



Warren W. Cherry Preschool  
1418 Lake Street  
Evanston, IL 60201  
847.492.1213  
[www.cherrypreschool.org](http://www.cherrypreschool.org)

## 2021-22 CHERRY PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

### ***Please Read Me!***

This handbook contains all of the basic information about Cherry Preschool's program, policies, & procedures. It also contains an extensive section about health. On our *General Release Form*, you will be asked to sign a statement that you understand and agree to the policies set forth in this handbook.

**Please save your handbook for future reference!**

#### **IMPORTANT CHERRY PRESCHOOL DATA**

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Evanston, Illinois 60201

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**WEBSITE:** [www.cherrypreschool.org](http://www.cherrypreschool.org)

**FEDERAL TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBER:** 36-3809526

#### **OUR NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Warren W. Cherry Preschool admits students of any race, color, gender identity and expression, national or ethnic origin to all 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 and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational programs, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic or other school administered programs.

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*Greetings from Katie Culhane  
2021-22 Cherry Board President*

*Dear Cherry families,*

*On behalf of your fellow parents that serve on Cherry's Board of Directors, welcome to the 2021-2022 school year at Cherry Preschool! We are so excited to have new families and our returning families at Cherry this year. We made it through last year, and I am looking forward to the school year in so many ways. One of my favorite things about Cherry is that the teachers meet each child where that child is as an individual. When my two older children attended Cherry, it was great to see how well the teachers interacted with them and understood them. My youngest child will have his first full year beginning this fall, and I'm excited that he -- and all Cherry students -- will have these same opportunities to play and grow at their own pace.*

*While we are still waiting for vaccinations for our young children, our school community is doing everything we can to keep our children and each other safe. Last year our teachers, administration, and staff executed new protocols and maximized safety for all, resulting in no single incidents of COVID. This is a continuing priority for our school, and we will monitor it throughout the year.*

*I look forward to working together with all of you to help our community thrive. There is no other place I want my child to be this coming school year than in the nurturing, creative, and fun environment of Cherry Preschool. I look forward to having a great year with all of you. Thank you for choosing Cherry!*

*All the best,  
Katie Culhane*

## ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

### **HISTORY**

**Warren W. Cherry Preschool** is located in a red brick building at 1418 Lake Street in central Evanston, one half block east of Penny Park. Established by parents and early childhood educators seeking to create an institution to meet the needs of the community's young children, Cherry Preschool opened its doors under the name *Evanston Developmental Preschool* in September of 1992 and was renamed *Warren W. Cherry Preschool* in September of 1993. The school is a not-for-profit, nonsectarian, parent governed program which provides developmentally appropriate early childhood education for children from Evanston and surrounding communities.

Warren W. Cherry Preschool is dedicated to the memory of Warren Cherry, an outstanding Evanston educator and friend of young children. Warren Cherry served as principal of Lincoln School in Evanston from 1979 until his death in July of 1990. Prior to that, he served as principal of Central School, assistant principal of Skiles Middle School, and teacher at Timber Ridge School. He was a man who gave much back to the greater Evanston community, serving on the boards of numerous civic organizations. We are honored to dedicate the preschool to the memory of this outstanding educator and to the principles for which he stood.

Cherry Preschool adheres to NAEYC standards and codes of conduct. We work with community groups such as Evanston/Skokie District 65, SPPAC and other school district agencies working with children with special needs, Park School, Evanston Chamber of Commerce, Childcare Network of Evanston, the Evanston Early Childhood Directors' Council and the Family Support Program of the Infant Welfare Society of Evanston. The preschool is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Cherry Preschool welcomes all applicants and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender identity and expression or national and ethnic origin.

Financial assistance, scholarships, and short-term help for families in financial difficulties are available to the extent provided by the school's budget and fundraising ability.

### **GOALS AND PURPOSES (MISSION)**

#### **MISSION**

Cherry Preschool provides an inclusive developmental early childhood program in a safe, consistent, nurturing environment. We encourage the social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth of every child. We embrace our diverse school community and value parental input and involvement.

#### **VISION**

Children of all abilities and backgrounds are supported, celebrated, nurtured, and prepared to become good citizens in an evolving global society. Every family is engaged as partners in their child's preschool experience.

#### **VALUES**

By providing an innovative curriculum, highly qualified staff, opportunities for parental input and involvement, a sense of school community, and an enriching environment for young children, Cherry Preschool strives to be a model of excellence in early childhood education. We aim to:

- Develop each child's positive self image
- Respect each child as a unique individual
- Promote independent and creative thinking
- Teach pro-social behavior
- Provide developmental preschool education in a stimulating play environment
- Include all children, regardless of disability or developmental difference
- Celebrate diversity by welcoming families of all economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds
- Implement a curriculum through which children learn to value and accept differences

- Include parents as partners in the education of their children

## **STAFF**

We are fortunate to have an extremely qualified, highly educated and talented staff. Our teachers and aides typically have many years of experience in early childhood education and many have advanced degrees. We choose our staff carefully and feel it is a cohesive and caring group of educators that reflects the values of Cherry Preschool. We consider the experience, talent, and dedication of our staff to be our greatest asset.

## **EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION & PHILOSOPHY**

### **UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY AT CHERRY PRESCHOOL**

Cultivating, celebrating, and supporting diversity at Cherry Preschool has always been a part of our mission. We believe that a diverse school community in which children learn to value and respect themselves and others and treat each other with kindness and inclusiveness enriches all of our lives. We strive to teach understanding and acceptance so young children learn to celebrate and appreciate differences. We want the children to feel proud of themselves and their heritage, to challenge bias or unfairness when they encounter it, and to feel at home in the diverse world in which we live. Because preschoolers are just beginning to distinguish themselves as individuals as well as starting to notice differences between themselves and others, being part of a preschool classroom community with children who have different backgrounds and abilities creates the climate for children to realize that they all have qualities that make them unique and worthy of inclusion in a caring community.

Cherry Preschool welcomes and celebrates all kinds of diversity. Our children and families represent a wide variety of cultures, races, family structures, socio-economic statuses, and abilities. An important aspect of diversity in a community is the willingness of the community's members to practice inclusiveness and encourage acknowledgement, respect, and appreciation of people who are different from them. Cherry Preschool was founded on this principle, and we continue our commitment to being a caring community for children and their families and to teaching children to value and celebrate the diversity of our community and the world in which we live.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Over the years, we have worked with community agencies such as Family Focus, Teen Baby Nursery, Early Head Start, The Infant Welfare Society of Evanston, and Childcare Network of Evanston. We have personally introduced ourselves to leaders and members of local religious and cultural groups, as well as to elementary school staff, explaining our mission and informing them about our scholarship program. In 2003, we started a Spanish-Speaking Parent/Child Class (Clase) for families whose primary language is Spanish. More recently, we have worked with the Family Support Program to enroll children transitioning out of their programs. Because of outreach efforts, we have attracted some children whose families might not otherwise have found us. Our dream would be to have Cherry reflect the same kind of diversity that exists in greater Evanston, and we invite our families to help us by referring families who would enrich our preschool by making our community even more diverse.

### **SCHOLARSHIPS & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Because of consistently strong fundraising efforts by our parents and generous donations from Cherry families, alumni, and friends, the preschool is able to offer assistance to current and prospective families who need help paying for tuition. Since part of our mission is to be as inclusive and diverse as possible, enabling families of differing financial circumstances to attend Cherry is one way we can do this.

Acceptance to Cherry is not based on ability to pay (unless application is made after all budgeted scholarship funds are depleted). During the 2020-21 school year Cherry committed over \$50,000 to support the enrollment of 17 children. Our scholarship commitment for 2021-22 will be similar with support of 16 children. Any family accepted to our school that needs help in paying tuition can request a scholarship, the amount to be determined based on our Financial Aid Guidelines that are available in the preschool office. Since Cherry opened its doors in 1992, we've been fortunate in that we have been able to help many families in financial need. We strive never to turn a family away because of financial need.

An important part of Cherry Preschool's community outreach effort is to make the preschool accessible to all families regardless of their ability to pay. Cherry Preschool does everything in its power to support its families and keep in school all children who are part of the preschool community. Guidelines and applications for **financial assistance** are available in the preschool office and on our website. All required forms must be turned in with the application **by the registration deadline**. Families are notified of their awards at the time of placement.

For applications turned in after the deadline, awards are made on a first come, first served basis within the limitations of the school's budget and fundraising ability. Decisions are made by the Executive Director and Financial Manager and all requests for assistance are kept confidential.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

At Cherry Preschool, we strive to create a diverse school community in which children learn to value and respect themselves and others. We try to accomplish this through curriculum, policies, strategies and inclusive practices. Sometime between the ages of 2-5, children become aware of differences in gender, race, ethnicity, age, family structure, and ability. They also begin to acquire biases from their families and society in general in relation to these differences. Our task as early childhood educators is to teach understanding and acceptance so young children learn to celebrate and appreciate differences. At the preschool level, we do this by creating an environment that reflects the families in a classroom as well as the greater community. We use books, pictures, dolls, puzzles, housekeeping items, music, art materials, and toys to expose children to diversity of race, culture, ability, gender, family structure, age, religion, and socio-economic status. We invite families to share their customs, holidays, and celebrations with us. Our approach to holidays is to connect them to the children's daily lives, to learn about one another from one another, and to approach them in a developmentally appropriate way. Thus, while we want to validate their importance in the lives of the children, we do not "teach" about them or base our curriculum on them.

Finally, an important goal at Cherry Preschool is to promote pro-social behavior in which every member of our school community is treated with kindness and respect.

## WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF DIVERSE LEARNERS

Cherry Preschool is committed to providing an inclusive preschool environment where children of all abilities can develop the skills needed to succeed in school. Our Inclusion Program is designed to support children with developmental differences and disabilities as they learn and grow alongside their classmates. Learning in an inclusive environment enriches the lives of all children because it models acceptance, respect, and appreciation for individual differences.

- Approximately 10% of our classroom population each year benefits from the support of our Inclusion Program.
- Through the generosity of our community and various foundation grants, Cherry Preschool's Inclusion Program is provided at no additional cost to families.

## CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY STARTS HERE

Our all-school rule is ***You Can't Say You Can't Play***. This means excluding a child from play is not allowed in our classrooms. Vivian Gussin Paley, a retired early childhood educator at the University of Chicago Lab School as well as a lecturer and the author of many books on working with preschool and kindergarten age children, articulates this philosophy in her book [You Can't Say You Can't Play](#).

Simply stated, the policy is as follows: The classroom is not a private place. Just as there are rules governing the sharing of toys, there is a rule governing the right of all children to participate in free play. Many good things follow from applying this rule to our classroom communities: new friendships are forged as children get to know other children, children feel safe (even the ones who tend to do most of the excluding), and teachers can handle issues of exclusion in a matter-of-fact manner (i.e. "*You forgot the rule*") rather than approaching each incident as

a moral puzzle to be solved. At Cherry, we believe this rule is a fundamental part of diversity and inclusion. All children should feel safe and accepted in our preschool community.

Please help us to extend the spirit of inclusion we work so hard to create in our classrooms to our hallways and hearts. **One way to do this is to approach play arrangements for the children with sensitivity to the feelings of others.** It is always nice for our preschoolers to form friendships and see each other outside of school. It is important, however, to keep these budding friendships in perspective and use good judgment and sensitivity in making arrangements for your child.

We ask that you consider the following guidelines regarding your child's friendships:

- Make arrangements privately over the phone or by email so children do not hear that they are not invited or that a child declines to play. **Do not make arrangements in the hallways.**
- **Do not distribute invitations to parties, thank you notes for party gifts or greeting cards at school.** Teachers will not permit these to be placed in children's cubbies. If you do not have a child's address, the office will be happy to supply it.
- At the preschool age, it is not appropriate to give children too many choices and too much power over play dates and social arrangements. It is usually better for adults to work out the plan and tell the children what will be happening.
- Keep these arrangements at a reasonable level. Children do not have to have plans every day. Sometimes, they indicate they want to play more after school when what they really want/need is quiet and rest.
- Be sensitive to the feelings of other children and their parents/guardians. Consider making plans to meet someone you do not know well. And please remember that being left out really hurts.

Vivian Paley sums it up best when she states,

*We must be told, when we are young, what rules to live by. The grownups must tell the children early in life so that myth and morality proclaim the same message while the children are listening...[teachers should] prepare our children to live and work comfortably with the stranger that sojourneth among them. And should it happen that one day our children themselves are strangers, let them know that a full share of the sun is rightfully theirs.*

## CREATING A CIVIL PRESCHOOL COMMUNITY

At Cherry Preschool, we view each class as a community. We try to teach young children to consider the needs and feelings of others so they can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the group. The idea of **fairness** is an important concept for creating a safe and accepting classroom community. When children are unkind or make one another feel uncomfortable, either physically or verbally, conventional wisdom is to “teach” the aggressors to stop the behavior and the victims to walk away or stand up for themselves. In the real world of preschool life, however, aggressors rarely stop. Instead, they find ways to continue their behavior “under the radar” of teachers’ watchful eyes. The whispered remark in passing can sting as much or more than an overt shove! And the victims rarely find the words or strength to stand up for themselves and usually have no choice but to walk away. For these reasons, it is very important to empower all of the children to tell one another to “**be fair.**” The goal is to teach all children this basic form of social justice.

As early childhood educators, we also understand that violent behavior for this age group can take many forms. Of course, there is the obvious violence we are all familiar with in preschoolers: pushing, hitting, biting, snatching, kicking, gunplay, etc. Much of the violence we see, however, is verbal and just as devastating. As a staff, we define violence as **hurting or destroying any person, place, or thing.**

## “RESPECT” & “BE FAIR”

We subscribe to a common code of behavior for our school, using the word **RESPECT** as the key to what we want to teach children:

**R**  
**Each other**  
**S**  
**Places**  
**E**  
**C**  
**Things**

We try to model this concept in how we treat the children, families, and one another. Signs reflecting this concept are posted throughout the preschool and teachers explain the idea to the children.

Another aspect of creating a civil community is teaching conflict resolution. When children disagree or hurt one another, we remind them that at Cherry Preschool we respect each other. We teach them to use their words to resolve problems, we validate their feelings, and we help them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully.

As part of our effort to teach children to resolve conflicts peacefully, gunplay or violent play themes of any sort are unacceptable at preschool. The staff is not so naïve as to believe that an edict from teachers will stop the creation of guns from legos, sticks, carrots, and fingers! We look for ways, however, to channel the need of preschoolers for power in other directions (i.e.: large block constructions, woodworking, and stories about magic). We recommend that parents try to curb media influences over the children by eliminating violent television, videos, movies, computer games, and action figures.

Violence and bullying in our society are such important issues that we ask parents to work with us to find more peaceful and civil ways to resolve problems and live together with respect for all the people, places, and things that make up our world.

### THE CHERRY PRESCHOOL BOARD

The Cherry Preschool Board was established in January of 1992 when a group of parents found themselves in need of a quality preschool embodying a warm, nurturing, developmental, nonsectarian, multicultural approach to early childhood education. Cherry Preschool grew from these parents' dream.

A not-for-profit corporation owns the preschool as well as the building in which it is housed at 1418 Lake Street, Evanston. A board, comprised of parents, staff and community members, is responsible for the overall operation and policies of the preschool. Responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the school, including staffing, rests with the Executive Director.

**Parents are welcome and encouraged to contact board members with ideas and concerns, and to attend board meetings.** The board meets on a monthly basis (*usually the third Monday of each month*); dates and times of board meetings are listed in the school's monthly calendars. In addition, **the names and phone numbers of board members are listed in the back of this handbook and in the *Cherry Preschool Directory*.** To be on the agenda to speak at a board meeting, please contact the board president in advance of the meeting.

### THE CHERRY PRESCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

The Cherry Preschool Parent Council supports the school through active volunteerism. This is done through specific Council member job descriptions. The Parent Council meets 3 times per year with special meetings called as needed. The June and May meetings are held on the 3rd Monday.

# CHERRY'S PROGRAM

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### ALL CLASSES INCLUDE:

block play...children's literature...circle (group) time...creative movement...dramatic play...experiential art... fine motor activities...free play...gross motor activities...imaginative play...individualized activities...indoor climbing equipment...large group activities... manipulative toys...music & singing...outdoor play...painting & playdoh...socialization skills...special events

### A TYPICAL CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

9:25-9:40	Greeting/Circle Time
9:40-10:45	Free play/art & learning activities
10:45-10:55	Clean-up/bathroom
10:55-11:10	Snack
11:10-11:25	Circle Time
11:25-11:55	Outdoor Play

The order and length of time allotted to these activities will vary depending on the age and interest of the children.

## ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT

Applications for priority registration are made in January of the current school year for the following school year. Priority registration privileges are accorded to all children currently enrolled in Cherry Preschool (including those in Parent/Child classes) and their siblings. Open registration applications are made in mid-February of the current school year for the following school year. If there are more applicants than spaces available for a class, names are drawn at random for the openings which are available. Applicants whom we are unable to place are put on a waiting list ordered by a random draw of names. Applications received after classes are full are placed on a waiting list ordered by the date on which they are received. Cherry Preschool welcomes all children in our community. We do not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, color, gender identity and expression or national and ethnic origin. We welcome, encourage, and celebrate diversity of race, culture, religion, ability, and family structure. Applications are considered on a need-blind basis until financial assistance funds are depleted.

Responsibility for making specific classroom assignments rests with the administrative staff in consultation with the teaching staff. Cherry Preschool's policy regarding these decisions is as follows.

Being a priority family guarantees an appropriate placement in Cherry Preschool for all children in the family. It does not guarantee the family will receive its first choice of class.

Criteria for placement in classes include age requirements, balancing classes by gender and race, and creating the best possible classroom dynamics. Parents must indicate **at least (2) two choices** on the registration form, as it is not always possible to give every family its first choice. Final decisions about placement are made by the administrative and teaching staffs, based on the criteria outlined above.

We recognize that parents sometimes have specific requests regarding classrooms, teachers, and peer groups. While we wish we could honor these requests, it is not always possible. In fact, requests often contradict one another (i.e.: two children want to be together, but one wants one classroom and the other wants a different one.) While we can usually accommodate a choice of one special friend **or** a choice of a particular classroom **or** a choice of a teacher, we cannot fulfill all of these things combined. It is, therefore, our policy to consider requests submitted on the appropriate form at the time of registration with the understanding that **the welfare of the preschool as a whole and the importance of creating the best overall groupings of children must take precedence over the requests of any individual family.**

## **REQUIRED FORMS**

Required annually prior to starting school:

- Child and Family History or Update
- Medical Form
- Release Form (except for Parent/Child Class & Class)
- Guidance & Discipline Acknowledgement
- Late Pick Up Policy Acknowledgement

Required upon initial enrollment:

- Certified copy of child's birth certificate

## **HOURS OF OPERATION**

Cherry Preschool, open Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., offers morning or afternoon classes on a varying schedule, depending on the age of the child.

## **CLASS OFFERINGS**

**5 Morning Transitional Kindergarten Class meets Monday-Friday 9:15AM-2:15PM for children who are 5 by December 1.**

**5 Morning Pre-K Class meets Monday - Friday from 9:15AM-12:00PM for children who are 4 by September 1.**

**4 Morning STEM Class meets Monday - Thursday morning from 9:15AM-12:00PM for children who are 3 or 4 by September 1.**

**4 Morning Dual Language English-Spanish Class meets Monday-Thursday from 9:15AM-12:00PM for children who are 3 or 4 by September 1.**

**3 Morning Threes Class meets Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 9:25-11:55AM for children who are 3 by September 1.**

**2 Morning Bridge to 3's Class meets Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:25-11:55 for children who are 2 by September 1 or 3 by December 31.**

**3 Morning Bridge to 3's Class meets Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9:25-11:55AM for children who are 2 by September 1.**

**4 Afternoon STEM Class meets Monday - Thursday afternoon from 12:30PM—3:15PM for children who are 3 or 4 by September 1.**

**Lunch Program** is available every day from 12:00PM-2:00PM for children in 5 AM Pre-K, 4 AM STEM, 4 AM Dual Language and 3 Morning 3's.

**PM After-School Care** is available Monday-Thursday from 3:15-4:45 for children enrolled in the afternoon STEM class (availability is dependent upon a minimum enrollment of 2 children per day).

**Summer Camp** is offered for 6 weeks, mid-June through July 9:00-12:00. Children need to be 3 years old, toilet trained, and have had prior preschool experience to attend.

**Summer Camp Enrichment** is offered for 6 weeks, mid-June through July, 12:00-1:00.

## **SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR**

Cherry Preschool follows a school year calendar similar to that of Evanston/Skokie District 65. Parents receive a copy of this calendar. School begins late August to early September with a Parent Orientation Night, followed by pre-visits & half-sessions. The school year concludes one week earlier than Evanston public schools (late May or early June). Excluding Winter & Spring Vacations, there are 36 attendance weeks per school year. There is also a six-week summer camp program (mid-June through July).

The following holidays (if they fall on a school day) are non-attendance days: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Thanksgiving, Winter Vacation (2 weeks), M.L. King's Birthday, Presidents' Day, Good Friday, Spring Vacation (1 week), and Memorial Day.

Cherry Preschool does not observe the same institute and in-service days as District 65. We will be closed one day

in November and one day in March for Parent/Teacher conferences. We will also be closed for two Staff In-Service days. Specific dates will be included in the school year and monthly calendars.

## BEGINNINGS

### STARTING SCHOOL

Because your child is about to begin the school year at Cherry Preschool, we have an important mutual goal: working together to make sure your child gets off to the best possible start. Beginnings are difficult for everyone - children, parents, and teachers. That's why we put so much thought into the first few weeks of school. Your child is about to make an important transition from home to school, from parent/guardian/caregiver to teacher, from individualized play to group social experience. According to Nancy Balaban, for preschoolers Separation...is an adventure and a challenge. Eventually the ability to separate is a necessity if children are to develop as autonomous and self-reliant beings.

### SEPARATION IS A POWERFUL ISSUE

All people have strong feelings about separation and beginnings. Think about how you felt when you started kindergarten, went to overnight camp, left home for college or career, or began a new job. Separation arouses powerful emotions - *fear, anger, abandonment, anxiety, sadness*. Young children have fewer resources with which to manage these feelings and the accompanying loss of their sense of security. Children may express their feelings through protesting (*crying, whining, tantruming, fussing, etc.*) or acting sad or angry (*detachment, withdrawal, rejection of playmates, teacher, or returning parent*). All of these behaviors are normal and part of the learning and growth process. Each child has his/her individual pace and style of moving through this cycle of feelings. It is our job to validate these emotions, to build trust, and to help each child work toward the ultimate goal of adjustment.

### PARENTS HAVE FEELINGS TOO!

We recognize that starting school is a major step for parents as well as children. Parents experience a wide range of emotions: excitement (*My child is growing up*), ambivalence (*I'm not sure I'm ready for my child to leave me*), worry (*How well will my child function without me there?*), fear (*What if my child doesn't do well?*), sadness (*I'm not ready to let go*). All of this is normal. We all bring our own baggage about separation and starting school along for this ride!

Often, no matter how carefully parents and teachers plan, some *start-up stress* is inevitable. If your child protests or is sad or angry, maintain your control over the situation (**do not let your child call the shots!**) and be as calm and matter of fact as possible. Your child's teachers and the office staff have had lots of experience with separation issues and can give you suggestions and support as you ease your child into the school routine.

### GETTING STARTED...

All families receive a September calendar prior to the start of school that outlines the plan for starting school. This plan includes:

- **Parent Orientation Night** (an important kick-off meeting at which parents learn about the school & their child's class).
- **Pre-visits** (a brief, individualized meeting at school between parent, child, & teacher),
- **Half-sessions** (a shortened class with half the children attending at a time, planned for all classes except Pre-K and Transitional Kindergarten).
- Bringing **family pictures** to school & sending home special communications from school.

We realize that this school year might present unique separation issues since some children have been sheltered in place at home for such a prolonged period of time. The teachers will develop individualized separation plans for children who need them. DCFS continues to limit the number of nonessential adults entering the building, however, these limitations will allow us to have the parents in our Bridge to 3's classes enter the building to transition their children to their classrooms. All adults entering the building will need to wear face masks.

## WHAT IF ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS PERSIST?

If a child cannot ease into the group after a reasonable amount of time, there will be a conference to consider what to do. For the children in the four- and five-day classes, a reasonable time is one week to ten days. For children in the two- and three-day classes, most will adjust by early October. If the teachers' individualized plan for helping your child has not worked, the Executive Director or Child Development and Inclusion Director will meet with the family. **Happily, in almost all cases, with parental patience, support, and understanding, children do make an excellent adjustment to preschool.**

## 15 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BEGINNING

1. Follow school policy and prepare your child for what to expect (where you will be when s/he is in class, who will pick him/her up, etc.). Be brief and matter-of-fact in your explanations. Don't prepare your child too far in advance—a few days is enough!
2. Keep the time before school begins as calm as possible:
  - Avoid conflicts
  - Get started early enough to avoid rushing
  - Follow predictable routines
  - Make sure your child eats and uses the bathroom
  - Avoid violent television programs, movies, or videos
  - Remember, we don't care what your child wears to school; this is never worth a battle!
3. **Arrive and pick up on time.** Children who are habitually late have a much harder time entering the classroom and making friends. In addition, once the classroom session is in full swing, teachers are not available to greet children. Late drop offs and pick-ups will be even more difficult this year due to health checks and three entry doors. They are also very upsetting to children and undermine trust.
4. It is important to Inform the teachers about anything that may affect your child's day (poor night's sleep, recent illness, trouble with carpool, etc.). This will be best done via email this year.
5. Say good-bye in a brief, matter of fact, loving way...
6. Respect your child's individual pace, style, and needs. Don't compare your child's pattern of adjustment with that of his/her classmates.
7. Give your child plenty of empathy, but not the power to make major decisions about coming to school.
8. **Be patient.** Don't let your own ambivalence spill over to your child.
9. **Be patient.** Expect delayed reactions and regressions, especially following changes, illnesses, and vacations.
10. **Communicate.** Don't wait for formal conference times if there is a problem. Calling/emailing the teacher or arranging a special time to talk is much better than waiting until the scheduled conference day.
11. **Be dependable and predictable.** Follow a routine for making the transition from home to school and be on time for picking up your child.
12. Keep in mind that there is a wide range of reactions to starting school based on your child's individual personality. The following are all expected behaviors (within reasonable limits, of course): crying, whining, clinging, withdrawing, thumb-sucking, bed wetting, acting out, regressing, etc. If you are concerned that your child's reaction is beyond normal limits, or if we have that concern, let's talk!
13. To reinforce the bridge between home and school and to help reassure your child, send a **family picture** that can be kept at preschool throughout the year.

## A FINAL THOUGHT

*Here at school entry lies a ripe opportunity for teaching. Self-confidence arises from separations that are well achieved. Children who are supported by their teachers and parents as they separate from home have the opportunity to move fearlessly into new realms of learning and growth.*

-- Nancy Balaban

## SCHOOL POLICIES

### DROP-OFF

**All children must be brought directly to the designated entry door.** Parents, guardians or caregivers, are to make sure every child in their care has been checked in by an administrator before leaving him/her at school.

### PICK-UP/SIGN OUT

For the protection of your child, all children are signed out at the end of the day by parents/guardians or by someone they have authorized in writing. The administrator at each entry door will have a copy of each child's Authorization *for Release* form. **No child will be sent home with anyone other than the parent/guardian unless his/her name is listed on the form.** Please take the time to consider all possible people who may have occasion to bring your child home (relatives, friends, carpool, neighbors, etc.) when completing the Release Form. If someone occurs to you later in the school year, please come to the school office (or send a note or e-mail the school) and have that person's name added to your child's form. Also, please inform the school in writing if you wish to have someone deleted from your list

If your child is to go home with someone whose name is not on your list (i.e.: a friend's parent), we must have your **written permission**. Anyone picking up a child who has a special circumstance requiring help should contact the office to make appropriate arrangements.

All of these policies are in compliance with the State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

### LATE PICK UP POLICY

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services requires that all licensed schools have a written late pick up policy. Parents/guardians are required to read the policy and sign a document stating that they have done so.

Late pickups are a problem on many levels. First and foremost, it is very difficult for children. Children become anxious and worried when they aren't picked up with their peers. They are afraid they have been forgotten. Late pickups will be very troublesome this year since we will have three different entry doors. Administrators will only be at those doors at the stated pick-up times,

It is Cherry Preschool's responsibility to protect and look out for the wellbeing of all children until they are picked up when school has ended. If you are late for pick up, we will begin calling all phone numbers available for the child's parents/guardians five minutes after the class has been dismissed. If we cannot reach you within 10 minutes after dismissal, we will continue to call all emergency contacts listed on the general release form. If we are not able to get in touch with any of the emergency numbers within 1 hour after dismissal, we will contact the police to request assistance in finding emergency contacts. Therefore, it is very important that we have up-to-date emergency contact numbers on file.

The staff will not hold the child responsible for any late pick- ups. That discussion will only be with the parents or guardians, never with the child.

Fines for late pickups are donated to the Staff Appreciation Fund and are assessed as follows:

\$1/minute for the first 15 minutes

\$5/minute after that

For chronic late lunch or after care offenders: At the 4<sup>th</sup> offense, the child will be dropped from the program. Late pick up fines are donated to the Staff Appreciation Fund.

We appreciate your understanding about this important policy.

## **ENTRY DOOR TRAFFIC**

We anticipate the entry doors becoming very crowded at drop off and pick up time. To help keep the chaos and congestion to a minimum, and to keep our Cherry Preschool community safe, we ask that you leave promptly after drop off and pick up and do not socialize with other families while on school grounds.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION**

It is extremely important to **keep all of your contact information current**. There have been times when, trying to reach someone for a sick child, we have discovered that work and cell phone numbers have changed or that emergency contact numbers do not want to accept responsibility. Please remember to inform the office if there is a change in any information provided on the Release Form you turned in to us in September.

If you have a cell phone, please make sure it is turned on when your child is at preschool.

## **SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

On rare occasions, severe weather conditions (extreme cold, excessive amounts of snow, flooding) or unsafe building conditions (no power or water) necessitate the closing of the preschool. While we try to follow the decisions of Evanston/Skokie District 65, there may be times when we opt to close even if public schools are open and vice versa. Decisions about closings are made by the administrators in consultation with the Board President. Please bear in mind that the safety of our children, families, and staff are our primary concern in making these decisions. If possible, families will receive a call the night before a closing, but often these decisions cannot be made until the morning of the closing. Closings will be posted on the preschool website and families will also be notified via automated phone call and email as soon as possible. Because these are rare occurrences that are beyond the preschool's control, emergency closing days will not be made up by adding additional attendance days to the school calendar.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

We have not had any reason to be concerned about safety and security in terms of strangers coming into the school. Our main safety issues thus far have involved toddlers who have wandered away from their parents/guardians. We are aware, however, that we live in an unsafe world and need to be as careful as possible. **Please think of Cherry Preschool as part of your neighborhood and apply the same principles as the *Neighborhood Watch* concept.** Studies show that looking out for each other is the best way to ensure our safety and security.

Cherry Preschool has taken the following security measures:

- The front door is unlocked only during arrival and dismissal times.
- Side doors are kept locked at all times.
- Someone is present in the office to monitor people entering the building.
- Security cameras are located at all exterior doors.
- All classrooms are connected to the main office and one another via a phone system. Thus, teachers can intercom for help or signal the office in an emergency.
- There is a panic button in the main office to summon the police.
- All areas of the building are alarmed for fire, in accordance with the most stringent requirements of the city and state fire departments.
- There is an all-school PA system with speakers located in the classrooms, the hallways, the gym, and the playlot.
- Fire and emergency drills are conducted regularly.
- Teachers are trained in the procedures to evacuate the building in the event of an emergency.
- We have a *Risk Management Plan* which we go over with all staff members.

**WE ASK OF YOU:**

- Never prop any door open -- close the front door behind you.
- Please watch younger children carefully, holding them by the hand or in your arms if possible.
- Never leave a child unattended in a parked car or stroller.
- Don't hold the door open for a stranger.
- If you see someone you don't know, introduce yourself and ask the person who s/he is. This not only helps to keep the school more secure; it also makes new people feel welcome!
- Report anything suspicious to the office immediately.

The police department provides a list of registered sex offenders to all preschools and day care centers. If you wish to see this list, go to [www.isp.state.il.us/sor](http://www.isp.state.il.us/sor).

**GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and NAEYC require that all licensed schools have a written guidance and discipline policy. Staff members and parents/guardians are required to read the policy and sign a document stating that they have done so.

The goal of discipline is to teach children to function in a social setting with civility and respect. Discipline is not punishment, but rather a way to help children maintain self-control, follow the agreed upon rules for classroom behavior, and treat one another with kindness and acceptance. At Cherry Preschool, we believe discipline involves teacher planning to prevent problems, simple and clearly stated rules and expectations, redirection when problems arise, and appropriate adult intervention when necessary. Each classroom, under the guidance of the teachers, develops and posts its own rules for the protection and welfare of the group. The basic code of behavior for Cherry Preschool is:

- Respect one another -- do not hurt anyone physically or verbally.
- Include one another -- You can't say you can't play.
- Keep everyone safe -- do not act in a way that could be dangerous to yourself or others.
- Respect our environment -- do not intentionally damage toys, equipment, or property.

**TEACHERS' ROLE**

Staff members are responsible for handling discipline for the children under their care. This is to be done in a positive manner, privately and individually. ***Discipline is used when a child's behavior becomes disruptive to the functioning of the class, is disturbing to other children, or is potentially dangerous for the child or other children.*** In general, children who have lost control of their behavior are given the opportunity to regain control in a quiet place in the room. This is not referred to as time out. A teacher will be near the child and removal from the group will not exceed one minute per year of age. ***If a child needs to be removed from the classroom, the teacher must first intercom the office for additional help. If a child hurts him/herself or another child, or behaves in an unusually disruptive manner, the teacher must document this behavior in writing on an Accident Report or Incident Report form.*** As a DCFS licensed program that adheres to NAEYC standards, we agree that the following are never permitted:

Physical punishment such as shaking or hitting, psychological abuse or coercion, abusive language, threats or derogatory remarks, withholding or threatening to withhold food or bathroom privileges, threats of any sort, public or private humiliation, discipline for toileting accidents, emotional abuse (shaming, rejecting, isolating)

The teachers work with children to help them understand and verbalize their feelings. Limits and consequences are clearly explained, consistently enforced, and discussed with children as part of any disciplinary action. When a specific plan has been developed to respond to a child's pattern of unacceptable behavior, all staff members who work with that child will be aware of the plan and responsible for its implementation.

**PARENTS'/GUARDIANS' ROLE**

Parents/guardians receive a copy of the rules of conduct developed by their child's class. We ask that they

reinforce these rules at home. We welcome parental input as to what works best for each child, and whenever possible, we try to be consistent. Cherry Preschool encourages open communication with parents/guardians to help children behave appropriately in the preschool setting. In addition to formal conferences, teachers will inform parents if behavior problems persist and may consult with the Educational Coordinator and/or Executive Director. Parents may be asked to attend extra conferences to collaborate on solutions (see *Policy on Working with Children Who Have Disabilities, Developmental Delays, or Receive Supportive Services* in this handbook).

## **DISCHARGE AND TRANSITION POLICY**

We recognize that all children develop social skills and adjust to the school environment at their own individual rate, and that there is a wide range of normal behavior in adjusting to the preschool setting. If a child is having an unusual amount of difficulty assimilating into the group setting, the school will work with the child's family to solve the problem with the support of our Child Development and Inclusion Director or Executive Director, a staff consultant, and parental conferences. If interventions are unsuccessful, the Child Development and Inclusion Director and Executive Director will work with the family to find a more appropriate placement for their child, based on the following Department of Children and Family Services regulation:

“Infants, toddlers, and preschool age children who, after documented attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrate an inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be transitioned to an alternative program.

For infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children, in all instances when a facility decides that it is in the best interest of the child to transition to a different program, the child's and parents' needs shall be considered by planning with the parents to identify the new program and working with the parents and pending program on a transition plan designed to ensure continuity of services to meet the child's needs. “

## **PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR:**

When a child's behavior is negatively impacting their health and safety or the health and safety of the classroom community, the following process will be followed:

1. The Child Development and Inclusion Director and/or Executive Director will meet with the classroom teachers to discuss the situation. The Child Development and Inclusion Director and/or the Executive Director will observe the child in the classroom. Parents/caregivers will be notified that the child is struggling in the classroom.
2. A meeting will be held with the teachers, parents/caregivers, and the Child Development and Inclusion Director or Executive Director. If there are concerns that the child's behavior is a symptom of an undiagnosed disability or developmental delay, the Child Development and Inclusion Director will provide referrals to outside agencies for evaluation. (See Policy Regarding Working with Children who have Disabilities, Developmental Delays, or Receive Supportive Services.) A plan will be created to provide interventions to support the child, and the Child Development and Inclusion Director will determine how progress will be measured and tracked.
3. The teachers will work with the Child Development and Inclusion Director to put the plan in place and track progress. The school will communicate regularly with the family about the child's progress. After an agreed upon period of time, the team will again meet with parents to discuss progress.
4. If the child responds to the interventions and Cherry Preschool feels that the child can continue at the school in a manner that is safe for the entire classroom, the child will continue their enrollment for the remainder of the school year. If the child does not respond to interventions, the Child Development and Inclusion Coordinator and/or Executive Director will work with the family to transition the child to a more appropriate setting for the child.

Cherry Preschool is committed to exhausting all means within its disposal to keep a child in our program. Ultimately, however, the welfare of the entire class must take precedence over the needs of any given child.

## **POLICY FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS OF FAMILIES**

If a family has an issue or concern that is unresolved after talking with their child's conferencing teacher, the family should contact the Executive Director immediately. A variety of paths could follow, including:

- A meeting with an administrator to discuss concerns and clarify issues.
- The Executive Director and/or Child Development and Inclusion Director may observe the child and staff in the classroom setting and provide feedback to the family and the staff.
- A meeting that includes the family, teachers, and administrators to problem-solve and create a plan to address the concern.
- A follow-up meeting (if needed) to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and modify the plan if necessary.
- The Child Development and Inclusion Director may provide a referral for outside services.

## **POLICY REGARDING WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE DISABILITIES, DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS, OR RECEIVE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

Cherry Preschool welcomes all children and is glad to work with families in the best interests of their children. The school's primary mission is to enable each child to progress to the best of their ability and to provide a developmentally appropriate early childhood education for every child. We offer an Inclusion Program to support the development of children who have disabilities, developmental delays and/or receive supportive services.

Cherry Preschool views a child's education as a collaborative effort. For children receiving supportive services outside of school (i.e.: speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, social services, etc.), it is very important for families to share knowledge and access to any information from these outside services which would help facilitate the child's adjustment and maximize their education and social experience. Therefore, the school requests that reports from agencies and/or private therapists providing services for children in our school be forwarded to the school on a timely basis. The school will also request that parents sign a release of information form enabling the child's teacher, the Child Development and Inclusion Director, and/or the Executive Director to talk directly with the agency and/or private therapist. This exchange of information is essential to ensure we:

- Have the knowledge and information necessary to help the child.
- Adopt a consistent approach as that taken by the family and outside consultants.
- Focus on the skills and goals which are most relevant for ensuring developmental growth and a positive experience at Cherry.

**All information exchanged will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.** No information will be sent to any other school, agency, consultant, or therapist without the parents' permission.

Cherry Preschool reserves the right, should the need arise, to utilize the following interventions:

- Call in the Child Development and Inclusion Director, Executive Director, or a consultant to observe a child and advise the teachers
- Require extra parent/teacher conferences
- Require one of Cherry's Inclusion Aides to facilitate the inclusion of the child in the classroom and provide one-to-one support and supervision

Teachers and the Child Development and Inclusion Director will keep parents informed of their child's progress on a regular basis.

## **CHILDREN WHO ENTER CHERRY WITH AN IDENTIFIED DISABILITY, DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY, OR NEED FOR ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

Once the school offers an Inclusion placement to a child, the school communicates and plans with parents and therapists before the beginning of the school year. Together they determine the level of additional support

needed in the classroom to participate in the regular preschool program. Children may be supported by a dedicated 1:1 aide, a shared aide, or no aide. When an aide is needed, the school will provide an aide for the child. Placement with an aide is determined through collaboration with the Child Development and Inclusion Director.

The Child Development and Inclusion Director works with the child's family and therapists to review any existing IEP/IFP or other reports, and to create goals for use at Cherry Preschool. The goals are shared with families and all staff working with the child. The Child Development and Inclusion Director meets with the child's conferencing teacher and inclusion aide prior to each conference to review progress. The Child Development and Inclusion Director and conferencing teacher will conference with the child's family (and therapists or Inclusion Aide if desired) to discuss progress and make modifications to goals and plans as needed.

### **CHILDREN WHO DURING THE COURSE OF THE SCHOOL YEAR PRESENT DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS**

When a child with no prior diagnosis is struggling in the classroom, staff members (classroom teachers and administrators) will discuss concerns, meet with the child's parents to share those concerns, and make an appropriate plan or recommendation for evaluation. Once an evaluation is underway, the Child Development and Inclusion Director will review any reports, speak with the child's therapists, and meet with the classroom teachers to determine if Cherry Preschool is able to provide the level of support the child requires to be successful while also ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the entire classroom.

If it is determined that Cherry Preschool can offer the support and accommodations necessary, one of the following will occur, depending upon the school's finances:

- **If the school feels the child can participate without additional support staff**, the child will continue in the classroom for the balance of the school year without additional support. The Child Development and Inclusion Director will work closely with the teaching team to monitor progress and offer guidance for working with the child.
- **If the child requires an aide and the budget allows**, the school will provide an aide to support the child.
- **If the child requires an aide and there are not funds in the budget for additional support staff**, parents may provide funds for an aide.

If the school offers the child a placement for the following year, the school will plan for and provide an aide if it is determined that one is necessary.

If Cherry is not able to provide the support and interventions necessary to ensure the success of the child and the safety and wellbeing of the entire classroom, the school may terminate the child's enrollment. (See Discharge Policy.) If this occurs, the Child Development and Inclusion Director will work with the family to find an alternative program for the child.

When working to support a child who is struggling in the classroom, it is critical for the school and parents to work closely together to develop a plan to help the child succeed in the classroom. If a parent's unwillingness to partner with the school interferes with the child's ability to safely participate in the classroom, Cherry Preschool may terminate the child's enrollment. (See Discharge Policy.) If this occurs, the Child Development and Inclusion Director will work with the family to help the child transition to an alternative placement.

### **LUNCH POLICY FOR CHILDREN IN THE INCLUSION PROGRAM**

Lunch is an optional extra activity that is not considered part of the Cherry Preschool educational program by DCFS. Because Cherry Preschool does not have the resources to provide Inclusion Aides during the lunch program, participation for children in the Inclusion Program is determined on a case-by-case basis by the Child Development and Inclusion Director.

### **CHILDREN'S FILES & PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**All information about your child will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.** All forms required by law must

be on file in the school office prior to the first day of school. This includes:

- Child & Family History or Update
- Medical Form
- General Release/Permission Form, including emergency information
- Guidance & Discipline Policy Acknowledgement
- Late Pick Up Policy Acknowledgement

Children whose files are incomplete may not attend preschool, so please be sure to schedule an appointment with your child's physician in a timely manner if a medical form is required.

Written communication and reporting related to assessment and conferences are also included in the file.

Information in your child's file will not be made available to any other school, agency, or individual without your permission.

### **CHILDREN'S PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

We know how important it is to young children to bring their special possessions with them to school. Bringing one favorite thing to school as a comforting transitional object or to show the teachers and/or class is a lovely custom. We do not wish to discourage this. We need your help, however, in setting limits with your child on the quantity and appropriateness of things brought to school. **The following are not appropriate:** *guns, war toys, costumes, masks, sticks, balloons, toys with very small pieces, books or other objects with frightening content and/or pictures, action figures, and money.* Each class has its own way of handling things brought from home. Because children become upset when small toys are misplaced or lost, or when special toys are handled by other children, we suggest that items of this nature be left in your child's cubby for "safe keeping" after showing the teachers. If your child needs to bring a cloth transitional object to school, please send it in a labeled plastic bag at this time.

### **BACKPACKS OR STURDY BAGS**

We ask that each child have a backpack or sturdy bag, clearly labeled with his/her name. This may be used to bring personal things to school. It will also be used to send home notices and the children's artwork.

Please consider the following if purchasing a backpack or bag for this purpose:

- It should be large enough to hold your child's art (approximately 9 X 12) but not too large for your child to carry or wear.
- It should be easy to open and close (avoid bags with multiple closures — simple is better!).
- If possible, please avoid rolling backpacks.

***It is very important that you check the contents of your child's backpack after every school session.*** Not only does your child want to share what s/he has created at school that day, but there may also be time-sensitive notices in there for you to read.

### **A PLACE FOR PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

Every child is assigned a permanent place in the school (cubby) for his/her outer clothing (coats, hats, boots, etc.). Things brought from home may also be safely left in this cubby during school hours. The teachers may leave artwork and notes to be brought home in each child's backpack; please check for this on a daily basis.

### **A LABELED REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE**

Please send a labeled, reusable water bottle to school with your child each school day. Children will need to remain socially distant while eating and drinking at snack time since they cannot wear their face coverings at this time. To help ensure that children can be socially engaged during snack time they will enjoy their snack picnic style on individual washable mats or they will be socially distanced at tables.

## **SMOKE FREE ENVIRONMENT**

Smoking or the use of tobacco products in any form is not permitted on school grounds, in bathrooms, or at Penny Park when children are present.

## **GUN FREE SCHOOL**

Federal and state laws prohibit guns at school.

## **USE OF PESTICIDES**

A professional exterminator visits the preschool four times/year as part of an integrated pest management program. During these visits, the exterminator checks the interior of the school for evidence of pests and uses the least toxic application possible if any are found. A barrier solution is sprayed on the exterior of the building twice/year. This work is done on Friday afternoon when school is not in session and children will not be in the building for at least 24 hours.

## **SNACKS**

A healthy snack will be provided each session that your child is in school. Cherry Preschool will provide a basic snack of fruit (raisins, oranges, banana, etc.) or dairy product (small yogurt, cheese, etc.) and some type of healthy cracker/carb product. We will serve snack size portions of these foods as well as water to drink.

We do not have parents bring daily snack for two reasons: DCFS requires us to post snack menus one week in advance and many of our children have food allergies and/or dietary restrictions.

## **BIRTHDAY AND SUPPLEMENTAL SNACKS**

If your family chooses to celebrate your child's birthday at school, he/she will be able to choose the snack for the class from our snack supply.

Supplemental snacks from home will not be permitted at this time.

Each class will post a menu at the beginning of the week listing the snacks to be served that week.

If there are any dietary restrictions or foods you do not wish your child to have, please complete the appropriate forms and discuss this with your child's teachers so an individualized plan may be created.

## **FOOD ALLERGIES AND DIETARY RESTRICTIONS**

Our preschool has been faced with a growing population of children with allergies and/or medical conditions requiring special care and attention. Because parents are ultimately responsible for monitoring the food their children eat when the results could be serious, we must have you complete the forms appropriate for your child's situation. We all understand the importance of teaching children to manage dietary restrictions outside of the home. However, we are deeply concerned about teachers and other parents taking on this responsibility when the consequences could be serious or fatal.

## **BASIC POLICY**

The following distinction will be made in determining how to handle a child's food allergies:

**If the parent does not return an Emergency Health Care Plan completed and signed by a doctor**, the school assumes that allergy/medical condition is not life threatening or likely to result in a serious illness. In these cases:

- The parent will provide substitute snacks to be kept in the classroom in the event the allergen is present in the class snack and alternate treats in the event of a birthday snack.
- The allergen will not be banned from the classroom (with the exception of peanut products).

If the parent returns an **Emergency Health Care Plan completed and signed by a doctor**, the school assumes that the allergy/medical condition is life threatening or could result in serious illness, unless the doctor indicates otherwise. If the doctor indicates the allergy/medical condition is life threatening or could result in serious illness:

- The parent must provide or approve (in writing) all food/snacks to be served to the child at school.
- If the doctor has indicated that the allergic reaction can result from contact or proximity, the class will not have the allergen in the room including pets, art projects, cooking projects, Sharing Season projects/treats, and birthday snacks.
- If the doctor indicates that the allergic reaction is only a result of ingestion, the parent will provide substitute snacks to be kept in the classroom in the event the allergen is present in the class snack
- The parent is responsible for monitoring the child during class parties where food is served.

## LUNCH POLICY

**Lunch** is an optional extra activity that is not considered to be part of the Cherry Preschool educational program by DFCS. Children whose food restrictions can be accommodated by seating at an allergen-free table may attend lunch and will be seated accordingly. Because our children's lunches come from home, we cannot guarantee they are free of allergens; therefore, children for whom separate seating is not enough should not attend lunch.

## SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITY

- Inform teachers of children in their class with allergies/medical conditions.
- Provide a copy of all forms to teachers.
- Inform parents of classmates of the presence of an allergy in the classroom.
- Have an emergency action plan in place in which the child's teachers and the office staff know where the child's medication is stored and how it is to be administered.
- Be sure several staff members are trained in CPR and be prepared to call upon them as needed.
- Enforce our "no trading food" policy at snack and lunch.
- Include children with allergies/medical conditions in all regular classroom activities, making reasonable accommodations to ensure their safety.

## TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITY

- Post a list of all children with allergies.
- Eliminate the allergen from the classroom in the case of serious/life-threatening allergies.
- Collect and keep alternative snacks from the parent of the child with an allergy.
- Never serve a school provided snack food (including cooking projects) to a child with a serious/life-threatening allergy unless the parent has reviewed the ingredients and/or the food is on their parent-approved list.

## PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY

- Inform the school of their child's allergy/medical condition in the child's history form and during the pre-visit.
- Complete the appropriate forms in the Children with Allergies and Medical Conditions Requiring Special Attention packet and return to the school:
  - **Parents' Form: Medical Conditions & Allergies Requiring Special Attention** must be completed for every child with a medical condition or allergy
  - **Medical Consent Form** –must be completed for every child who may need medication administered at school
  - **Emergency Health Care Plan** – must be completed by child's physician for every child who has a serious/life-threatening allergy or medical condition.
- Provide alternate snacks to be kept at school in the event the school provided snack contains an allergen and the allergy is not serious/life-threatening (no *Emergency Health Care Plan* on file).

- Review school snacks and provide teachers with a written list of snacks that may be served to their child.
- Provide all snacks to be served to their child if the child has serious/life-threatening allergies (*Emergency Health Care Plan* on file).
- Inform Cherry Preschool of any changes.

An information packet about children's food allergies is available in the school office upon request.

## **TUITION AND PAYMENTS**

### **TUITION AGREEMENT**

In consideration of holding a class placement for the enrolled child, the parents/guardians accept the obligation to pay the fees **in advance** for the full academic year, regardless of attendance, and subject to the provisions in the Policy on Withdrawing from Preschool and in the Parent Handbook.

Tuition payments begin in May preceding the start of the school year, or upon enrollment after that month, and continue monthly until the full tuition is paid. The normal schedule is nine monthly payments.

### **2021-22 TUITION SCHEDULE**

<b>CLASS / PROGRAM</b>	<b>Full School Year Tuition</b>	<b>Nine Monthly Payments</b>
5 Day Transitional Kindergarten	\$10,499	\$1,111.00 following \$500 Deposit
5 Day Pre-K Class	\$6,996	\$777.33
4 Day Classes, AM & PM	\$5,921	\$657.89
3 Day Classes AM & PM	\$4,578	\$508.67
2 Day Young Threes	\$3,371	\$374.56

### **POLICY ON PROMPT PAYMENT**

Families are expected to make monthly payments by the first day of the month, regardless of whether a reminder is received. Families are encouraged to sign up at [MyProCare.com](http://MyProCare.com) to view their accounts and to print receipts and statements. Payments by credit card can also be submitted at [MyProCare.com](http://MyProCare.com) for no additional fee.

If payment is NOT received within the month due, assuming no alternative arrangement has been made with the Financial Manager, the following steps will be taken:

- A late notice will be sent and a \$10 late fee assessed.
- Families whose accounts are not current at the end of the month and who have also failed to establish a payment plan with the Financial Manager will be excluded from attendance. When the family's account is up to date or when a payment plan is agreed upon and a partial payment is made, the child may return to preschool.

### **POLICY ON WITHDRAWING FROM PRESCHOOL**

Cherry Preschool is private and independent, relying on tuition to meet our commitments for staff and facility expenses. Withdrawal of a child from the program has serious financial consequences for the preschool. The preschool will retain the amount of tuition invoiced by the date of withdrawal.

### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (SCHOLARSHIPS)**

Financial assistance is awarded based on need, within the limitations of the school's budget and fundraising ability. Students are accepted to the school on a need-blind basis until the financial assistance resources have been depleted. **Financial assistance is not available for the lunch or after-school programs.** Cherry Preschool does not

discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its scholarship program. Applications for Financial Assistance are given to families upon request. All information is handled with strict confidentiality.

#### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC SPECIAL POLICIES**

Due to the unprecedented conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board retains the right to modify school policies if circumstances arise during the school year. We appreciate the trust and understanding given us by the families who enroll during this extraordinary time, and we pledge to address the concerns of our families to the best of our ability and in the best interests of the children.

#### **RELEASE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

All information in a child's file is strictly confidential and will be seen only by his/her classroom teacher, the Executive Director, or the Child Development and Inclusion Director. In order to release this information as well as information regarding a child's social/emotional development and adjustment to school, the parents/guardians must sign a ***Permission to Release Information Form***, which may be obtained from the school office. A copy of this form will be sent to the agency or person with whom information is to be shared.

# OUTDOOR PLAY

## THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR PLAY

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, “The delights of the outdoors are among the deepest, most passionate joys of childhood...Our society has become increasingly complex, but there remains a need for every child to feel the sun and wind on his cheek and engage in self-paced play.”

Outdoor play benefits children in many ways:

- **Social benefits** – children are learning a wide range of social competencies when they play outside with their class. They learn about cooperation, sharing, expressing their ideas verbally, resolving conflicts peacefully, and respecting rules.
- **Emotional benefits** – Active (gross motor) play acts as an outlet to reduce stress and anxiety and serves as a means for children to learn to manage stress and gain self-control. Unstructured outdoor play enables children to work out emotional aspects of everyday experiences.
- **Physical benefits** – Physical movement is essential for healthy growth and development. Recent research indicates that over 8% of children are overweight by preschool age and 40% of children have cardiac risk factors including obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and an inactive lifestyle. Penny Park and the playlot provide the opportunity for sheer physical activity: running, climbing, jumping, chasing, balancing, hanging, swinging, stretching – all great things for your child’s development.
- **Cognitive benefits** – Recent research indicates that physical activity fuels the brain, enhances brain growth, and makes a greater number of connections between neurons. Children learn through their play, and active play enables children to focus better and have greater control over their behavior.

We will use the hill and Penny Park whenever the weather permits for our 4, & 5 day classes. Bridge classes will use the on-site playlot only. Three-day classes also use the playlot with the option of an occasional outing to the Penny Park later in the year if the teachers feel the children are ready.

Weather permitting, each classroom will have an opportunity to use our new parking lot outdoor play space. This space will be closed for vehicles during school hours. We will set up canopies for shade, as well as set up a variety of materials for large and fine motor development. This space will only be used by one class at a time.

All of our classes go out or stay in on a given day unless the weather changes significantly during the day. A flag hanging by the foot of the entrance ramp indicates it is an outdoor day.

Because outdoor play is an essential part of our program, the children play outside whenever weather permits. In general, this means any day when it is not raining, the grounds are not too wet or icy, and the temperature (combined with the wind chill) is above 20 degrees. The staff consults the temperature/wind chill index 20 minutes prior to going out and makes a collective decision about the appropriateness of going outside and uses its best judgment. **Please accept our decision, even if it is not the one you may have made.**

If you have any doubt about the weather, assume we will be going out and dress your child accordingly. Children who are feeling “under the weather” or who do not come to school with appropriate clothing may not stay indoors while their class is outside.

## POLICIES FROM THE RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

- 1) The 4 & 5-Day Morning and the Afternoon STEM class use Penny Park and the hill. 3 Day 3-year-old classes may choose to use Penny Park in the spring if the class is deemed ready.
- 2) The staff supervises children very carefully at at Penny Park. Teachers have assigned stations to enable them to see and supervise all areas of the hill and need to be able to remain at their assigned spots.
- 3) Ratios of staff to children: In order to ensure safe supervision, all staff assigned to a class must be present when the class goes to Penny Park. The office will be called to escort children if they have to use the bathroom.

- 4) Every child is accounted for at all times--Attendance is taken before leaving the park and upon returning to school.
- 5) Children walk to and from Penny Park in an orderly fashion.
- 6) Children use the walking rope, holding onto handles.
- 7) One teacher is at the front of the line and another at the rear. The group may not proceed to or from the park without teachers in these positions.
- 8) Children stop at the stop sign on Ashland. The lead teacher checks for traffic and tells the class it is safe to cross before the children proceed.
- 9) Children will wear bright colored belts (safety belts) at the park for easier identification. These belts and the walking rope will be sanitized at the end of each day they were used.
- 10) Teachers always have the following at the park:
  - a) Attendance sheets
  - b) School backpack with first aid kit, bell, and cell phone
  - c) Walking ropes

### **ADDITIONAL PARK SAFETY RULES**

- Children are to be taught not to pick up things they see on the ground. They are to tell a teacher about them instead.
- Children who do not follow directions regarding safe play or lining up when the bell rings will not be permitted to play in the park. Teachers may ask them to sit on the bench for a reasonable period of time, either that day or the next.
- Children may not use the porta-potty when it is in the park.
- Children practice walking around the building and around the block using the walking rope before they start going to the park.
- Teachers will not take a class to Penny Park until they are certain every child is ready to handle this transition.

### **SLEDDING SAFETY**

Decisions about whether it is an appropriate day for sledding will be made by an administrator after the temperature/wind chill and icy conditions have been assessed. Six school sleds will be used. Non-school sleds or other equipment may not be used. When the teachers ring the bell to announce it is a sledding day, children may choose to sled (go to the top of the hill) or play in the snow (go to the area between the hill and the park). To ensure proper supervision, no children may play in the park. Two staff members will supervise the non-sledding group, and 6 will supervise the sledding group (3 at the top of the hill and 3 at the bottom). Children will sled in an orderly fashion and be directed to walk back up away from others who are sledding.

### **OFFICE CONTACT FROM THE PARK**

Teachers will call the office on the cell phone for:

- Children who need to be brought inside to use the bathroom.
- Children who need to be brought inside for disciplinary reasons.
- Any emergency.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP AT THE PARK**

- Children should always be dressed for outdoor play. This means gym shoes, layers of warm clothing, and boots on muddy/snowy days. On cold days, children must have hats, mittens (not gloves and attached to their coats), and snow pants. If your child resists putting any of this on, just send it with him/her in a bag. Children will usually cooperate for their teachers and when they feel the cold! Please label all outerwear with your child's name.

- Report any unsafe or unclean situations to the office immediately. Then, if you can, pitch in to clean it up or make a call to get it fixed. **For Penny Park, call the Evanston Recreation Department, (847) 866-2910.**

### **SAFETY ISSUES FOR GROUNDS AND EQUIPMENT**

For both Penny Park and our on-site playlot, we need to rely on parent volunteers as a supplement to our staff to inspect the grounds to be sure they are clean and free of garbage or unsafe objects, and to check the equipment to be sure it is in good condition. Through our Room Parent network, we organize volunteers to check the park every Monday morning and to clean the playlot on a regular basis.

## **HEALTH INFORMATION**

### **MEDICAL FORMS**

**Every child must have a current medical form** (with the initial form dated no more than 6 months prior to the first day the child's started school) on file at the school. This form must list immunization dates and be **completed by both physician and parent/guardian**. All subsequent immunizations must be reported for inclusion in the file. In accordance with NAEYC recommendations, new forms must be completed every year. DCFS monitors our compliance. **New students must have their forms on file before they begin school.**

**Please check medical forms carefully** to be sure they are complete. TB test and lead screening results should be recorded in the proper spaces, and the parent information section must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian.

### **IMMUNIZATION POLICY**

We are licensed by DCFS (Department of Children and Family Services). DCFS mandates a current, completed medical form (physical exam within 6 months of starting preschool for the first time), be on file for each child. Please remember that our preschool community includes children who are immune compromised, pregnant mothers, and younger siblings who may not be fully immunized.

Children attending Cherry Preschool must have received the following immunizations, in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Public Health:

- DTP (4 doses)
- Polio (3 doses)
- Hepatitis B (3 doses)
- Hib (3 doses)
- Varicella or proof of chickenpox (1 dose)
- MMR (1 dose)

If your child is on a **delayed schedule**, you must provide a letter from the doctor outlining the dates when your child will receive the required vaccinations.

**A lead screening blood test** is required (include the date of the test and the number result).

If the **TB test** was done, include the date and result. If the doctor does not recommend a TB test, he/she may write and sign a note indicating such. The note must be attached to the medical form.

If a specific immunization is **medically contraindicated**, the doctor must write and sign a note stating such. Please attach this to the medical form.

Children on delayed schedules for vaccines or any other under-immunized children may be excluded from school if a vaccine-preventable disease occurs to which children are susceptible.

## CAN I CHOOSE TO OPT OUT?

THE ONLY WAY to avoid the vaccines is through a **medical exemption**. **No other types of exemptions are permitted.**

If a family has a medical reason for requesting an exception to a particular immunization requirement, the parents/guardians must provide *a letter attached to the Medical Form or a note written directly on the Medical Form by the child's doctor stating that the requirement is medically contraindicated (not indicated).*

As required by DCFS, Cherry Preschool maintains a list of all children enrolled who are not fully immunized. The number of not fully immunized children in a child's class will be available to parents who request it.

## ADMINISTERING MEDICATIONS AT SCHOOL

A *Medical Consent Form* is available in the school office in the event your child needs to take medication during school hours. No medication (including sunscreen) will be given unless a parent/guardian has completed this form. Please do not send your child to school with any medication unless this form is on file.

## PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

These may be given to a child by a Cherry Preschool staff member if the label bears the child's name, the physician's name, the drug store's name, the prescription number, the date of the prescription, and the directions for administering the medication. In addition, the parent/guardian must complete and sign a *Medical Consent Form*. One copy of this form is kept in the office and a second copy is kept in the child's classroom. Each time the medication is given, the Cherry Preschool staff member will record this on the *Medical Consent Form* that is kept in the classroom.

## NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

These may be administered by a Cherry Preschool staff member with the written permission of the parent/guardian in accordance with the packaged instructions, except for aspirin and aspirin-substitutes, which may only be administered if there is a specific prescription written by a physician. The medication must be labeled with the child's name and date and the parent/guardian must complete and sign a *Medical Consent Form*. One copy of this form is kept in the office and a second copy is kept in the child's classroom. Each time the medication is given, the Cherry Preschool staff member will record this on the *Medical Consent Form* that is kept in the classroom.

## ILLNESS AT PRESCHOOL

Please see our COVID HANDBOOK for illness policies related to COVID-19.

To help us ensure a healthy environment for our children, we ask that parents/guardians **use good judgment and please do not send a sick or overtired child to school.**

When a child's resistance is low, s/he is more susceptible to illness. A fresh cold, sore throat, pink eyes, or upset stomach can infect an entire class, *including the teachers and their families*, within days! Sick teachers (and sick children of teachers) affect the entire program, as we have to hire substitute teachers to be with your children while they recover. We, therefore, ask you to err on the side of caution when deciding if your child is well enough to come to school. If a child is not healthy enough to participate in both indoor and outdoor play, s/he should not be in school that day. It is not possible to keep a child indoors while the rest of the class is outside.

Parents and caregivers are our first line of defense against the spread of disease. Since you know your child best, we must depend on you to use common sense and be considerate of others. **If there is any doubt about whether your child is well enough to go to school, please keep him/her at home. Sick children do not really enjoy being in school.**

Our administrators doing daily health checks will send children home if they do not seem healthy upon arrival, become ill during school hours, or report having been ill within the past 24 hours.

## TREATMENT OF ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT

If a child should become ill while at school, we will keep him/her as comfortable as possible in our isolation room while we contact the parents/guardians, or the emergency numbers provided by the parents/guardians. For this reason, **it is essential that we have the most current work numbers as well as cell phone or pager numbers**; we also require three emergency numbers for each child. Parents/guardians should update these numbers if there are any changes.

The parent/guardian or emergency contact will be asked to take the child home. Sick children will be isolated from the rest of the class while waiting to go home. If a child should get hurt at school and the injury does not require immediate attention, we will keep him/her as comfortable as possible while we contact the parent/guardian. If the injury is minor and the parent agrees, the child may remain in his/her classroom for the remainder of the school day. An *Accident Report* will be completed by the child's teacher, signed by the parent/guardian, and kept on file in the school office.

## MEDICAL & DENTAL EMERGENCIES AT PRESCHOOL

In the event of an emergency or accident requiring immediate medical attention, we will call the Evanston paramedics at 911 to take the child to Evanston Hospital. One of the child's teachers or an administrator will stay with the child at all times and accompany him/her to the hospital with the paramedics. Remaining staff members will immediately contact the parents/guardians or emergency numbers to notify them of the emergency. An *Accident Report* will be completed by the child's teacher, signed by the parent/guardian, and kept on file in the school office.

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASES - WHAT TO DO

Parents/guardians whose child has contracted a communicable disease (*COVID-19, strep* throat, head lice, pinworms, conjunctivitis, meningitis, etc.), are required to **NOTIFY THE SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY** so we may inform the families of children who may have been exposed. ***We ask that you be honorable about this rather than not reporting something like head lice out of embarrassment. There is no shame in your child catching a communicable disease, but to keep the information from others who may have been exposed is very unfair.*** For serious illnesses which are highly contagious or of long duration, a note from the child's physician may be required before the child returns to school.

## HIV/AIDS POLICY

Our school practices universal precautions and treats all situations involving bleeding with the assumption that HIV/AIDS could be a factor. Any bleeding child will be separated from the other children and attended to by a teacher wearing gloves.

A child who is HIV positive or has AIDS may attend preschool as long as his/her health, developmental level, behavior, and immune system are deemed appropriate by a physician. Employees are afforded the same opportunity. These situations will be evaluated on a case by case basis, and every effort will be made to handle the information with the strictest confidentiality.

The procedures we follow are in accordance with the following policy established by the Department of Human Rights and the Illinois Human Rights Act: *Persons who are HIV positive or have AIDS are defined as "handicapped" (the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 & Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). Under Section 504, individuals are protected and have access and opportunity without discrimination in four areas: employment, housing, financial credit, and public accommodations. A childcare center/preschool which advertises and/or receives public funds has been determined to be a public accommodation.*

## WHEN A CHILD MAY RETURN TO SCHOOL?

Please observe the following guidelines in deciding when a child is healthy enough to return to school.

\* = Notify the school immediately

**\*CHICKENPOX:**

Child may return when all pox are scabbed over. This may take up to 10-14 days (1 week minimal).

**COLD/COUGH:**

Please use good judgment and remember that children who do not feel well are not very happy to be at school! We can't avoid colds, but we can help to control their spread by having children with excessively runny noses and/or coughs and sneezing stay home.

**\*COLD SORE:**

Child may return after all lesions are scabbed over.

**DIARRHEAL DISEASE:**

Child may return when s/he has not had any loose stools for 48 hours.

**FEVER:**

Children should stay home a full 48 hours temperature free following a fever.

**\*FIFTH DISEASE:**

Fifth Disease is a mild, non-febrile rash which causes the child to look as if s/he were slapped in the face. The rash may fade and then recur. Parents are advised to consult their child's physician as to when the child may return. Most doctors recommend keeping children at home for 2-4 days. Children with Fifth Disease are not contagious when the rash is present. **NOTE:** *Pregnant women exposed to Fifth Disease may want to consult their physician.*

**\*HEAD LICE:**

Child may return to school after treatment with a lice shampoo and **after all nits have been removed**. We also ask that all family members are shampooed and that the house and car are fully cleaned and treated. Children will be checked by the office staff upon return to school and **will not be admitted unless nit-free**, even if they have been treated with a lice shampoo. Usually, nits have to be removed by hand.

**\*PINWORMS & SCABIES:**

Child may return 24 hours after treatment.

**\*HAND, FOOT, & MOUTH DISEASE (Coxsackievirus)**

Symptoms include fever and blister-like lesions. Child may return after 24 hours fever free & when behaving normally.

**\*HEPATITIS:**

Symptoms include behavioral changes, fatigue, loss of appetite, yellowish skin & whites of eyes, dark urine, light colored stools. If you suspect hepatitis, keep your child at home and consult your pediatrician.

**\*INFLUENZA (Flu including H1N1)**

Child may return after 48 hours free of fever and symptoms.

**\*MENINGITIS:**

Early symptoms include fever, headache, stiff neck, vomiting. The child's activity level will decrease, associated with not feeling well, and symptoms can progress rapidly, becoming more severe. Contact your pediatrician.

**\*OPEN SORES (IMPETIGO):**

Child may return to school when lesions have stopped draining and the treatment has begun.

**\*PINK EYE (CONJUNCTIVITIS):**

Both forms of conjunctivitis (viral & bacterial) are highly contagious! A child who is uncomfortable or has a thick, colored discharge should be kept home. As with a cold, parents/guardians should use their judgment and **not send a child with a fresh case of conjunctivitis or a child who is feeling ill to school**. Contact your physician. If your child is given an antibiotic, s/he may not return to school for a full 24 hours following the start of medication. Viral conjunctivitis is contagious as long as there are symptoms.

**SORE THROAT:**

Please use good judgment. Often, a child is most contagious at the onset of an illness. Contact your physician if a fever is associated with the sore throat or if the sore throat persists, even without fever. In either case, your child could have strep throat. Untreated strep infections can lead to serious side effects such as rheumatic fever.

**\*STREP THROAT/SCARLET FEVER:**

Child may return to school a full 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has begun, and after the child is fever and

symptom free.

#### **VOMITING:**

The child should stay home at least 48 hours after the initial vomiting episode occurred and be symptom free for 48 hours before returning to school. A child who has vomited the night before school (or before coming to school) is sick and will often vomit again at school.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **CLOTHING**

Preschool children need freedom to explore and master a wide variety of materials. Their clothes often get dirty during this necessary process. Please dress your child in clothing that allows participation in "messy" projects and outdoor play as well as freedom of movement. Accidents do happen. The school has clothes available for emergencies, but younger children have more frequent accidents and feel more comfortable in their own clothing. We, therefore, ask parents to send a complete change of clothing, which is clearly labeled with your child's name, in a plastic bag.

**Please label all of your child's outer garments** (especially jackets & sweaters). Names on shoes and boots are also important, as many children have the same styles and sizes.

We try to encourage all of our children to build a sense of independence in the areas of dressing and undressing at school. If you will be buying new winter boots for your child, please make sure they are large enough to avoid frustration. We recommend buying shoe boots and leaving an old pair of slippers or gym shoes in the cubby for school use.

#### **DIAPERS**

Only disposable diapers will be permitted for those children wearing diapers that are enrolled at Cherry Preschool.

#### **FIELD TRIPS**

Sometimes a beautiful day will need to be taken advantage of, and the teachers may wish to take the class on a brief walk in the neighborhood. Generally, excursions will be limited to trips to nearby Penny Park or a trip around the block. All walks will be carefully supervised by the teachers. We do not take any field trips that require transportation.

#### **LUNCH PROGRAM**

Children in the 4 & 5 Morning classes and 3 morning 3's may enroll in the Lunch Program from 12:00PM-2:00PM (Monday through Friday).

Parents of children with food allergies, serious medical conditions, or special needs should contact the office before enrolling. The Extended Day program for the 5-day classes begins during the second week of school, and ends one week prior to the last week of school. Parents are encouraged to enroll on a regular basis, as we strive to maintain regular groupings on each day in the interest of providing continuity for the children. The number of "drop in" spaces available is very limited this year.

If you would like your child to "drop in" on a given day, contact the office: Leave a message, send an email, or give written notice at least 24 hours in advance. If you have left a message, please confirm that there is space available for your child before you send a lunch to school.

For some children, beginning school and lunch at the same time may prove to be too stressful. For those children, we recommend waiting until the child is completely comfortable with school before beginning the lunch program. A "drop-in" trial visit or two may be a good way to tell if your child is ready.

## **NO PEANUT BUTTER OR PEANUTS AT LUNCH**

Cherry Preschool joins most Evanston early childhood programs in banning peanut butter and peanuts from the lunch program. Although we will continue seating children with peanut allergies at a separate table next to teachers who can monitor their food, we are asking parents to help us minimize the risk of exposure for these children by keeping peanut butter out of the lunchroom.

This allergy poses a very serious health risk, as children may become severely ill through contact with peanut butter, including inhaling it or touching a table, toy, or piece of equipment with peanut butter residue. Such exposure can result in anaphylactic shock, necessitating the use of an epipen to administer adrenaline. While our staff is aware of all children with this allergy and trained to respond appropriately, and children wash their hands before and after lunch, we are asking for your help as well.

If your child is a big fan of PB&J sandwiches, you may want to consider using soy nut butter as a substitute for peanut butter. Most children will happily eat this, especially with some jelly! If you do send a soy nut butter sandwich, please label it as such on the outside of your child's lunch bag.

Because there are peanut traces in so many products and because much of the food sent for lunch is not in its original wrappers, we make no claim that Cherry Preschool is truly "peanut free." On the other hand, anything we can do as a community to minimize the risk for children with this allergy is a great help. Obviously, do not send foods that contain peanuts (i.e.: peanut butter granola bars, egg rolls, peanut candies). If you want to learn more about peanut allergies and foods to avoid, go to [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org). Simply avoiding the PB&J sandwiches, however, will be very helpful to reduce the exposure to this allergen.

## **ABOUT THE LUNCH YOU SEND WITH YOUR CHILD**

We ask your cooperation in following our policy of good nutrition in school. Please do not send sugary sweet treats.

The following guidelines may help you to decide what to send:

- sandwich (half is usually enough) or equivalent nutritious food
- a few chips (if desired at all)
- piece of fruit &/or cut up veggies
- only 1 small sweet (if desired at all)

We always have water to serve with lunches, but most children prefer their own drink box or thermos. Please do not send punch or soft drinks. And please no candy or gum in lunches.

You know best what your child likes and dislikes. Our experience, however, has been that children never eat as much as is sent!

We encourage you to send disposable lunch bags at this time. Following DCFS regulations during this pandemic, leftover food will be disposed of when lunch is over. **Please label lunch bags** with your child's name. The teachers will make sure lunches are refrigerated.

## **PM AFTERSCHOOL CARE PROGRAM (AFTERCARE)**

Aftercare meets from 3:15-4:45PM for afternoon students (Monday through Thursday).

Aftercare will only be held on days when 2 or more children have signed up for a given day.

The after-school care program is open to children in the afternoon class only at this time. **Enrollment and payment occur on a trimester basis** (regardless of your school tuition payment plan), **separate from the regular preschool classes**.

Because the preschool cannot afford to provide inclusion aides for the after-school care program, parents of children with special needs should contact the office if they are interested in the program.

If you would like your child to "drop-in" on a given day, contact the office: Leave a message, send an e-mail, or give written notice at least 24 hours in advance.

## **PRESENTING AN EXCITING COLLABORATION WITH CREATIVE KIDS CORNER**

(Available to all children (4 and over) enrolled at Cherry Preschool)

Cherry Preschool is excited to be the new site for Creative Kids Corner class **Music and More Afternoons**. Our very own music instructor Linda Kusel and staff will use play and a variety of art forms to nurture and develop children's innate creativity. Classes will include music and movement, as well as group games, activities, and language arts. The class will meet Monday-Friday, 2:15-4:00. Registration is open to all children 4-6 years old, on a daily, weekly, or drop-in basis.

## **USE OF PUBLIC BATHROOMS**

There is one public (adult) bathroom in the building near the office. If you need to use it, we will need to perform a health check before granting entrance to the preschool and all people entering the building must be wearing face masks.

## **PARKING AT CHERRY PRESCHOOL**

Cherry Preschool is restricted by law as to what it can offer to parents in terms of parking, other than using **legal spots** on the streets surrounding the school. City ordinance prohibits us from using the alley to the east of the school for drop-off or pick-up. We may also not drive through our parking lot to the west or stop directly in front of the building for drop-off or pick-up. The Cherry Preschool parking lot will be used for outdoor play for our students and will not be used as a parking lot for parents or staff.

## **LET'S HELP EACH OTHER!**

Parking can be a challenge, but generally a legal spot can be found within a block of the preschool. There are some things we can do as a school community, however, to make things easier for everyone. A school-wide campaign toward **courtesy and common sense** could improve the parking situation for everyone.

- If you don't mind walking, you could choose a spot a little further away, and leave the closer spots for people who need them more than you do.
- If you have business to take care of or expect to remain in the building for a while, please park a little further away.

In the mornings, try to avoid Wesley and Lake to the north and east of the school. The streets get very congested with cars taking children to Dewey School (it starts at 9:05).

## **PREFERRED STREETS**

Consider using the following streets

- **Greenwood** – it's usually fairly empty and only one block away.
- **Ashland** – note that parking is only allowed on the east side.
- **Wesley** – to the south of the school, there are usually spaces.

## **PARKING RESTRICTIONS**

***Please check all posted signs as these are subject to change.***

For street cleaning (from April 1—November 30):

### **Side Streets:**

- Tuesdays – Don't park on the even address side of the street
- Wednesdays – Don't park on odd address side of the street

### **Lake Street Parking:**

Regulations change from year to year. Please read all posted signs and consult with the City of Evanston ([www.cityofevanston.org](http://www.cityofevanston.org)) for the most current information.

### **PARKING IS SAFER SOUTH OF LAKE STREET**

- If you do park across from the school, please cross at the corner of Lake and Wesley or Lake and Ashland where there are 4-way stop signs. Do not cross in the middle of the block.
- If you park across the street from Penny Park for drop-off, be careful crossing Lake Street. Take each child by the hand. Never send a child across the street by him/herself.
- If you have a baby to carry or more than two children to supervise, avoid crossing Lake Street and do not park north of the school .
- If possible, remove all children from the passenger side of the car. Please do not open the driver's side back door into the Lake Street traffic to remove a child!
- If you do have a number of children in your carpool, try to park where you won't have to cross any major streets as you walk to the building.

### **STAGGERED SCHEDULES FOR MORNING CLASSES**

We have done this to help free up spaces and to minimize hallway traffic. For this to work, we need you to:

- Be on time (parents and teachers).
- Leave promptly to enable others to use your spot.

### **SPECIAL PLANS FOR FAMILIES IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

Having a sick sibling in tow or a new baby can be a real problem. **Anyone with an emergency or unusually difficult situation should call the office.** We'll try to figure out a way to help you so you won't have to search for a parking spot. Having a cell phone with you will be very helpful.

### **WHERE TO PARK WHEN IT SNOWS (MORE THAN 4 INCHES)**

Snow parking regulations are in effect from December 1 — March 31. Please check the posted parking regulations and check with the City of Evanston website ([www.cityofevanston.org](http://www.cityofevanston.org)). Cars illegally parked will be ticketed (\$35) or towed (\$100)! The parking ban applies from 8 AM to 6 PM, regardless of when the streets have been plowed. Emergency sirens will sound at 7:15 AM and 12:15 PM on snow emergency days, and these rules will be enforced. You can set up an alert on the City of Evanston website or call the city's hotline at 847-864-SNOW to confirm snow emergency parking regulations are in effect.

### **PLEASE KEEP OUR CHILDREN SAFE & OUR NEIGHBORS HAPPY:**

- Parking or pulling into the preschool parking lot will not be permitted at this time.
- Do not pull into the alley to the east of the school, even for a few minutes. Backing out is dangerous, and you are also blocking people from entering or leaving their garages.
- Be sure to observe all posted parking regulations and be careful not to block private driveways or alleys.
- Please do not use the bus stop on Lake, the private parking for businesses on Ashland, or the handicapped spots in front of Penny Park. **Doing so will result in a ticket and possibly a tow!**

We ask that you be considerate of our neighbors. We want to maintain cordial relationships with them and to have them be active supporters and friends of Cherry Preschool.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

### **VOLUNTEERING**

Cherry Preschool is an independent, parent-governed preschool that depends on the volunteer efforts of its families, rather than the support of a larger institution, for its existence. Tuition payments do not cover more than the basic program. Thus, to provide our children with enriching activities and to fulfill our school's commitment to community service by including children with special needs and children whose families are unable to pay the full

tuition, parents are expected to volunteer their time and energy in support of the school. A variety of opportunities exist. Please share as much of your time & talent with us as your schedule permits -- we need you! During this COVID time we would like to be able to call on you for your help, when needed.

## **COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN HOME & SCHOOL**

### **ONGOING COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

Families are encouraged to contact teachers by phone or via school email. Every week the families in each classroom receive Constant Contact e-news detailing the week's events. We rely mostly on Constant Contact email to inform families about upcoming events, health notices, non-attendance days, Board activities, etc. Families who prefer hard copy are given flyers with this information. If a family's home language is not English and no one in the family speaks English, we ask another family at the preschool or contact Northwestern University's International Center to find a translator. For Spanish-speaking families, our Latino Program Coordinator and/or a staff member who speaks Spanish translates materials as needed.

### **CONFERENCES**

We anticipate that our parent/teacher's conferences will be virtual. There are two routine conferences (usually in November and March, on a day on which the school is closed) for children in the 3, 4, and 5 days classes. The Bridge to 3's classes will have one formal conference in January. Attending these conferences is **required**.

Of course, you are welcome to call and schedule a conference whenever the need arises. **If there is a problem or concern, you should not wait until the formal conference time**. The Executive Director, Child Development and Inclusion Director, and teachers are always willing to make time to discuss any issue which concerns our children and families. These conferences will be virtual until further notice.

Communication between home and school is essential. Parents/guardians should inform the teachers about anything unusual that has happened or is about to happen in their family life: illness, parent(s) away, death in the family, vacations, family visits, birth of a new sibling, new house, separation, divorce, change in child care arrangements (new sitter or routine), etc. Having this information enables us to understand each child's behavior better and to help children cope with stressful situations.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH THE OFFICE STAFF**

To meet with the Executive Director, Child Development and Inclusion Director, Assistant Director, or Financial Manager: please call the office to arrange for a specific day and time to talk.

### **CALENDARS & NEWSLETTERS**

Use the Cherry website to access monthly calendars and all-school newsletters: [www.cherrypreschool.org](http://www.cherrypreschool.org). A **school year calendar** is distributed to all families. Extra copies are available in the school office. Each month, a **monthly calendar** listing dates and events, will be sent home, and there is also a **calendar on the website**. Please check the monthly calendar carefully as it is more detailed than the yearly one and reflects any changes of dates. ***All days on which there is no school are clearly indicated on all calendars. Please make note of these, as it is your responsibility to know this information.***

**All-school** newsletters are printed and published online. **Classroom news** is emailed home every week. These newsletters are our primary means of communication. **Please read them promptly and thoroughly.**

# SUMMARY OF LICENSING STANDARDS FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

**THE FOLLOWING IS A REPRINTED FROM A DOCUMENT PREPARED BY THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES.**

## **Introduction**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for licensing daycare centers. When a daycare center is licensed, it means that a DCFS licensing representative has inspected the facility and the facility was found to meet the minimum licensing requirements. A license is valid for three years. The daycare center's license must be posted. It will indicate the maximum number of children allowed in the facility and the areas where children may receive care.

Licensed day care facilities are inspected annually by DCFS licensing staff. If a complaint has been received regarding a violation of the licensing standards of a day care center, a licensing representative will conduct a licensing complaint investigation to determine if the alleged violation should be substantiated or unsubstantiated. Individuals may contact the Day Care Information Line to learn of substantiated violations.

## **Day Care Information Line            1-877-746-0829**

This statewide toll-free information line provides information to the public on the past history and record, including substantiated violations, of licensed daycare homes, daycare centers, and group daycare homes. This number operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## **Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers**

The following is a summary of the licensing standards for daycare centers. It has been prepared for you so that you may monitor the care provided to your child. This is a brief summary and does not include all of the licensing standards for daycare centers. State licensing standards are *minimum* standards, while some municipalities may pose stricter standards on day care centers operating within their jurisdictions. If you observe a violation of any of these standards, you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with the daycare center operator. In most cases, parents and daycare operators are able to resolve the parents' concerns and issues. If you believe the daycare operator is not responding to your concerns and may not be meeting state licensing standards, you may make a complaint to the local DCFS Licensing Office or by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-2873 and stating that you want to make a licensing complaint.

A DCFS licensing representative will investigate your complaint and report the results back to you. The daycare center is required to provide a copy of written policies regarding the operation of the facility to each staff person and to parents of enrolled children.

## **Staffing**

- The daycare center must have a qualified childcare director on site at all times. The director must be at least 21 years old, have completed two years of college or have equivalent experience and credentials.
- Early childhood teachers must be at least 19 years old, have two years of college or have equivalent experience and credentials.
- School-age workers must be at least 19 years of age and at least five years older than the oldest child in their care. They must have completed one year of college or have the equivalent experience and credentials.
- Early childhood assistants and school-age assistants must have a high school diploma or the equivalent and must work under direct supervision of an early childhood teacher or a school-age worker.
- Student and youth aides must be at least 14 years of age, at least five years older than the oldest child in their care and must work under direct supervision of an early childhood teacher or a school-age worker.
- Student and youth aides are not generally counted for purposes of maintaining staff/child ratios.

- The director and all childcare staff must have 15 hours of in-service training annually.
- All staff must have current medical reports on file and are subject to background checks for any record of criminal conviction or child abuse and neglect.
- A person certified in first aid, including CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, must be present at all times.
- All childcare staff in a facility licensed to care for newborns and infants must have training on the nature of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), SIDS and safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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#### Group Size and Staff Requirements:

AGE OF CHILDREN	STAFF/CHILD RATIO	MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE
Infants (6 weeks through 14 months)	1 to 4	12
Toddlers (15 through 23 months)	1 to 5	15
Two years	1 to 8	16
Three years	1 to 10	20
Four years	1 to 10	20
Five years (preschool)	1 to 20	20
School-age: Kindergartners present	1 to 20	30

**Exception:** One early childhood teacher and an assistant may supervise a group of up to 30 children if all of the children are at least five years of age.

Whenever children of different ages are combined, the staff/child ratio and minimum group size must be based on the age of the youngest child in the group.

#### General Program Requirements

- Parents must be allowed to visit the center without an appointment any time during normal hours of operation.
- Staff must demonstrate respect for each child enrolled regardless of gender, ability, cultural, ethnic or religious differences.
- There must be a balance of active and quiet activity. Children of all ages shall be encouraged to participate daily in at least 2 occasions of age appropriate outdoor time, with active movement or play for mobile children.
- In preschool programs where children receive care for less than three hours per day, outdoor activity is not required.
- Children may not be left unattended at any time.

#### Infants and Toddlers

- Infants and toddlers must be in separate spaces away from older children.
- A refrigerator and sink must be easily accessible.
- Toys and indoor equipment must be cleaned and disinfected daily. Safe, durable equipment and play materials must be provided.
- Either the day care center or the parent may provide food for infants not consuming table food. Feeding times and amounts consumed must be documented in writing.
- No food other than formula, milk, breast milk or water may be placed in a bottle for infant feeding. Microwaves are not to be used for bottle warming.

- Infants must be placed on their backs to sleep.
- The facility must have a clearly defined diaper changing area with the procedures for changing diapers clearly posted. A hand-washing sink must be accessible for hand washing.
- Staff changing diapers must wash their hands and the child's hands with soap and running water after diapering.
- Information about feeding, elimination and other important information must be recorded in writing and made available to parents when the child is picked up at the end of the day.
- Only new cribs manufactured on or after June 28, 2011 can be utilized.

### **School-Age Children**

- The facility must have a designated area for school-age children so they do not interfere with the care of younger children.
- Clear definitions of responsibility and procedures are to be established among parent, day care center and school when children move to and from school.
- A variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials must be available for children. Opportunities must be provided to do homework, if requested.

### **Evening, Night and Weekend Care**

- Family-like groups of mixed ages are allowed.
- Staff must be awake at all times and in the sleeping area whenever children are sleeping.
- Dependent on age, each child must have an individual cot, bed or crib.
- An evening meal and a bedtime snack must be served.
- Breakfast must be served to all children who have been at the facility throughout the night and are present between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

### **Enrollment and Discharge**

- Parents must be provided the names, business address and telephone number of persons legally responsible for the program.
- Parents must be provided, in writing, information on the program, fees, arrival and departure policies explaining to the parents and guardians what actions the caregiver will take if children are not picked up at the agreed upon time as well as policies related to guidance and discipline policies.
- Parents must complete an enrollment application, which includes a certified copy of their child's birth certificate (which will be copied by the center and returned to the parent), emergency numbers, and persons authorized to pick up their child.
- A child may only be released to a parent or other responsible person designated by the parent in writing.
- Daily arrival and departure logs must be kept by the center.

### **Guidance and Discipline**

- Parents must be given a copy of the guidance and discipline policy.
- The following are prohibited:
  - corporal punishment
  - threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest or use of the bathroom
  - abusive or profane language
  - public or private humiliation
  - emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing or isolating a child.
- "Time-out" is to be limited to one minute per year of age. "Time-out" may not be used for children less than two years of age.

**Transportation**

- The driver must be 21 years of age and hold a driver's license that has been continuously valid for three years.
- Children must not be allowed to stand or sit on the floor of the vehicle. Age-appropriate safety restraints must be used when transporting children in vehicles other than school buses.
- Any vehicle used to transport children must have liability insurance coverage in an amount required by statute.
- The driver must make sure that a responsible person is present to take charge of a child when delivered to his or her destination.

**Health Requirements for Children**

- Parents or guardians of infants, toddlers and preschool children enrolling in day care for the first time must provide a medical report dated fewer than 6 months prior to enrollment; children transferring from another licensed day care center may use their current medical report, if it is less than one year old.
- Parents of guardians of school-age children may submit a copy of the most recent regularly scheduled school physical (even if it is more than 6 months old) or the day care center may require a more recent medical report by its own enrollment policy.
- A medical report indicating that the child has been appropriately immunized must be on file for each child. Parents are encouraged to be informed about childhood immunizations by going to the following Website: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/pgci.htm>. A tuberculin skin test is to be included in the initial exam unless waived by a physician.
- The medical report is valid for two years for infants and preschool children. Exams for school-age children are required consistent with the requirements of the public schools.
- Children aged one to six years must have either a lead risk assessment or a lead screening.
- Water must be freely available to all children.
- Children's hands must be washed with soap and water upon arrival at the center, before and after meals or using the toilet, after wiping or blowing their noses, after outdoor play and after coming into contact with any soiled objects.
- Prescription and non-prescription medication may be accepted only in its original container. The center must maintain a record of the dates, times administered, dosages, prescription number (if applicable) and the name of the person administering the medication.
- Medication must be kept in locked cabinets or other containers that are inaccessible to children.

**Nutrition and Meals**

- Menus must be posted.
- Meals and snacks must meet nutritional guidelines and shall be prepared so as to moderate fat and sodium content.
- Children in care two to five hours must be served a snack. Children in care five to 10 hours must be served a meal and two snacks or two meals and one snack. Children in care more than 10 hours must be served two meals and two snacks or one meal and three snacks.

**Napping and Sleeping**

- Children under six years of age who remain five or more hours must have the opportunity to rest or nap.
- Infants must sleep in safe, sturdy, freestanding cribs or portable cribs.
- Toddlers may use either stacking cots or full-size cribs.
- A cot or bed must be provided for each toddler or preschool child in attendance five or more hours. Each cot, bed or crib must be labeled with the name of the child.

**Physical Space**

- Infants and toddlers must be housed and cared for at ground level unless special approval has been granted from the Department.

- Indoor space must provide a safe, comfortable environment for the children. Floors and floor coverings must be washable and free from drafts and dampness.
- Toilets and lavatories must be readily accessible to the children.
- Hot and cold running water must be provided.
- Hazardous items must be inaccessible to children.
- Parents must be notified before pesticides are applied.
- Lead paint or asbestos removal must be in accordance with public health standards and statute.
- Exits must be unlocked and clear of equipment and debris.
- Drills for fire and tornado must be conducted. A floor plan must be posted in every room indicating the areas providing the most safety in the case of a tornado and the primary and secondary exit routes in case of fire.
- Smoking or the use of tobacco products in any form is prohibited in the childcare center or in the presence of children while on the playground or on trips away from the center.
- The facility must test for radon at least every 3 years and post the results in an area visible to parents, along with an informative notice about the effects of radon.
- Play materials must be durable and free from hazardous characteristics.
- The facility may not use or have on the premises any unsafe children's product as described in the Children's Product Safety Act. Lists of unsafe children's products and recalls from 1989 forward are available at: <http://srs.dph.illinois.gov/webapp/SRSApp/pages/>.
- The facility must be cleaned daily and kept in sanitary condition at all times.
- First-aid kits must be maintained and readily available for use.

#### **Outdoor Play Area**

- Play space must be fenced or otherwise enclosed or protected from traffic and other hazards. There must be a shaded area in summer to protect children from excessive sun exposure.
- All areas of the outdoor play space must be visible to staff at all times.
- Equipment must be free of sharp points or comers, splinters, protruding nails or bolts, loose or rusty parts, the potential for entrapment and/or other hazards.
- Protective surfaces must be provided under equipment from which a child might fall.
- All swimming pools must be fenced or otherwise inaccessible to children.
- During hours of operation and at all times that children are present there must be a means for parents of enrolled children to have direct telephone contact with a center staff person.

**This summary has been developed to assist parents in monitoring the care provided by the day care center. Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers may be accessed through the DCFS website: [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov). You may also contact your nearest DCFS office for assistance. Locations of DCFS offices are also available on the DCFS website. Locations of DCFS offices are available on the DCFS website.**

## CHERRY PRESCHOOL BOARD

		CHILD	CLASS
<b>Katie O'Shaughnessy, President</b>	kculhane@gmail.com	JP	4 AM STEM
<b>Katy Shapiro, Vice President</b>	katywshapiro@gmail.com	Oliver	AM Pre-K
<b>Sarah Weidaw, Treasurer</b>	sarahweidaw@gmail.com	Elsie	AM Pre-K
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