

Parent Handbook



Early Childhood Education Center

Weymouth High School

1 Wildcat Way

Weymouth, Ma 02190

(781) 340-2500

Revised: August, 2017



Welcome to the Early Childhood Education Center. This handbook has been prepared to answer some of the most commonly asked questions, and explain some of our routines and procedures.

Our center is a laboratory program which serves as a training facility for high school students enrolled in the Early Education and Care program of the Career and Technical Education Department. EEC regulations and guidelines are followed in the center. Staff members of the Weymouth Public Schools, teen parents at the high school, and community families may enroll their children in the center. *Priority is given to staff members and teen parents.* Ages of the children range from infancy through 4 years. The center is open from 7am until 4pm and children are eligible for an eight hour day of child care, according to the parents' school schedule. The program is open 183 school days, including professional development days for teachers, except for the first day of teacher orientation.

Our Philosophy of Learning

In a caring and positive environment, we create a warm and happy place for children to grow and learn. As we bridge the gap from home to school, we guide children to a continued positive self-image, while building social skills in a child care setting.

Sensory, motor, perceptual and language skills are introduced through materials and activities which are both child-centered and teacher-facilitated. Work is planned which emphasizes the **PROCESS RATHER THAN THE PRODUCT**, fostering a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Based on the theory that children learn through play, daily routines encourage active involvement, meaningful experimentation, and reinforcement through repetition. Schedules are designed which balance structure and free choice, as well as active and quiet times.

Recognizing that children grow in unpredictable stages, we treat each child as an individual, working from the level each child has attained and moving forward a step at a time. We encourage love of learning by allowing children to experience their own stage of development and helping them to feel success without pressure.



Goals

The following are the primary goals of the Early childhood Education Center:

For the Child:

- *We strive to provide a safe environment for the child to play and learn, developing thinking, reasoning, and questioning skills through experimenting with materials.
- *We strive to provide a nurturing environment where children can feel welcome, secure, and loved; enabling them to develop positive self-respect.
- *We provide learning activities based on the individual child's developmental abilities, and interests, while experiencing freedom in creative expression.
- *We provide an environment where children can play with other children, gaining social and language skills within a peer group, and developing a respect of cultural diversity and individual differences.

For the Student Interns:

- *We provide an early childhood program as a training site for students to learn and practice principles of early childhood education.
- *We help the student develop a personal early childhood philosophy and work ethic in order to succeed in a future career.

For the Families:

- *We provide a setting where parents can leave their child; knowing that he/she is safe, well cared for and happy.
- *We provide information regarding early childhood development. Developmental assessments are done during the school year to provide information on important milestones and benchmarks that each child has attained.



Guidance Techniques

We believe that children learn best through their experiences. We believe that teachers must lovingly guide and redirect children to help them to cooperate with their peers, share in positive educational experiences and to encourage and enhance their growth and development while in our care. We believe this growth can be accomplished by:

- *The use of group management techniques; limiting the number of children in each area of the room to avoid overcrowding and allow for sufficient materials and the opportunity for constructive interactions.

- *Maintaining a low ratio of adults to children. We follow EEC guidelines which are: 2:7 for infants, 2:9 for toddlers and 1:10 for preschoolers. The student interns in the center greatly reduce these ratios.

- *Speaking with children if their behavior is inappropriate for the area or materials that they are using. Examples: "We take blocks down gently; this is the way we use the paintbrush; chairs are for sitting; we stand on the floor".

- *Using positive language with the children to give praise for appropriate behavior. Example: "I like the way Jamie is sitting with his hands on his own body and his feet on the floor". We say "only walking" or "walk Debbie" instead of "don't run".

If after using the guidance techniques, the child has continued inappropriate behavior, he/she will be re-directed to another area. As the year progresses and the child is redirected to another area, he/she begins to realize the behavior is inappropriate. Eventually children will begin to recognize inappropriate behavior and redirect themselves with little or no prodding from the teacher.

If group behavior is an issue (for older toddlers and preschoolers); it is discussed using a logical sequence technique which is "If we take a long time to put toys away, we run out of time for other fun things like painting." This helps children to internalize responsibility and logical consequences.

If inappropriate behavior is repeated, the child may be accompanied by a teacher to a quiet thinking spot, which is a place to think about the inappropriate behavior and, with the teacher's help, figure out an appropriate behavior to replace it with.



Staff

The center follows EEC guidelines in regards to the staffing schedule. The ratios for staffing are as follows:

Infants: 1:3, 2:7

Toddlers: 1:4, 2:9

Preschool: 1:10, 2:20

The staff is CPR/First Aid trained. They take the EEC trainings on 51A reporter training, medication administration training, nutrition/choking, SIDS training, and the general orientation that is provided. Professional development opportunities are explored throughout the year, both at the center and at outside training opportunities.

EEC Contact Person:

Linda Warnock

125 Hancock Street

Quincy, MA 02169

617-979-8603

Meals

The Weymouth Board of Health has approved our center to REHEAT previously prepared foods in a microwave oven. We may not “cook” foods for lunch or breakfast. The only time we “cook” foods is as part of a nutrition or science lesson as dictated by our curriculum.

Beverages: Included in your tuition is milk with breakfast and lunch and water with morning and afternoon snack.

Breakfast: A simple breakfast may be brought to school to eat immediately. Please bring in a healthy choice such as cereal, fruit, or toast, and set up your child with his/her breakfast before you leave the center.

Lunch Suggestions: We do not warm up leftovers for the toddlers and preschoolers. Time does not allow us to individually warm up each child’s lunch. We can warm up infant’s food. Please use a thermos for soup, pasta, chicken nuggets, veggies or anything that needs to stay warm. Sandwiches are a great lunch. Try using cookie cutters to keep things interesting, especially when youngsters get in a rut of eating the same kind of sandwiches. Yogurt is a popular choice for lunch. Use a cold pack in the

lunchbox. Fruit is a great addition to a lunch. **Please do not send in candy, gum, fruit snacks, chips, or cookies. Popcorn, nuts, celery, grapes, raisins, pretzels, or hard uncooked veggies are considered choking hazards.** We follow the wellness policy in Weymouth, encouraging healthy eating habits! Each child needs a lunchbox with his/her name clearly marked on it.

Food Allergies: **Please make the staff aware of any food allergies your child might have.** All precautions will be made to ensure that your child is safe. WE ARE A PEANUT and NUT FREE center. Please do not send in anything containing nuts or peanuts.

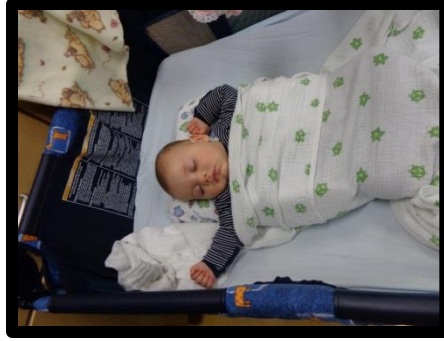
Snacks: Morning and afternoon snacks and a beverage are provided daily. The staff chooses from a variety of healthy snacks.

Birthdays: The wellness policy does not allow food to be brought in for a birthday celebration. We will sing Happy Birthday and celebrate with your child to make his/her day a bit more special!



Items From Home

Children love to “show” items that are special to them, but often do not like to “share” this item with others. Please encourage your child to leave special toys in the car to be used before and after school. Things can get lost and we do not want to be responsible for that. Occasionally there might be something really special that could be used to share at a special time, but make arrangements for that in advance. We love to see family photos, as that is a great way to share. Consider bringing in a blanket for rest time to leave in the cubby, and if a child has a special rest time stuffed animal or doll, please leave that in the cubby for use at rest time, as well.



Clothing (Label Everything)

Daily:

Please send your child to the center in clothing that is comfortable for playing. A goal of our center is for children to learn through exploration. We paint, glue, color, play outside and crawl around. Although cover-ups are provided for all “messy” activities, little ones get paint, glue and markers on more things than we can imagine. PLEASE SEND YOUR CHILD IN CLOTHING THAT WILL NOT BE “RUINED” WITH AN ADDITIONAL COLOR OR TWO!!

Extra Clothing:

Please have extra changes of clothing in the cubbies for when we need to change the children. Include underwear and socks! Babies need several outfits in their bins! Label clothing that comes into school, especially coats and hats. Check for seasonal changes and size changes throughout the year.

Foot Wear:

Sneakers or rubber soled shoes are the best for school! If you cannot get your child out of the house without his/her party shoes or cowboy boots; just make sure you have sneakers with you and we will encourage them to change before playing. Sandals, jellies, crocs, and party shoes do not work well on the playground.

Winter Clothes:

We play outside in the winter months, so please plan accordingly. Hats, mittens, and boots are needed on snowy days. We hope to get outside as long as the temperature is above 32.

All children are encouraged to play outside or go for a walk. If a child is too sick to go outside, then he/she should not come to school.



Communication

Open communication between the staff and families is the cornerstone of your child's ability to experience a happy day! Parents are able to visit the center at any time, unannounced while their child is present. There are different avenues for communication to use. Verbal communication is often the most effective, but not always the most convenient. A quick e-mail (jane.kirsch@weymouthschools.org) can be sent during the day for a change of pick-up or a forgotten message. A phone call to check in on a child is encouraged. Someone might not be right at the phone, but if you leave a message, it will be heard during the day. The office number is 781-340-2500.

We will communicate upcoming events in a monthly newsletter to parents. Infants and toddlers will receive a sheet upon pickup which details their day and any supplies we need. Preschool parents can check the board for a summary of their child's daily activities.

To maintain privacy, please schedule a meeting to discuss any concerns. We ask that you please refrain from such discussions during drop-off and pick-up times. Teachers need to keep focused on the children in the center or on the playground.

Parents will be given a copy of their child's progress report and a copy will stay in the child's file. Progress reports will be done on infants and children with special needs every 3 months and toddlers and preschoolers will be evaluated every 6 months.

The high school direct line is 781-337-7500. The high school principal may be contacted at ext. 25111; the CTE Director may be reached at ext. 25203.



Fire Drills and Emergency Procedures

When there is a fire drill, the staff and children will exit the building, following the protocol set up in each room. The group will meet in the parking lot and await further instructions from the security staff at the high school. The staff will stay with the children until it is safe to re-enter the building. Members of the Weymouth High School community offer help to the child care staff on these occasions. An emergency bag filled with snacks, water, formula, diapers, and blankets will accompany the group outside. An emergency spreadsheet with all contact numbers for families will be in the bag. The infants will be placed in evacuation cribs designed for this purpose and get outside as quickly as possible. Contact will be made with families once the situation is under control and a directive is given from the administration. If the group has to exit the premises entirely, we will proceed to St. Francis Xavier Church parish hall and contact families as soon as possible. The staff's main priority is to make sure that the children are safe outside.

If a lockdown or stay put order is announced inside the building, the staff will direct the children to the appropriate place in the room to wait until the situation is under control and the lockdown has been lifted. There are provisions in the rooms in case the lockdown lasts for an extended period of time.



First Aid Permission

A consent form is included in the application which designates permission to administer first aid in the case of an emergency.

The school nurse is available from 7:20am-2:25pm.

Weymouth Public School Medication Policy

According to Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) chapter 112, Section 80b, a licensed nurse must have a medication order from a physician, dentist, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant in order to administer any medication, whether it is a prescription drug or an over the counter medication, which documents the name of the medication, the dosage, the time and method for administration. Medications will be kept in a secure location in the center and will be administered to the child by a staff member. Proper documentation of this will be kept in the child's file. Medications will be returned to a parent when they are outdated or discontinued. The staff will not administer the first dose of medication, except under extraordinary circumstances and with the parent's permission. There are forms for parents to fill out before the medicine is given. A Weymouth Public Schools Health Policy will be included in the application. If a child needs an Epi-pen, proper documentation from the doctor must be kept on file. Arrangements can be made with the school nurse if your child needs the use of an inhaler.

Illnesses, Diseases

Children will be excluded from the center due to serious illnesses, contagious diseases, and reportable diseases, as set forth by the Division of Communicable Disease Control and the Department of Public Health. Parents will be informed of any illnesses by the director of the program or the school nurse in the building. If a child needs to be excluded from school, a parent will be notified and the staff will make accommodations to care for the child until a parent arrives to take him/her home. It is expected that a parent will arrive in a timely manner so as not to expose other children and staff members to the illness. Parents will read and sign the Health Care Policy that is issued by the Weymouth Public Schools Health Services Department.

Individual Health Care Plan

Parents must provide the program with an Individual Health Care Plan for their child who has a chronic medical condition that was diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner. An IHCP ensures that a child with a chronic medical condition receives health care services he or she may need while attending the program.

Snow Day Closings

The center will be closed if the Weymouth Public Schools are closed. If a delayed opening occurs, please follow your regular drop-off time, adding two hours to the start time.

Departure and Pick up Policy

Each parent needs to complete a pick up permission form in the application. No child will be released to an adult who is not listed on the form, unless written permission is given to a staff member on the day of the pick-up. The adult picking up the child will be asked for a photo ID to verify their identity.



Child Care Acceptance Policy

The following criteria are used for accepting a child into the Early Childhood Education Center:

- *Children of teen parents enrolled in the high school
- *Children of Weymouth Public School staff

In the event that there are not enough slots for all interested WPS staff, a dated waiting list will be developed. Families will be offered slots based on the order defined on the dated waiting list.

Termination Policy

Children will be terminated from the Early Childhood Education Center for either of the following reasons:

- *Failure by parents to pay tuition in a timely manner. Written warnings will be issued to a parent after non-payment of one month. After two months of non-payment the child will be terminated.

- *A child will be terminated if the staff determines a child to be a threat to the safety of the other children in the center. The staff will work with the family to address behavioral issues before the termination process begins.

Suspension and Termination Policy for challenging Behavior

The staff will work hard to avoid the suspension and/or termination of any child from the program. Staff will meet with parents to discuss options other than suspension and/or termination. When appropriate, staff will offer referrals to parents for evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services. When appropriate, staff will provide options for supportive service to the program, including consultation and educator training. Staff will develop a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program when appropriate.

In some circumstances, suspension and/or termination may be warranted. Written documentation will be provided with the specific reasons for the proposed suspension and/or termination of the child and the circumstances under which the child may return, if any.

If your child has a disability, regulations regarding students with disabilities can be found at 606CMR 7.04(13). We would provide reasonable accommodations to the student in our program and work with EI and the home district around those accommodations in our setting. The language says we “must make reasonable accommodations to welcome or continue to serve any child with a disability.” If we are unable to “continue to serve” the student, we would work with EI or the home district to provide appropriate services to the student beyond what we are capable of doing. A liaison assigned to our students with disabilities will coordinate between home, school, EI, and the home district.

Discrimination Disclosure

The Early Childhood Education Center will not discriminate on providing services to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, disability or marital status.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Educators are mandated reporters and must by law report suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and EEC. Parents will be notified of allegations of abuse and neglect involving their child while in the care of the program.

Infants (Birth to 15 Months)

Infant development is amazing! At the end of 12 months, your baby can be three times his birth weight and twice his birth length. Babies follow a similar path of development, yet each is unique. Here is what you can expect to see during the first 15 months of life:

Babies first gain control over their heads and then their bodies in the early months of life.

Rolling over, sitting, crawling, walking, and moving with a purpose can happen over the course of the first 12-15 months.

Babies are like sponges, soaking up all of the talk around them. Thus, talking, singing, reading, and interacting with your baby becomes critical to the development of language. Television and videos are not a substitute for face-to-face interaction with a loving caregiver.

Babies coo and babble. But the main way they communicate is by crying. As every parent quickly learns, their baby's cries can change when they are hungry, tired, wet, frightened, or overwhelmed. Responding to infants' crying and holding them often is important and develops a sense of trust.

Babies have their own temperaments and rates of growth, as well as their own routine of feeding and sleeping. Each relationship between family and baby is special and unique!

Activities to Help you Learn and Grow Together

Play with simple toys: Your baby can drop, roll, and chew soft and colorful toys, such as stacking cubes, rattles, and soft blocks.

Use toys at bath time: Use toys that float or sink. Splash and play with these water toys and always keep one hand on your baby during bath time.

Sing through routines: Repeat lullabies, finger plays and games like pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo to help build language skills. Your baby loves the sound of your voice!

Babies love to look at themselves in the mirror: Provide a child-safe mirror for the car, stroller or play space. Point and say “here is your nose, there is your mouth, I see your eyes...”

Read to your baby: Look at chunky board books with colorful pictures or photographs. Let the baby hold the book and turn the pages. This builds a solid foundation for literacy and school readiness.

Parenting Tips

Have a daily routine: Provide a predictable daily routine for your baby. This gives your baby a sense of security and safety.

Respond to your baby’s cries: Immediately tuning in to your baby’s needs develops attachment and trust. You cannot spoil your baby by responding right away.

Make sleep-time safe: Avoid toys, blankets, and pillows in your baby’s sleeping area and always put your baby to sleep on his/her back.



Toddlers (15-36 Months)

Toddlers are busy and eager explorers with small bodies and big feelings! Toddlers are trying to do things for themselves but still need to be reassured by the adults in their lives. They are experiencing the world and trying to make sense of it all at the same time. Here is what you can expect to see in the toddler years:

Vocabulary takes off. Toddlers are learning many new words and putting them together.

Toddlers start using words to interact with parents and other people in their lives. This stage is marked by the frequent use of favorite toddler words: “No”, “Mine”, and “I do it!”

On the move! Crawling, dancing, rolling, and running all contribute to a toddler’s growth.

Although they often get frustrated, this is just a temporary stage. As toddlers develop more language, and understanding of how things work and what to expect, their frustrations melt away rather than melt down.

Toddlers are straightforward, concrete thinkers who truly believe a kiss and hug can make things all better!

Activities to Help you Learn and Grow Together

Turn a walk into learning time: Talk about what you see, like the colors of cars or count the number of dogs. Let your child share her ideas with you and expand on what she says.

Sing your way through routines: Take a familiar or favorite tune, such as “Row, row, row your boat,” and use words to match your activities, such as “Brush, brush, brush your teeth.”

Visit your local public library: Check out new books to bring home and look at together. Children’s libraries can help you find books to read with your child and may host special story times for toddlers.

Parenting Tips

Be patient with your little explorer. Toddlers need to repeat activities many times until they can predict what will happen in a given situation.

Acknowledge feelings: Give your child words for what he is feeling. "I know you are sad." He has to know you understand him before he can listen to you.

Redirect: Head off a tantrum by offering another activity when you see your child is becoming frustrated. As you play with your child, you will learn to tune into the signs that she needs a change of scenery.



Preschool Years (3 and 4 Years)

Preschoolers are active and more confident of how their bodies move. Here is what you can expect at this stage:

They like to use their fingers to build with blocks, use crayons, and do puzzles.

You will see great growth in your child's language, imagination, and ability to play with other children.

They are curious about the world and want to understand how everything works. They often ask questions and share their own stories and experiences.

This stage often marks the development of imaginary play and role playing, when children create rich and involved fantasies.

Busy preschoolers have a growing interest in playing cooperatively with other children. All the time you spent encouraging your toddler to take turns now pays off!

Preschoolers learn concepts of reading, math, writing, and science as part of their play and everyday routines!

Activities to Help you Learn and Grow Together

Cook safely: Make a shopping list and plan to cook together. Ask your child to look at the supermarket flyer with you and tell you what needs to go on the shopping list. Always closely supervise cooking activities; turn pot handles away from your child and keep sharp or breakable objects out of reach.

Sort, count, and label: Build numbers into everyday routines. Count your way up stairs or say out loud the number of bananas you are picking at the supermarket. Using math builds problem-solving skills and confidence.

Look at your child's baby pictures together: Marvel at how your child has grown and changed! Let your child tell you about all the things she can do now that she could not do as a baby. Remember that even "big kids" need a cuddle.

Have an indoor "family picnic": Plan an easy-to-prepare menu and select a theme. For a seasonal "Winter Wonderland," you can use sheets for snow, pillows for a snowman, and bubbles for falling snow.

Parenting Tips

Let your child see you writing and reading: You are the best role model your child has for supporting literacy.

Do chores together: Develop cooperation and responsibility early by letting your child help out.

Be amazed: Let your child know how impressed you are with his/her accomplishments and abilities.

