plan with the family for behavioral intervention at home and in the program. A written plan outlining the conflict and procedures for resolution will be placed in the child's file.

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If after sufficient time, the conflict remains despite all good measures to address the issue the child will be terminated from the program. A written description of the specific reasons for termination and any circumstances, under which the child could return, will be placed in the child's file. The educator and Director will make the transition to a new school as easy as possible. The educators will work in cooperation with any specialists in the classroom or follow plans by specialists in order to meet the needs of the child.

When a child's enrollment is terminated by the school or family, the Director and educators will make every effort to make this transition a positive experience for the child and the child's classmates. Self-esteem, friendships, and continued support will be the prime considerations in easing this transition. The children's age and ability to comprehend information provided will be taken into consideration. Preparation prior to and during the time of termination will be handled with compassion and sound judgment as regards the child, the school, family, and educators.

Identifying And Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

All educators are mandated reporters. Protocols and procedures are based on information from the [Department of Children and Families](#) (DCF). Signs of abuse are listed on the DCF website.

Any form of abuse or neglect while in care is strictly forbidden. The school and all educators must operate the program in ways that protect children.

If the educators observes any condition of a questionable nature or if a child's health or appearance appears to be neglected this would be cause for concern. The Director will be notified immediately and the Director and/or educators will document these observations by describing the nature of the suspected abuse or neglect. The family will be made aware of these concerns and be given a copy of the written observations that have been placed in the child's file. The family must successfully provide explanation for concerns raised by the school.

As a mandated reporter, the Director and/or the educators, with the most direct contact with the child, must make a report to the DCF. If the child is in immediate danger the police will be called. The DEEC will be notified immediately upon the existence of a report.

It is the goal of the school to arrive at a consensus as to whether to file a report or not. However, it is understood that this may not always be possible. The Sharon Cooperative School always respects an educator's decision if they wish to make a report. Any report will be filed by the end of the business day noting which concerns were identified. In a case that a child would be at imminent risk of injury the report will be made immediately. After a mandated reporter has notified DCF, a written report must be submitted within 48 hours.

The school shall cooperate in all investigations of abuse and neglect, including identifying families of children currently or previously enrolled in the program; providing consent for disclosure to the DEEC of information from, and allowing the DEEC to disclose information to, any person and/or agency the DEEC may specify as necessary to the prompt investigation of allegations and protection of children. Failure to cooperate may be grounds for suspension, revocation, or refusal to issue or renew a license.

DCF 800-792-5200

Department of Early Education & Care, Taunton (508) 828-5025

Handling Alleged Child Abuse by Educators

The Director or another educator will immediately confer with the educator against whom the

The Cooperative Nature School at The Trustees Moose Hill Farm

allegation of child abuse has been made. The educator will be informed of the following:

1. The educator will be immediately suspended with pay for a period not to exceed five working days pending investigations.
2. No accused educator may continue to provide direct care to children unless and until the allegation is proven to be unfounded.
3. It is the school's intention to resolve an allegation quickly, both to spare the educator unnecessary anguish and to maintain the equilibrium of the school for the welfare of the children and educators.

Therefore, the school will conduct its own investigation within a period not to exceed five (5) working days at which time the employee, if the allegations are not supported by the DCF, DEEC and the school, the educator will be reinstated.

If DCF, DEEC and the school cannot reach a resolution and a more extensive investigation is undertaken, then the educator will be placed on suspension without pay, indefinitely. At no time during the course of an investigation for alleged child abuse shall an accused educator be permitted to provide direct care to children. If allegations against an educator were supported by DCF, DEEC, and the school's investigation, employment will be terminated at once. All educators and families should cooperate fully with the investigation efforts of any licensing or regulatory authorities. The Director, educators, or families involved should not make any statement, oral or written, to other educators not directly involved in the investigation. Questions from families and other educators or the media should be directed to the Director of the school.

Procedures For Recruiting Educators

Candidates for educator positions must meet DEEC and NAEYC requirements for the position applied for. Recruitment will be done through regular channels utilizing the most expansive means of communication: the web, local colleges and universities and professional organizations. Recruitment notices or ads will also be submitted to local newspapers, colleges, public school early childhood coordinators, and ECE organizations such as BAEYC, NCECE, and NAEYC. Such notices and ads will include: the name and address of our program and the contact person from whom to request a written application; the position title and a brief description of responsibilities; the date the position is to commence and if applicable to end; and the deadline for filing an application.

Student Interns, Substitutes, and Volunteers

At times, the school may allow students from local high schools or colleges to intern in our program. All interns will provide documentation of their internship from the sponsoring school, provide a current physical, submit to a background records check and abide by all relevant provisions of the employee handbook. Student interns will not be counted in the staffing ratio, will not be left alone with children and will be supervised by both the educators they work with and by the Director at all times. They will work as teacher's assistants in the room abiding by all the rules and regulations of the school.

Substitute teachers, as needed will be hired and added into the educator-student ratios. All substitutes will provide a current physical, a background records check, and a resume or application.