



**2017-2018 Gorham Cooperative Preschool
Parent HandBook [Final Edit 10-2017]**

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Hello GCP Families,

Welcome to preschool, a place for you and your children to grow together!

It's official; you are now a member of a cooperative organization. Our families share their time, talents, and energy to create a unique preschool community that serves 46 children and their families.

Our preschool is for children. It is a safe and supportive place to pursue and explore their ideas. Gorham Cooperative may provide a very different preschool experience than the traditional one you are familiar with. Most of the time preschoolers must learn to function in an adult world. The magic of Gorham Cooperative Preschool lies in the unique opportunity for adults to learn better how to function in a preschooler's world. By playing together, teaching positive behavior and problem solving happens alongside, rather than from above.

Our hope is that this handbook will shine some light on the developmental needs that inform our program philosophies and policies. This handbook will address many of your questions about the practical workings of the school. Class schedules, safety information, details about parent participation, snack preparation-are covered here. Whether you're new or returning for your second, third, or even fifth(!) year at GCP, please read this entire handbook. In an organization with so many diffused responsibilities and members, transfer of knowledge can be a challenge. This handbook is an essential resource.

While the handbook serves as a guide to classroom issues and much of our school business, it's far from comprehensive. When you're unsure, please ask! Your teachers, board members, and fellow co-op parents may have answers.

We look forward to sharing the year with you at Gorham Co-op!

Sincerely,
Executive Board
Gorham Cooperative Preschool

Contents

ABOUT GORHAM COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL	7
Overview of Gorham Cooperative Preschool	7
Definition of a Cooperative	7
Philosophy	7
Parent’s Responsibilities	8
PROGRAMS AND TUITION	9
Available Programs	9
School Hours of Operation	10
Tuition	10
Tuition Payment Policy	10
OUR CLASSROOM	11
Areas within the Preschool	11
Daily Schedule	12
Early Arrivals	13
Playground Use and Safety	13
Snacks	14
PARENT HELPER GUIDE	14
Schedules	14
The Role of a Parent Helper	15
Start of Class Preparations	15
Cleaning Duties	15
GUIDANCE IN THE CLASSROOM	16
Philosophy of Child Guidance	16
Encouraging Appropriate Behavior	16
Guiding Children’s Mistaken Behavior	17
Cooling Down Time	18

Bullying	19
Expulsion Policy	19
Behavior and Discipline Plan	20
Student Status Review Procedures	21
HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES	22
Accident Procedures	22
Administration of Medications	22
Allergies	22
Communicable Disease	22
Emergency Contact Information	23
Emergency Procedures	23
Evacuation and Fire Drills	23
Illness at School	24
Immunization	24
Injury Report	24
Infection Control Procedures	24
Hot Beverages	25
Sexual Misconduct Policy	25
GENERAL INFORMATION & POLICIES	26
Absences	26
Abuse and Neglect	26
Allergy Program	26
Approved Snacks	26
Birthday Celebrations	27
Book Club	27
Bulletin Boards	27
Bylaws	27
Clothing	27
Communication System	27
Confidentiality	28
Cubbies	28
Drop Off Program	28

Program Evaluations	28
Field Trips	28
Fundraising	29
Giving Tree	29
Hand Washing Policy	29
Holidays	29
Inclusion	29
Insurance	30
Licensing	30
Meetings	30
Outdoor Play	30
Parent/Teacher Conferences	30
Parking	30
Photographs	31
Pick Up Alternatives	31
Referral Policy	31
Reimbursement Policy	32
School Address & Phone Number	32
School Calendar	32
School Pictures	32
Smoking Restrictions	32
Snow Policy	32
Toys from Home	32
SCHOOL CALENDAR	33
PARENT BODY CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT (COPY ONLY)	35
ALLERGY AND SNACK POLICY	36
Policy Statement	36
Daily Snacks	36
Celebratory Snacks	36
Annual Allergy Plan Development	37
Banned Allergens:	37
Medical Management	37

Risk Reduction – Classrooms	38
Risk Reduction – Field Trips	38
Risk Reduction – Preparing for an Emergency	39
Allergy Protocol	39
Potential Food Risks	39
Identification of Children at Risk	39
Availability and Location of Allergy Medications and EpiPens	40
Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction	41
Anaphylactic Treatment Protocol	42
2017-2018 Allergy Plan	42
2017-2018 APPROVED CELEBRATORY SNACK LIST	43

ABOUT GORHAM COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

Overview of Gorham Cooperative Preschool

The Gorham Cooperative Preschool was established in January 1968 by a group of parents who shared an interest in a quality preschool experience for their children. The preschool is a non-profit, non-sectarian, non-discriminatory organization licensed by the state of Maine.

Definition of a Cooperative

The cooperative preschool experience offers a unique opportunity for both parents and children. The school is run by parents for their children. Member responsibilities include electing an Executive Board from within the Parent Body and working together to provide the best school environment. The Executive Board hires the teacher(s), sets up Standing Committees, determines policies and procedures and responds to the requests of the Parent Body as a whole.

Our Lead Teacher is responsible for the classroom programs. Often there is a parent helper in the classroom. All families are assigned days during which they are responsible for providing a fruit or vegetable and their child is responsible for bringing a share item. This day will also be when families are required to be the parent helper unless they have chosen to opt-out. This system creates a special day for each child in the class.

At least one parent per family serves on a Standing Committee assisting teachers and facilitating various functions to help the preschool operate. Parents and teachers attend Parent Meetings to conduct preschool business.

Philosophy

The mission of the preschool is to provide each child an opportunity for social and emotional growth which will help individual growth. The program will nourish each child intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially. The school will embrace an inclusive mindset and welcome families and children with varied needs and backgrounds. The preschool philosophy is to provide developmentally appropriate activities that nurture the whole child through a play-based curriculum. Skills that help children adjust to the structured school environment are introduced.

Learning is a natural and ongoing phenomenon, which emerges as we interact with our environment. As young children play, they develop strategies and form relationships that enable them to create a world that makes sense. At Gorham Cooperative Preschool, we believe it is our responsibility to provide opportunities for preschoolers to explore, experiment and grow in a safe, nurturing and age appropriate arena.

Parents are the first and ultimately the best and most influential teachers. To this end, we are dedicated to providing services to our community within the context of the family. Parents are provided opportunities and are encouraged to assist in many aspects of school development and operation.

Establishing a genuine partnership between children, parents and teachers in an educational setting benefits everyone.

Our program is committed to:

- ❖ Helping children develop and maintain a positive self-image.
- ❖ Promoting the development of the whole child by fostering a variety of skills including social, emotional, cognitive, language, creativity, fine motor, gross motor and self-help.
- ❖ Providing an environment where children can be active learners, make decisions, accept responsibility for their actions and understand limits.
- ❖ Providing an environment fostering trust, communication and responsibility.
- ❖ Encouraging children to problem solve both individually and as a group.
- ❖ Providing a stimulating environment that helps children develop a love of learning.
- ❖ Aiding children in successfully communicating their thoughts, feelings and ideas through language, art, music and dance.
- ❖ Exposing children to colors, shapes, letters, numbers, science activities, math activities, name recognition, simple writing and much more.

Parents' Responsibilities

The unique nature of a cooperative preschool allows parents to develop relationships with the teachers, students, and one another. Working together to provide the best possible school environment is a shared goal. Understanding that we are all acting in good faith with a view to the best interests of the preschool, we should keep an open mind, exercise informed judgment, and when and if you disagree, disagree with ideas and motions, not individuals.

To be considered a member in "good standing" a member must fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. Elect an Executive Board. Each family is entitled to one vote regardless of the number of children enrolled.
2. Sign a Confidentiality Agreement and a Criminal Conviction Disclosure Statement.
3. Participate as parent helper on assigned day or choose to pay an opt-out fee as part of tuition.
4. Attend every Parent Meeting. Members are the governing body of our school; therefore, attendance is mandatory.
5. Hold a minimum of one position as either an Executive Board member or a committee member, regardless of the number of children enrolled.
6. Provide transportation to and from school and for field trips.
7. Participate in all official school fundraisers. In order to keep the cost of tuition affordable, participation in official fundraising events is imperative.
8. Satisfy all financial responsibilities.

9. Provide up to date immunization records for your child. Inform teacher(s) of any allergy or infectious disease information.
10. Conduct themselves in a professional and rational manner at all times while on preschool property or while attending a preschool function.
11. Be familiar with school Bylaws and contents of the Parent Handbook.
12. Voice any issues or concerns to an Executive Board member.
13. Be familiar with school's emergency YIKES procedures and sign transportation agreement.

Membership responsibilities include but are not limited to the aforementioned. Failure to meet the membership requirements as stated above, without approval from the Executive Board, will result in the member receiving a letter from the Secretary as a reminder of membership responsibilities. Loss of "good standing" will occur upon receipt of a second notification and the member will be required to meet with the Executive Board to discuss membership responsibilities. Membership may be terminated without a refund of paid tuition by vote of the Executive Board for failure to comply with the obligations aforementioned.²

PROGRAMS AND TUITION

Available Programs

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 2-Day AM Program | The 2-day morning program meets on Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30 – 11:00 a.m. The recommended age for children in this program is 3 years old by October 15 th of the school year. Children must be potty trained. |
| 2-Day PM Program | The 2-day afternoon program meets on Tuesday and Thursday from 12:00 – 2:30 pm. This class will include 4 year olds. The minimum age for children in this program is 3 years old by October 15 th of the school year. Children must be potty trained. |
| 3-Day AM Program | The 3-Day programs meet on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. The recommended age for children in this program is 4 years old by October 15 th of the school year. Children must be potty trained. |
| Extended Program | The 3-Day program is an optional extension for current 3 Day AM program members, and runs from 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. on Monday and Friday. The minimum age for children in this program is 4 years old by October 15 th of the school year. Children must be potty trained. |

² Article XIV of GCP Bylaws

3-Day PM Program The 3-Day program meets on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 12:00 – 2:30 p.m. This is a multi-age class that includes both 3 and 4 year olds on Tuesday and Thursday. The minimum age for children in this program is 4 years old by October 15th of the school year. Children must be potty trained.

School Hours of Operation

The preschool will be in session:

8:30 – 11:00 a.m.	Tuesday/Thursday	2-Day AM Class
12:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Tuesday/Thursday	2-Day PM Class
8:30 – 11:30 p.m.	Monday/Wednesday/Friday	3-Day AM Class
12:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday	3-Day PM Class
11:30 - 2:30 p.m.	Monday/Friday	Extended Day Program

GCP generally follows the same holiday schedule as the Gorham Public Schools system and are guided by their “no school” announcements with few exceptions. GCP asks families to refer to the GCP Calendar at the rear of this handbook.³

Tuition

Tuition for all programs is recommended by the Executive Board and voted on by the Parent Body each year. Tuition may increase slightly in order to meet operating expenses. Tuition may only be increased by a majority vote of the Parent Body.

Tuition Payment Policy

Tuition may be paid electronically via PayPal on the Preschool’s website, placed in the tuition box in the preschool, or mailed to:

Gorham Cooperative Preschool
 28 Ball Park Rd.
 Gorham, ME 04038
 DUE DATE: 1st of each month

For every child who is registered in the preschool, a deposit of one month’s tuition must be paid by June 1st and will be counted as the following June’s tuition. Monthly tuition is payable on the first of each month. Monthly tuition not paid by the 10th of each month will be assessed a late fee of \$10 or an amount to be determined by the Executive Board. If tuition is not paid by the 10th of the month, a warning will be given by the Treasurer. If tuition is not paid by the 20th of the month, as a second warning, a written notification will be sent by the Secretary. Failure to pay tuition within the 30-day delinquency period, without approval of the Executive Board, may be grounds for expulsion. 3-Day families that have not fulfilled their financial commitment will not be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony. 2-Day families that have not fulfilled their financial commitment will no longer be members in “good standing” and will forfeit their position in the preschool for the following year.

³ Article IV of GCP Bylaws

In extenuating circumstances, families experiencing financial hardship may appeal to the Executive Board for special tuition arrangements. There is no reduced tuition for members with multiple children enrolled in the preschool. Any charges incurred by the preschool due to check(s) being returned “non-payable for insufficient funds” will be paid by the member.⁴

The preschool community is dedicated to its members and offers assistance to our member families experiencing financial hardship. Scholarship funds are available for families who are experiencing difficulty. Families seeking scholarship should appeal to the Co-Chairs of the Executive Board for information about the application process. This information will be kept confidential. Final approval must be sought from the Executive Board.

OUR CLASSROOM

Areas within the Preschool

The preschool is divided into areas designed to provide multifaceted opportunities for preschoolers to explore, experiment and grow in a safe, nurturing and age appropriate arena. These areas include:

<i>Dramatic Play Area</i>	This area of the preschool stimulates dramatic play through the use of dress-up clothes and accessories, playhouse appliances, pretend food, dolls and simulated realistic life experiences. The props for this area will change according to the current unit of study and interest of children.
<i>Art Area</i>	The children will be offered daily art projects. Adults assist only when needed. Freedom of expression is encouraged.. Supplies for art are kept in labeled bins and on shelves. Students have free access to these materials during free choice time.
<i>Block Area</i>	The block area provides a place where children can build with a large assortment of blocks. Block buildings are to be only chest high to the children. Materials that work well with blocks, like cars or dollhouse items, will be made available and changed out depending on children’s interests and the needs of the classroom.
<i>Library/Oval Area</i>	This is a place for children to look at books. Parents may choose to read to children in this area. This area is large and shares space with the block area. If a quieter area is desired books can be brought elsewhere in the classroom.
<i>Listening Station</i>	Near the back of the classroom there is a cart with a CD player and 2 headphones. Students can sit and listen to books on CD but an adult should assist when the CD is being changed.
<i>Writing Table</i>	The writing center provides paper, pencils, crayons and markers so that children can draw or write. Sometimes the writing table is incorporated into the dramatic play area depending on the current theme.
<i>Sensory Table</i>	The sensory table contains various materials and mediums for students to use and manipulate.

⁴ Article IX of GCP Bylaws

<i>Free Choice Shelves</i>	There are two shelving units that contain a variety of materials children can use during free choice. These materials are rotated throughout the year and typically include puzzles, blocks, science equipment and simple games.
<i>Play Dough Table</i>	Play dough is a well-loved and always available material. The rectangle table near the bathroom is the only place where children should use play dough.
<i>Easel</i>	The easel will be supplied with either paint, chalk or markers. Students may need help taking down finished work.
<i>Car Rug Area</i>	This area contains materials that are best used on a floor instead of a table. Examples of such materials include train tracks, marble run, car mountain and our dollhouse.
<i>Alone Area</i>	The alone corner is a small, cozy, nook in our classroom that contains beanbag chairs, a selection of books, and a few small manipulatives. This section of our classroom gives students a place to go if they want to be alone, or if they need a few minutes to process a big emotion before talking to a friend or teacher. Children are not encouraged to use this space for play.
<i>Cubby Room</i>	The cubby room is used for storing personal items or projects belonging to students, as well as coats and bags upon arrival. It is also used for special projects between students and teachers, such as assessments and handwriting. Children should not be in the cubby room without permission.
<i>Office</i>	This area provides storage for the teachers' materials, seasonal items, crafts and supplies, as well as equipment such as the copier, microwave, and laminator. This area is off-limits to the students.
<i>Outside Equipment</i>	The playground equipment is specifically designed for the needs of preschoolers. While supervising this area, please follow safety guidelines.

Daily Schedule

Arrival

Parent Helpers and their children arrive, review the day's activities, and help with last minute preparation and set-up. Students arrive, hang up coats/backpacks and say goodbye to parents. Everyone uses hand sanitizer to clean hands before entering the cubby room or classroom. Parents or guardians note the time of arrival on the the sign in/sign out sheets.

Free Choice

Children are free to explore the room and choose where and what to play. Parent helper assists as needed in the classroom, mainly by playing alongside the children. Children are given ample time to learn at their own pace and focus on their own areas of interest.

Clean Up

Children put away toys in preparation for Oval Time.

Oval Time

This time includes taking attendance, marking our daily calendar, singing songs, playing games and discussing small group activities. Big Helper introduces Parent Helper and shares the Share Bag.

Small Group and Book Browsing

Children are split into small groups to complete an assigned game, activity or craft. Parent helper will either assist or lead a small group. Children look at books while waiting for classmates to finish.

Story Time

Children gather together to hear a story. Parent Helpers clean tables and prepare snack. Big Helper may assist Parent Helper, if desired. Parent Helper may assist children in hand-washing before snack time.

Snack Time

When all children are seated, children enjoy their daily snack. They are encouraged to pour their own water and clean up their own spills. When children are finished with snack they clean their place setting before leaving the snack area. Parent Helpers assist during snack time and wipe down tables after snack time is complete.

Outdoor Play

Parent Helpers may help dress children for outdoor play and make sure art projects and share toys are in the children's cubbies. Parent Helper can remain inside to clean up from the day's activities and prepare the room for the next session. One teacher will stay in the building until all children have finished snack and dressed for outside.

Dismissal, Goodbye Song

Children will be either outside (weather permitting) or inside the classroom when parents arrive. If inside, parents are encouraged to stay out of the classroom until the session is dismissed. Prior to entering the playground or classroom parents/guardians should gather child's belongings, check parent pocket and sign their child out by noting the time and writing initials on the sign in/out sheet. Children will end the day with the Goodbye Song and teachers will call out the names of the children, who will proceed to their parents.

Early Arrivals

Upon entering the classroom the teachers welcome your children with warm and enthusiastic greetings. If you arrive early the teachers will interrupt their planning time to greet your child. Therefore it is important that if you arrive early you remain outside, in your car, or on the playground until 8:30 for the morning classes and 12:00 for the afternoon classes. Also, arriving after 8:45 a.m. for the morning classes or after 12:15 p.m. for the afternoon classes will reduce the amount of time your child has for free play/free choice time. Please be prompt so that your child has a chance to explore our classroom.

Playground Use and Safety

Using the playground with siblings while school is in session can be very disruptive. The children in the classroom will be drawn to the activity outside the windows. Please consider using Robie Park as an alternative during school hours.

On extended days (Monday and Friday) children not participating in extended day are welcome to stay on the playground until 12:00 at which time extended day students will be transitioning to rest time and will need a quiet environment.

The teachers are very happy to see their “friends” using the playground before school, after school and during their lunch break. Children should be supervised at all times while on the playground. If you are a parent helper and are cleaning the classroom at the end of the school day please have your preschooler and siblings in the classroom with you or ask another parent to supervise them on the playground. If you are in the morning session and stay to play after class has ended, please be mindful of the time and vacate the playground prior to the beginning of the afternoon session.

Consistency is a very effective instructional tool! We ask that parents encourage their children to follow the same rules on the playground when school is not in session as the teachers encourage during school time.

We may play Tag with our friends but we tag gently, using just one finger.

We may not throw sand or rubber chips.

We use the stairs to go up and slides to go down.

We may not jump off the slides or climb up high on the outside of the play structure.

We may not climb on the chain link fence, tree or rock wall.

We may not use cars, trucks or other play toys on the play structure or slides.

We may dig only in the sandbox.

The bench is for sitting only.

Please keep in mind that children often become over stimulated and easily frustrated when they are engaged in fast, energetic play. Children may forget to use their words instead of their bodies to solve a problem. What starts out as a fun game can escalate quickly. Please keep a close eye on your little people.

Snacks

For healthy growth and development, children need snacks and fluids between meals. Snacks should be nutritious and age-appropriate. Parent Helpers are asked to bring a fruit or vegetable snack for the children on the days that they are in the classroom. Please read the Allergy and Snack Policy for guidance on how the school manages the allergy risks for our members. In addition to providing a part of the child’s daily food intake, snack time can offer important learning opportunities:

To try new foods, and explore how they look, feel, sound and smell

To develop social skills by talking and being with others

To discuss how food is produced, prepared, its importance to growth, etc.

To develop a willingness to try different things through eating new foods

To learn age-appropriate table manners

To share special events like birthdays or holidays

PARENT HELPER GUIDE

Schedules

Parent Helper schedules are prepared prior to the first day of school by your Class Coordinators. We understand that in some instances you may not be able to fulfill your scheduled time. In such cases, you are responsible for switching days with another parent from your child's class. You are welcome to switch your scheduled time with another parent, however, please notify the Class Coordinator and teachers about any change in the Parent Helper schedules.

If illness prevents you from attending school on the day you are scheduled to be the Parent Helper, please arrange a Parent Helper substitute within your class. Class coordinators can be contacted to help find a sub. Please call the school after arranging a substitute and let the teachers know of the change.

The Role of a Parent Helper

The parent helper should interact and help throughout the classroom. This could include helping with crafts, reading books to children, playing games with children, or escorting children to wash their hands. Parent helpers and other adults are welcome to give gentle reminders about rules and expectations but teachers are the prime providers of guidance in the classroom. If a Parent Helper is unable to easily resolve a conflict, a teacher should be summoned to handle the situations. Please discuss any guidance concerns with a teacher. Parent Helpers do not assist children in the bathroom or handle first aid needs.

Assisting and being with your child in class is one of the joys and privileges of being in a cooperative preschool. Have fun and don't worry about remembering it all. The teachers are there for you if you have any questions or concerns.

Start of the Class Preparations

- Arrive 5 minutes prior to class.
- Dress in clothes that are comfortable, can get messy and are appropriate for the outside weather.
- Bring a healthy fresh fruit or vegetable to share with the class, a roll of paper towels and your child's item for the share bag
- Remind children to use hand sanitizer or wash hands upon arrival at school and prior to entering the classroom.
- Escort children from their cars when Parent Drop Off Program is in effect from 8:30-8:40, or 12:00-12:10. The Drop Off Program is optional and only applies to 3 day students after teacher's decide the students are ready to handle this program.

Cleaning Duties

On-Going

Ensure that spills that could be a safety concern are cleaned up. If possible involve children in the cleaning of spills. Refresh wipes, toilet paper and paper towels as needed. Wash hands as needed (upon arrival, before snack, after blowing nose or using the bathroom).

Snack Time

During story time, spray and wipe snack table with cleaning solution. Children are not allowed to help with this step. Wash your own hands in preparation for snack. Set a place for each child with a placemat, paper plate and cup. Your child can help with this step. Snack is distributed when everyone is seated. Children are encouraged to clean up their own spills. When finished eating children take care of their plate, cup and leftover snack.

End of Class

Once students are outside on the playground or participating in indoor recess activities the parent helper will clean the classroom.

- Wipe down all classroom tables and chairs.
- Sweep and vacuum floors.
- Put away any stray toys.
- Clean all dishes and other items used for food preparation. Store in appropriate location.
- Clean countertop and sink area.
- Clean bathroom – empty trash and wipe down counters, sink and toilet.
- Wipe down doorknobs and light switches to control germs.
- Trash
 - AM Class: Compress trash in large white trash can.
 - PM Class: Compress all trash into one bag and discard in dumpster across the street.
- Recycling
 - The classroom has a recycling bin for paper, plastic and metals. When the recycling bin is full either bring the items home to add to your own recycling or dispose of the items in the dumpster.

GUIDANCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Philosophy of Child Guidance

Guidance is the means by which we help children learn about working together, self-control, decision making, problem solving and conflict resolution in an encouraging atmosphere that maintains their self-esteem. Young children are just learning how to get along in a group. The role of the teacher is to help children learn acceptable ways to express and meet their needs. Teachers give children cues about which behaviors to maintain or avoid and which alternative behaviors may be more successful. The overall

guidance policy is aimed at creating an encouraging classroom environment that helps children develop social skills.

Encouraging Appropriate Behavior

We will work to create a caring, inclusive, responsive environment for your child that offers opportunities for large group, small group and individual interactions. The following are some strategies used in the classroom to create an encouraging environment that teaches social skills and cooperation.

1. Teach children to recognize and accept how they and others are feeling, and what the names are for those feelings. This can be done using facial expression pictures or storybooks.
2. When a child is upset or angry, acknowledge how that child is feeling. (e.g., “I can see that you are angry because your tower was knocked over.”)
3. Avoid singling out an individual child publicly for either praise or criticism. Keep your encouragement and guidance private in order not to embarrass them or compare them to others.
4. Teach children acceptable, non-hurting ways to express strong emotions. This can be done through techniques such as role-playing or storybooks. Reinforce this teaching with guidance or encouragement when a child is actually experiencing strong emotions.
5. Teach children conflict resolution skills, such as taking turns, expressing their points of view and coming up with alternative solutions. Once again, this can be done through techniques such as role-playing, puppetry and storytelling. Reinforce this teaching with guidance or encouragement when a conflict actually occurs.
6. Model for the child how to work with others in a group and accept the differences between members of the group.
7. Always affirm for the children how important and special and worthy each of them is as an individual and a member of the class or group.
8. When talking with a child, get yourself in close proximity to the child, get down to their eye level and let them know they have your full attention and make sure you have theirs.
9. Focus on children’s behavior rather than attitudes or personality characteristics. Label by name the behavior of the child that is either positive or negative. Avoid labels such as you’re a “good/bad” child or that they were not nice.
In addition, give the child a description of the expected behavior and the reason behind the expectation. (e.g., “Hitting is not okay, it hurts our friends. We need to use friendly, gentle touches.” instead of “You are bad for hitting.”)
10. Avoid using guilt, shame or comparisons. (e.g., “You may not hit Susie with the block.” instead of “You should be ashamed of yourself for hitting Susie, you like her.”)

Guiding Children's Mistaken Behavior

Even in an encouraging environment, conflicts are going to occur. It is helpful to think of conflict in terms of *mistaken* behaviors rather than *mis*behaviors. The following are some tips for guiding children's behavior to help them learn from their mistakes and recognize their successes.

1. Let children work it out for themselves. Often we are tempted to jump in too soon. Give the children a chance to work it out. You can either pretend not to notice anything, or you can subtly let the children see you watching and listening. After the issue is resolved, you may want to give a specific comment to reinforce positive behaviors. (e.g., "I really appreciate how you've all waited your turn. Now everyone can have a chance to play.")
2. Comment on what you see, without offering solutions. Often just the "reminder" will prompt children to solve the problem (e.g., "I see the sandbox toys scattered all over the playground.")
3. Reinforce rules in a positive manner when possible. (e.g., "Ride on the cement." instead of "Don't ride on the grass."; "We keep the sand in the sandbox." instead of "Don't dump the sand out of the sandbox.")
4. When you need to intervene in a conflict situation, ask questions. Instead of rushing to judge, let the children express their views about what is happening.
5. Always go to the victim first. If a conflict occurs between two children and one is obviously the victim, always tend to the victim first.
6. Help children brainstorm solutions. Without offering your own solutions, ask the children, "What could we do to (fill in the blank)" (e.g., "What could we do to make sure everyone gets a turn with the monkey?") If the children need more intervention, then you could offer some solutions of your own.
7. Do not force a child to say, "I'm sorry". Often this is forcing them to lie. Children are developing empathy and may not cognitively understand what it means to feel "sorry". Instead, have the child come up with a way to make the other child feel better by making restitution. (For example, possible solutions could be to help rebuild the tower that was knocked down, or bring your friend a special item if they are sad.)
8. Give the child a choice if you intend on leaving it up to them. (e.g., "You may either wear your hat or your hood.") AND don't give them an option if there truly is not an option. For example, if asked "Do you have to go to the bathroom?" Most often the child would say "no". Instead say, "It's time to go to the bathroom." Or give them a different choice that is related to the issue but does not leave an option out of the desired behavior. (e.g., "Would you like to use the big stall or the little stall in the bathroom?")
9. Redirect children's behavior. Consistently suggest alternatives to unacceptable behavior. (e.g., "You cannot throw stones, but you can throw these beanbags at a target.")
10. Give children a warning of what consequence will result from breaking a rule and follow through on the stated consequence if children continue to break the rule. (e.g., "If you do not walk out to

the playground, we will have to come back inside and try again.” if necessary, followed by, “Remember I said you had to walk out to the playground or we would have to come back in and try again? Now I need everyone to come back inside so we can practice walking out to the playground again.”)

11. When directing children’s behavior, use statements rather than questions, and avoid tagging “OK?” on the end of sentences. (e.g., say “It’s time to come in now.” rather than, “Do you want to come in now?” or “It’s time to come in now, OK?”)
12. When necessary to prevent harm, use gentle restraint. (e.g., Hold the child back from hitting another child.)
13. Use painless removal from the situation (“cooling down time) as a last resort.

Cooling Down Time

Children can experience very intense feelings such as anger, sorrow, or excitement. Sometimes these feelings are so strong that children can no longer control their behavior. They may kick, scream, hit or sob uncontrollably in an effort to express their emotions. when this happens teachers will be patient, supportive and firm in your efforts to help children regain control. In these situations, teachers usually implement a “cooling down” procedure. Cooling down means just what its name implies, children take a break from the busy classroom to regain their composure privately.

The “cooling down time” works as follows:

1. The teacher will take the child to a quiet place in the room, or immediately outside of it. This will be a safe place where the child has few distractions, will be less disturbing to other children, and where classmates have little opportunity to stare at or tease the child. When children are upset privacy helps calm them down. An audience prolongs the difficulty.
2. Once the child is in the quiet area the teacher will say something like “You’re still very upset. When you are calm we can talk about what’s bothering you”.
3. The teacher will remain with the child and if necessary carefully restrain the child from hurting himself/herself or the teacher.
4. Once the child has calmed down, the teacher will discuss the original concern with the child and accompany the child back into the classroom.
5. Later in the day the teacher will make sure to have some positive contact with the child to show that the teacher does not dislike the child because he or she lost control. Thus the purpose of the cooling down time is to help children regain control, not to punish, shame or blame children in any way.

“Cooling Down Time” is the ultimate discipline strategy used. Adults DO NOT slap, spank or ridicule children in an effort to maintain order in the classroom.

Bullying

With limited experience and newly developing social and emotional skills young children are likely to engage in behaviors that fall into the category of bullying. They aggressively pursue their own needs, pushing and hurting others in order to get what they want. They may also experiment with name calling and various negative behaviors to gain the attention of peers and adults. Teachers will routinely help children see the negative impact of such behaviors and they will teach children appropriate alternatives. Teachers will also coach children how to appropriately assert themselves when treated disrespectfully.

Expulsion Policy

The goal of preschool is to help children develop the skills needed to succeed in both school and life. A child who is expelled from preschool is denied important opportunities to develop these skills. Removal from a program also often delays the identification of and services for developmental delays and mental health issues. Our school recognizes that expulsion has become wildly overused. Our expulsion policy aims to use expulsion only as a last resort when there are serious safety concerns that cannot be reduced or eliminated with reasonable modifications. The school also recognizes that children eligible for IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Act) may not be subject to exclusionary discipline due to behavior related to a disability. Unless the safety concerns are extreme the school will follow the procedures outlined in the behavior and discipline plan.

Behavior and Discipline Plan

Conflicts may arise when children interact in a classroom setting. We will take every opportunity to teach each child ways to solve their differences in a peaceful manner. Young children also sometimes express strong emotions in an unsafe manner. We will praise and recognize positive behavior, while discouraging and constructively addressing mistaken behaviors. We believe discipline is not about punishment, but rather about teaching appropriate forms of behavior.

Positive methods will be used to redirect a child's mistaken behavior into more acceptable modes of interacting with their peers and expressing their emotions. Conflict resolution techniques will be used by our Teacher(s) to help our students learn the skills to resolve conflicts independently. Techniques teach the children good self-concepts, while helping them grow in social awareness, acquire communication skills and develop respect and empathy for others.

A child may be asked to take a break from the group for a short period of time to regain their composure privately (See *Cooling Down Time*). Behavior that results in the need for *Cooling Down Time* will be brought to the attention of the parent(s)/guardian(s).

If, after an appropriate length of time (to be decided by the Teacher(s), dependent upon the child's age and maturity), the mistaken behavior still continues, the Teacher(s) will do the following:

1. Discuss the situation with the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) privately.

2. Implement a written Student Action Plan (“SAP”) with input from the Parent(s)/Guardian(s). The plan may include referrals for student. Such referrals will be kept confidential between teachers and the involved family.
3. Begin documenting behavior and how it is addressed. Share this documentation with parent(s)/guardian(s)
4. Email Co-Chairs with pertinent information and SAP.
5. File an Incident Report if, at any time, the child harms themselves or another person. The harmed child’s Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be notified of the incident at pick-up, if feasible, or as soon as possible thereafter.

In the event that there is (A) no improvement in the mistaken behavior after an appropriate length of time (to be decided by the Teacher(s), dependent upon the child’s age and maturity), or (B) if an Incident Report is filed, then the steps below will be taken:

A conference will be scheduled with the Teacher(s), the Co-Chairs, and the Parent(s)/Guardian(s). Together, they will do the following:

1. Review the mistaken behavior taking place and review the incident report if applicable
2. Discuss other issues that may be affecting the child.
3. Develop a written three-week plan of behavior modification (“BMP”) for the classroom. During this period the Teacher(s) will document the child’s behavior and how it is addressed.
4. Review additional resources, such as reading materials.
5. Come to an understanding that the goal of the BMP is to modify the child’s behavior for continued success after the three-week timeframe and throughout their enrollment in the preschool.

At the end of this **three-week period** the Teacher(s) and the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will meet. The child’s behavior will determine further action, as follows:

- a) If the child’s behavior improves, Teacher(s) and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will review, modify and/or terminate BMP, as decided by the Teacher(s). The original SAP may remain in place for the remainder of the student’s enrollment in the program.
- b) If the same behavior occurs, Teacher(s) and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will reassess and modify the BMP, changing it for greater impact if necessary, and begin another three-week period.

If at any time during this three-week period an Incident Report is filed, the Teacher(s), the Co-Chairs, and the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will immediately meet to determine the student’s status in the preschool. Removal from the preschool may occur if no satisfactory solution can be determined. (See Student Status Review Procedure below)

At the end of the **2nd three-week period (six weeks total)**:

a) If the child's behavior improves, Teacher(s) and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will meet to review, modify and/or terminate BMP, as decided by the Teacher(s). The original SAP may remain in place for the remainder of the student's enrollment in the program.

b) If the same behavior occurs, Teacher(s), Co-Chairs and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will meet to determine the student's status in the preschool. Removal from the preschool may occur if no satisfactory solution can be determined. (See Student Status Review Procedure below)

Student Status Review Procedure

A summary of the information regarding the student's behavior will be provided to the Executive Board for review. The Executive Board, based on recommendations provided by the Teacher(s) and Co-Chairs, may vote on the student's removal from the preschool. We believe in inclusion, that children with varying needs should all be in a learning environment together. The removal may be either:

1. Temporary – The amount of time away and conditions for return will be determined by the Executive Board.
2. Permanent – As approved by the Executive Board.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

Accident Procedures

In the case of an accident or a medical emergency, a child will be given immediate first aid and the school will immediately attempt to reach a parent. All staff is trained in first aid and CPR, as required by DHHS. If we cannot reach a parent, we will contact the child's doctor. If necessary, the school will also call an ambulance. Until arrival of the parent, doctor or ambulance, the teacher will be responsible for the care of the child. If the emergency warrants a trip to the hospital, and a parent is not available, a teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance and into the medical center. The remaining teacher and Parent Helper will then assume responsibility for the class.

In the event of an accident or medical emergency, the teacher will complete an Injury Report. The Injury Report will be signed by the injured student's parent and a teacher. The report shall be filed in the child's file and a copy shall remain in the school files. Injury Report forms and school log are kept in the preschool.

Administration of Medications

The preschool shall administer prescription medication only upon written order from a physician or according to the labeled instructions on the original medicine container and with a written, signed and dated request from the parent. The preschool shall record the administration of all medications, including the amount, time, date and signature of the administrator of the medication.

The preschool shall not administer any non-prescription medications to a child without written, signed and dated parental permission naming the medication and dosage. Verbal permission is allowed in emergencies if the provider makes a written note and then gets written permission from the parent as soon as possible.

Allergies

The school will keep relevant information about all children with allergies posted in a prominent place for quick and easy reference. *(See Allergy Management Program)*

Communicable Disease

Please notify the school as soon as possible if your child has contracted a communicable disease. Health Department rules must be followed concerning exclusion from school. If children in school have been exposed to a communicable disease, all parents will be notified.

Please keep your child home if he/she has any of the following:

A fever or has had one within the previous 24 hours.

A constant cough or heavy nasal discharge or bouts of sneezing.

The child is fussy, cranky and "not himself/herself".

Is overtired from unusual activity such as travel, company or holidays.

The child has symptoms of a communicable disease.

Diarrhea within the past 24 to 48 hours and/or Vomiting within the past 24 hours.

A rash that has not yet been identified by the child's physician.

Please also note:

If your child has Strep, wait until your child has had three doses of antibiotic or 24 hours has elapsed before sending your child to school.

If your child has Chickenpox, wait until all scabs are dried up before sending your child to school.

If your child has Conjunctivitis (pink eye) your child must visit the physician to obtain treatment and may not return to school until 24 hours after the start of treatment.

If your child has Lice it must be treated, all mites should be dead and removed from your child's head, and there should be no visible nits before the child may return to school. Your child's teacher and GCP Co Chairs should be notified immediately of any case of lice so that the GCP community can be notified. Your child's name will be kept confidential.

Emergency Contact Information

Emergency phone numbers that include the name, address and telephone number of the health care consultant, the fire department, police, ambulance, nearest emergency health care facility, poison control center, telephone number and address of the school, including the location of the school will be immediately visible and posted by the school's telephone.

Emergency information for each child will be kept in a binder in the preschool. This binder will be taken on all off site field trips. The school will keep a complete set of first aid supplies on site. The supply will be restocked as needed and assessed at least annually. A first aid kit will be taken on all field trips.

PLEASE KEEP US INFORMED AND UP TO DATE ON PHONE NUMBERS, EMERGENCY NUMBERS AND OTHER PERTINENT DATA SO THAT WE MAY ACT QUICKLY.

Emergency Procedures

As required by licensing the preschool has an emergency plan specific to our preschool. This plan contains details that are not public knowledge but every member will be given access to this document and will be asked to be familiar with our procedures and sign an emergency transportation agreement.

Evacuation and Fire Drills

The school will have emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis and such drills shall be conducted according to policies and procedures, which are posted in each room utilized by children. A record of drills shall be available for inspection by the State Fire Marshal's Office and local fire inspectors. Teachers shall record drills.

In the event of a fire or fire drill, the teachers will initiate the evacuation procedure.

1. Assistant teacher will guide the main body of children out the nearest exit.
2. Lead teacher will check the other areas of the preschool building including the bathroom, cubby room and office. They will enter all the rooms that can safely be entered and lead any people found to the nearest exit.
3. Lead teacher will take the attendance sheet, emergency backpack and cell phone with her
4. The children will be taken to line up on the back fence located in the playground area. Another site will be chosen if this spot is unsafe. If there is a real fire or other emergency children and adults will move to the off-site evacuation site.
5. In the event of a real fire, the lead teacher will call 911.
6. The children are to remain outdoors until directed to return to the building by the teacher.

In the event the school needs to close due to power loss, loss of heat or water and/or severe weather warnings, parents will be called to pick up their children.

In the event of an emergency children will be evacuated to either a safe room or an off-site location. Staff will cooperate with emergency officials. The school will provide information about the off-site locations to families prior to the start of school. This information is vital but confidential. Every effort will be made to communicate with families in a safe and timely manner.

Illness at School

If a child becomes ill at school, a teacher or Parent Helper will stay with the child and the child's parent or designated emergency contact will be contacted. Children who vomit, have diarrhea, or a fever will be sent home. It is the parent's obligation to pick up the child following a phone call to the parents or

emergency contact. Again, the staff is not permitted to administer any medication without the appropriate permission.

Immunization

All immunization records must be up to date and a copy of your child's record must be provided to your Class Coordinator by your child's Orientation Day, unless your child has written exemption. Medical exemptions are allowed with a doctor's signature and a filed medical exemption form.

Injury Report

An injury report for any incident which requires first aid or emergency care shall be placed in the child's file and a copy shall remain in the school files. Injury report forms and a school log are kept in the preschool.

Infection Control Procedures

Disposable gloves should be used to assist any child who is bleeding or vomiting in order to assure protection of both child and caregiver. Used gloves will be thrown away in a lined, covered container. Staff will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after cleaning up the soiled area. Soiled clothing will be sealed in a plastic bag with the child's name and returned to the parent at pick up.

The school will practice the following infection control procedures:

All teachers, Parent Helpers and children will use hand sanitizer to cleanse their hands including but not limited to, the following times:

- Upon arrival at the preschool.
- After coming in contact with bodily fluids and discharges.

All teachers, Parent Helpers and children will wash their hands with soap and water including but not limited to, the following times:

- Before eating and handling food.
- After toileting.
- After coming in contact with bodily fluids and discharges.
- After handling school animals or their equipment.
- After cleaning.

Facilities used for hand washing after toileting will be separate from facilities and areas used for food preparation and food service.

All items and surfaces used for food/eating will be cleaned and disinfected after every class.

All cleaning supplies and disinfectants will be stored in a secure place and out of the reach of children.

Hot Beverages

During school hours or when children are present, hot beverages such as coffee or tea shall only be permitted if their container has a screw top lid. Beverages must be nut free.

Sexual Misconduct Policy

GCP strives to maintain a harassment-free environment for all teachers, administrators, volunteers and others. Sexual harassment is a violation of this principle and is never permissible.

Under the law, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions

- Such conduct has the effect of interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating or offensive work environment

Examples of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include but are not limited to:

- Suggestive remarks, jokes, slurs, or degrading comments of a sexual or gender nature

- Unwelcome sexual advances

- Unwelcome hugging, touching, or kissing

- Requests for sexual favors

- Unwelcome sexual flirtation or proposition

Reporting Procedures

Our school supports and encourages reporting of all incidents of sexual harassment, regardless of the identity of the offender.

If you believe you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you should promptly report the incident to the Co-Chairs or the Executive Board. If you witness conduct that you believe is sexual harassment, that conduct should be reported as well. All complaints of sexual harassment will be investigated and treated seriously.

Response to Reports of Alleged Sexual Harassment

The school upon receiving the information will establish a response committee. The response committee will promptly conduct an investigation into, and review of the allegations. Investigations will be conducted expeditiously, with due regard for the sensitive and serious nature of the allegations. A thorough investigation will be conducted, which may include interviewing the alleged victim, potential witnesses and the alleged harasser. The response committee may also receive any documents or other evidence produced by the investigation. Upon completion of the investigation of alleged sexual harassment, the response committee will conclude with a report as to the nature of the complaint and any recommended actions involving the parties involved.

Employees who complain of harassment in good faith will be protected against retaliation of any kind.

GENERAL INFORMATION & POLICIES

Absences

Please call the school before the beginning of the school day if your child will be absent (839-4706). Please let the teachers know ahead of time regarding vacation, travel and other plans affecting your child's attendance in school.

Abuse and Neglect

All children attending the school will be protected from abuse and neglect while in the program's care and custody. The term 'Abuse and Neglect' means a threat to a child's health or welfare by physical, mental or emotional injury or impairment, sexual abuse or exploitation, deprivation of essential needs or lack of protection from these, by a person responsible for the child. Staff members are mandated reporters and will report suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect to civil or criminal authorities as required by state or federal laws. GCP will cooperate in all investigations of abuse and neglect, including identifying parents of children currently enrolled in the program and staff members currently or previously employed: providing consent for disclosure to DHHS of information from, and allowing DHHS to disclose information to any person and/or agency DHHS may specify as necessary to the prompt investigation of allegations and for the protection of children. All staff members and parents are required to treat each child with respect when interacting with them. Any alleged abusive or neglectful staff member or parent will not be allowed to work with children until the DHHS investigation is completed and reinstatement is approved by DHHS.

Allergy Program

We are a NUT FREE school. Please refer to Gorham Cooperative Preschool's Snack Allergy and Snack Policy at the back of the Handbook.

Approved Snacks

Please refer to the Approved Celebratory Snack List at the end of this handbook for a list of approved allergy friendly snacks.

Birthday Celebrations

A child's birthday is always special. We provide a birthday "crown" and sing Happy Birthday. Parent Helpers are assigned to assist and may bring a celebratory snack on or near their child's birthday. (Summer birthdays will be celebrated before the closing of school.) While we normally encourage healthful nutritious snacks, special treats are acceptable for special occasions. Please refer to the Approved Celebratory Snack list at the end of this handbook for a list of approved allergy friendly snacks. If your child has a summer birthday, families are given the option of choosing a day near the end of the school year to celebrate their child's special day.

Book Club

Participation in the Scholastic Book Club is optional. Books and audio materials offered by Scholastic Book Clubs will be outlined on forms placed into parent pockets. And forms can be turned into a teacher if paying by check.

While orders can be placed on these forms, we encourage our members to place their orders online via the Scholastic Book Clubs website. Ordering on-line helps our preschool obtain free books and other educational materials from bonus points earned from member orders. So your purchases help the preschool!

If using the form, checks may be written to “Scholastic Book Clubs” and turned in to the teachers by the deadline indicated. Cash can not be accepted by Scholastic.

Bulletin Boards

The bulletin board is used for important notes, special dates, school needs, schedules, etc. Be sure to check the bulletin board each time you come in.

Bylaws

The Gorham Cooperative Preschool Bylaws are kept on file in the preschool and a copy is posted on the Website. All members are required to be familiar with the contents of the Bylaws and hard copies are available upon request at the school.

Clothing

Parents and children should wear washable, comfortable clothes, appropriate for sitting on the floor and doing messy activities. Parents are asked to send in an extra set of clothing (underwear, pants, socks, shirt, etc.) to leave at school during the year in case children need to change their clothes during the day. Dress children suitably for outdoor play (boots, snow suits, raincoats, hats, mittens, etc.). We go outside every day, weather permitting! PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOUR CHILD’S CLOTHING IS LABELED WITH HIS/HER NAME. In the winter when the parent helper and teachers are getting children ready for the playground- labels make this task much easier!

Communication System

Communication is an integral piece of our program. It is important that each GCP family checks their email on a regular basis as we use email as one of our main forms of communication within the preschool. The website (GorhamCoopPreschool.org) is the main location where you can locate electronic copies of the handbook, bylaws, and other useful files. Please be sure to check the entryway bulletin board and parent pocket every time you come into the preschool. And for carpooling check the parent pocket not the “inbox” of carpool member. This is an important means of communicating among coop members and staff. If you carpool, remember to check the parent pocket of your carpool members. Also, please remember to keep your Class Coordinator, Registrar, Teachers and Co-Chairs updated with any changes to your email address &/or contact information throughout the year.

Confidentiality

All members and teachers are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement, which remains on file in the preschool.⁵

When you assist in the classroom, it is essential that events pertaining to particular individuals remain confidential. Please refrain from discussing other children outside of the classroom with other parents. If you have any questions or concerns about a particular child, please speak directly with a teacher.

⁵ Article IV of the GCP Bylaws

Cubbies

Each child has a cubby marked with his/her name and a picture brought from home. Personal belongings are placed in the cubbies. Please check your child's cubby EVERY day for your child's treasures. Each child also has a hook to hang outerwear and bags.

Drop Off Program

The preschool offers an optional drop off program for members. The Co-Chairs will notify members when the program begins each year.

The Parent Helper will be asked to stand outside the preschool by the walkway to welcome children who would like to take advantage of the "drop-off" option. The two parking spots in front of the preschool, marked by orange cones, should be used for parents who wish to "drop-off" their preschooler. All other members are asked not to park in this area. Your child will be monitored by the Parent Helper as they walk to the front door and the Parent Helper will assist the child if needed. Teachers will continue to welcome everyone once they walk into the school. The Parent Helper will be asked to monitor outside from 8:30 - 8:40 for the morning classes and from 12:00 - 12:10 for the afternoon classes. Remember, to use this option, you must arrive within those timeframes.

Please remember this program is optional and both the child and parent should feel comfortable with the procedure.

Program Evaluations

During each school year, families are encouraged to complete a program evaluation survey. This helps us to improve the quality of our program, set goals for the following school year and make sure our program is meeting your child's needs. A summary of the results will be presented to the Parent Body.

Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of the curriculum. The children really look forward to these special days. Trips are discussed at Parent Meetings or communicated by the Teachers and Class Coordinators via email. Siblings are always welcome to attend field trips. If you are unable to drive your child you may arrange carpooling with another family. Please inform the teachers if your child is not participating in a field trip.

Fundraising

Fundraising is vital to create a stable financial present and future for the preschool. Tuition alone does not fully support the needs of our children and our school. Through fundraising we are able to keep tuition affordable, build strong community ties and ensure our position in the competitive preschool market. Participating in fundraising activities is a great way to meet other coop families and to help raise money for your child's school. Funds raised allow the school to absorb unexpected expenses, such as safety upgrades, tuition from a family that has left the school mid-year or enrollment that is not at capacity, without having to raise tuition. In addition, the school has material needs that fundraising helps to support such as playground equipment and valuable learning supplies for the classroom. Participation in fundraising activities is mandatory. We ask that each family does their part, which enforces the meaning of a truly cooperative preschool.

Giving Tree

The teachers will post needed items on the Giving Tree in the hallway. Items on the list may be found at home or purchased. Helping to supply wish list items is optional, but always greatly appreciated.

Hand Washing Policy

All children and adults who enter the preschool are expected to use hand sanitizer (located in the hallway entrance) or warm soapy water to clean their hands upon entry to the school. This policy is to reduce the germs and allergens being carried into the preschool. In addition, this process works to help children develop the important habit of regular hand washing. Parents are asked to help their children. If parents are dropping their child off and leaving immediately, the parent helper will help the child.

All classroom occupants (children, teachers, and parent helpers) will wash their hands using soap and warm water after using the bathroom.

Holidays

Holidays are a special part of our heritage. We celebrate them in preschool with special food, games and activities. Please share any concerns regarding holiday celebrations with a teacher. We understand that not all families celebrate the same holidays and follow the same traditions and teachers are happy to give you and your child the chance to share your own family traditions. Celebrations will sometimes only involve students and will sometimes include an invitation for families to join the class for the celebration.

Inclusion

The preschool strives to create an inclusive classroom where children with varied needs and backgrounds are welcomed. Well trained and knowledgeable teachers combined with a community of supportive families enable the school to offer support to families and children facing difficult challenges. Every family and child should feel a sense of belonging and support from their school community. In order to meet the needs of children, teachers may use the referral process to obtain needed support. Confidentiality will be maintained by both staff and volunteers. Reasonable accommodations will be provided to any child with special needs.

Insurance

The school has accident insurance that covers teachers, parents and children while at preschool. Further details of this insurance policy may be obtained from the Co-Chairs.

Licensing

A copy of the State of Maine DHHS Licensing requirements for Nursery schools is available on the check-in bookcase in the hallway. It is also available online at:

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/cclicensing.htm>

Having a safe classroom is very important to all of us. If you notice a possible violation to the rules that govern our school, please inform your Class Coordinator. They will work with the teachers to remedy the situation. If you feel that violations have not been resolved, you may contact the Division of

Licensing and Regulatory Services of the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services at (800) 383-2441.

Meetings

Parent Meetings are scheduled throughout the school year and are mandatory. At least one member from each family must attend. If you cannot attend, let your Class Coordinator know beforehand. Agendas will be posted by way of email prior to each meeting. If you have anything you want to discuss, please speak with the Co-Chairs or your Class Coordinator.

Executive Board Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month and all current preschool members are invited to attend. Agendas will be posted for review by way of email prior to each meeting. If you have anything you want to discuss, please speak with the Co-Chairs or your Class Coordinator.

The minutes of the Executive Board Meetings and Parent Meetings will be issued by the Secretary, with a hard copy filed in the preschool. Parents are encouraged to contact their Class Coordinator or an Executive Board Member to resolve any concerns or questions they have about the proceedings of an Executive Board Meeting.

Outdoor Play

Parents are responsible for equipping their children with proper attire for outdoor activities. Families are asked to send children to school in appropriate cold weather clothes (e.g., boots, mittens, hat, snow pants, coat, etc.) every day during the winter months. We will be going outside as a class as often as possible, weather permitting. We ask that you apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent to your child before they come to school in the fall and late spring for the health and safety of your child. Teachers will not be applying sunscreen or insect repellent to the children.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Conferences are held twice a year. There is no school on these days. If you have a particular concern about your child, feel free to meet with the teachers any time during the school year. Please remember that the teachers are working for and with children during regular school hours.

Parking

Street parking is available along the front of the preschool and in the Municipal Parking lot. Please do not park on the corner or along the playground side of the preschool. Please drive slowly in the parking lot, especially when driving past the preschool. Parents must always supervise their children closely in and around the parking lot.

Gorham Cooperative Preschool asks that the rules of the road be followed by all individuals accessing the preschool. This not only includes drop off and pick up times, but any other time when individuals are visiting the preschool. Please note the following:

- Left Tire to Curb Parking: Parking must follow the flow of traffic and not against it. This means no parking with the driver's side of vehicles on the left hand side of the road. Violation is a \$25.00 fine and ticket.
- Parking in Posted "No Parking" Zones: There is a posted sign in front of the preschool that states "No Parking". This is to be adhered to and is especially dangerous in the winter months

with the piles of snow narrowing the road on the corner of Ballpark and Access Road. Vehicles parked in this area are in serious violation and may result in an accident from someone rounding the corner. Violation is a \$25.00 fine and ticket.

- Leaving Children Unattended In A Parked Vehicle: No child(ren) shall be left unattended in a parked vehicle. This can result in a serious offense and the fine is up to the discretion of the police officer on duty. Your plates will be run and the officer will bring this violation to your attention.

Note: Tickets and fines are issued by the Town of Gorham.

Photographs

Class coordinators will let families know about any opportunities to share photos on the class shutterfly account. Please be aware that some families do not want their children's photograph or name on facebook/social media. Class coordinators will have a list of children with photo restrictions.

Pick Up Alternatives

If a child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent, the teachers must be notified in advance. This includes days when another parent in your class is picking up your child. There are forms next to the bulletin board for listing pick up alternatives. Please provide the date, day of the week, name(s) of involved children and name of person who will be picking them up.

Use of the form and notification of the teachers is for the safety of your child. *Please also include information on the form and discuss with teachers if there are persons with whom you do not want your child to leave school.*

Referral Policy

In the event that a student or family needs assistance that Gorham Cooperative Preschool cannot provide, teachers will make every possible attempt to make the necessary referrals. The referrals will be within the family's community whenever possible. If appropriate referrals cannot be found within the home community, every attempt will be made to find assistance in surrounding communities. Gorham Cooperative Preschool reserves the right to refer any party to an appropriate agency outside of the school when the Executive Board and teachers cannot provide a needed or recommended service.⁶

Reimbursement Policy

Any purchases that are made for the preschool should be approved by a Co-Chair prior to purchase. Receipts should be provided for reimbursement in a timely manner. Reimbursement forms are available at the school.

School Address & Phone Number

Street and Mailing Address:

Gorham Cooperative Preschool, 28 Ballpark Road, Gorham, ME 04038

Phone: 839-4706

⁶ Article XI of the GCP Bylaws

School Calendar

A copy of the preschool calendar is located in the rear of this handbook.

School Pictures

School pictures will be taken in the spring. You will be notified in advance of the date. Purchase is optional.

Smoking Restrictions

Smoking is prohibited in the preschool building, on school grounds and at any preschool function. If a person is seen smoking, the person who witnesses this should ask them to extinguish the smoking material and remind them that smoking is prohibited. Failure to comply will result in Executive Board action.

Snow Policy

Preschool sessions may be canceled due to inclement weather. In such event, the Preschool will follow the closing of the Gorham Public School system. If Gorham Public Schools are closed, the Preschool will be closed. A “one hour delay” of school means a “one hour delay” for the AM Class (we shall open at 9:30 a.m. for the day) and the PM session will meet at its scheduled time. A “two hour delay” of school means the AM session will be canceled and PM session will meet at its scheduled time. If there is a delay of “more than two hours”, Preschool will be closed for the day. If there is an early release of the Gorham Public Schools, prior to 12:00 p.m., the PM session will be canceled. Snow days will not be made up.

Toys From Home

Although we understand that children want to share their toys and new possessions with their friends, we ask that toys from home not be brought into school. Our classroom materials and supplies are selected for their developmental and educational merit. When toys are brought in from home, the focus changes. Children will have the opportunity to share an item from home through the Sharing Bag on their Helper day. Comfort items will be allowed in the classroom, but we ask that parents notify the teachers at Drop-off so that they will be made aware of your child’s special item.

GORHAM COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL 2017 – 2018 SCHOOL CALENDAR

July 26: OPEN HOUSE - 5:30pm - 7:00pm

August 30: Ice Cream Social @ School 6:00-7:00pm

August 31: New & Current Parent Meeting (Orientation) @ Gorham Recreation Multi-Purpose Room 7pm

September 1: TUITION DUE

September 6: Executive Board Meeting

September 4: Labor Day (No Classes)
September 5: 2-Day AM Orientation (8:30 – 10:00)
September 5: 2-Day PM Orientation (12:00 - 1:30)
September 6: 3-Day AM Orientation (8:30 – 10:00)
September 6: 3-Day PM Orientation (12:00 - 1:30)
September 7: First Full day for 2-Day Classes
September 8: First Full day for 3-Day Classes

October 1: TUITION DUE
October 4: Executive Board Meeting
October 9: Columbus Day (No Classes)
October 18: Teacher Inservice (No Class for 3-Day AM only)
October 28: 5K Fundraiser – Kid’s Fun Run at 10:00; 5K Race at 11:00

November 1: TUITION DUE
November 1: Executive Board Meeting
November 8: Parent/Teacher Conference (No Classes)
November 9: Parent/Teacher Conference (No Classes)
November 10: Veteran’s Day (No Classes)
November 22-24: Thanksgiving Break (No Classes)

December 1: TUITION DUE
December 6: Executive Board Meeting
Dec 22-Jan 1: Holiday Break (No Classes)

January 1: TUITION DUE
January 3: Executive Board Meeting (Begin Staff Review Process)
January 10: Teacher Inservice (No Class for 3-Day PM only)
January 10: Mandatory Parent Meeting @ Gorham Recreation Multi-Purpose Room 7pm
January 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No Classes)

February Entire Month: Calendar Raffle Fundraiser Tickets are on sale

February 1: TUITION DUE
February 7: Executive Board Meeting
February 19-23: Winter Vacation (No Classes)

March Entire Month: Calendar Raffle

March 1: TUITION DUE
March 7: Executive Board Meeting
March 8: Teacher Inservice (No Class for 2-Day AM only)
March 22: Parent/Teacher Conference (No Classes)
March 23: Parent/Teacher Conference (No Classes)

April 1: TUITION DUE
April 4: Executive Board Meeting

- April 16-20: Spring Vacation (No Classes)
April 25: Mandatory Parent Meeting - Voting for 2017-18 Executive Board @ Gorham Recreation Multi-Purpose Room 7pm
- May 1: TUITION DUE
 May 2: Executive Board Meeting
 May 28: *Memorial Day (No Classes)*
- June 1: DEPOSITS DUE (FOR RETURNING STUDENTS)
 June 6: Executive Board Meeting
 June 13: **Last Day for 3 Day classes**
 June 14: **Last Day for 2 Day classes**
 June 15: **Graduation for 3 day classes**

Student Days:

- 3 Day = 105 days total (including in-service days)
- 2 Day = 75 days total (including in-service days)

All Board Meetings and Parent Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise stated. Parent Meetings will take place in the Multipurpose Room and Board Meetings in the “Fishbowl” at the Gorham Recreation Department unless otherwise stated.

PARENT BODY CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT (COPY ONLY)

I understand that it is the policy of the Gorham Cooperative Preschool to ensure that the activities and personal information of the Gorham Cooperative Preschool students and families are kept confidential.

If, during the course of my membership, I acquire confidential information regarding a student and/or family I will handle such information with strict confidence. Confidential information will not be discussed with unauthorized individuals beyond what is shared knowledge or what is needed to carry out the operations and services of the Gorham Cooperative Preschool. This obligation will also extend

beyond the period of my membership with the Gorham Cooperative Preschool. The signature below shows my understanding of the aforementioned policy and its importance. It is understood that this agreement extends to any member of my family who may be acting in my place.

I understand that willfully failing to comply with this policy could result in losing “good standing” status with the preschool.

PRINT NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

ALLERGY AND SNACK POLICY

Policy Statement

Gorham Cooperative Preschool recognizes the potentially serious consequences of allergen exposure to children with allergies. Severe reactions may include a condition known as anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction caused by exposure to certain foods or other substances.

The Preschool does not purport to be, nor can it be deemed to be free of food items and non-food items that may lead to a severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction. The Preschool will make every reasonable effort to reduce the risk to children with severe allergies or anaphylaxis as detailed in this policy.

We live in a world that contains many allergens and people with allergies must learn to avoid specific triggers. While the key responsibility lies with the anaphylactic individual and his or her family, in the case of a young anaphylactic child, the child care community must also be aware. Creating an environment that reduces the exposure risk for severely allergic or anaphylactic children requires the cooperation and understanding of all members and staff of the Preschool. In order to attain the utmost safety for all our children it is essential that all severe or anaphylactic allergies be reported to the Gorham Cooperative Preschool before the students enters the school grounds.

Daily Snacks

It is of the utmost importance at our school that children are safe at all times, including snack time. In order to keep our students fueled for learning, a snack is offered to the children each day. Gorham Cooperative Preschool provides a daily, nutritious, allergy friendly “dry” snack and water. The dry snack is purchased by a board appointed “Purchaser,” who is a parent member. Parent Helpers are required to supply a fresh fruit or vegetable snack for the students to enjoy on their scheduled Parent Helper day.

Snack time should be considered more than just a time to feed our children; this is an opportunity for them to experience flavors, colors and textures and maybe learn something about good nutrition for good health along the way. It can be fun to involve your child in the process of picking out the fruit or vegetable snack for their class.

In order to keep all children safe from potential cross contamination amongst preparation surfaces Parent Helpers are encouraged to prepare their fruit or vegetable snack at the school on their Parent Helper day. The school provides knives and cutting boards for use. If you bring a snack that requires eating utensils, please provide those (i.e., spoons or forks). The school provides plates, cups and napkins. If you opt to prepare the fruit or vegetable snack at home, you must comply with the Allergy policy.

All foods brought into the school must adhere to food restrictions and food allergies as detailed in the Annual Allergy Plan. All allergies and food restrictions should be communicated to parents from the teachers and the Class Coordinators at the start of the year, as well as posted in the school on the Member Bulletin Board as a reference. To avoid exposing a child with allergies to an allergen, please

follow the Annual Allergy Plan and refrain from sending a snack that may cause an allergic reaction. If a snack is brought in that does not comply with the Allergy Plan, it will not be served and staff will require you to remove it from school property.

Celebratory Snacks

On birthdays or other celebratory days, a special snack time treat is welcome. To ensure safety for all, only special snack selections from the “Approved Celebratory Snack List” are permitted on celebration days. The “Approved Celebratory Snack List” will be generated and distributed annually based on the allergy needs of our members. It will also be posted on the Member’s board inside the preschool as a resource to families. Celebratory snacks that are not listed on the approved list or prepared according to the allergy policy will not be served. In the event the celebratory snack does not comply, the school will provide a dry snack.

Snacks should be left in the original packaging until they are brought to the Preschool. If snacks are taken out of the packaging at home, the package must be brought to school for teachers and parents of the child with allergies to approve before serving to the class. Parent Helper schedules are labeled for all birthday celebrations so Parents will know in advance when to bring in a celebration snack.

Please note: If during the school year any current/new member develops an allergy or alerts the school to an existing allergy that causes anaphylaxis, the school will amend the “Allergy Plan” for the classroom and/or school that ensures safety for all members.

Annual Allergy Plan Development

To assure that we provide a safe and comfortable allergy friendly environment for all our students, the Executive Board will appoint a member to develop the Allergy Plan before the start of school. The appointed member will discuss the severity and management of allergies with the parents of each student with allergies reported to the board. The appointed member shall create and present the “Allergy Plan” to the board for approval. Once approved, the co-chairs shall distribute it to all members and post it to a bulletin board in the school. The allergy plan shall also include an “Approved Celebratory Snack List” that may be used for celebrations such as birthdays and class parties.

Banned Allergens:

We are a NUT-FREE school. Products containing PEANUTS and TREE NUTS (common examples include almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts) are NOT allowed in the Preschool at any time. If the school has members in attendance with other anaphylactic or severe allergies, the school reserves the right to ban other allergens from the school. If such allergy bans are needed they will be included in the “Allergy Plan.” The executive board reserves the right to amend the “Allergy Plan” as needed throughout the year based on our members needs. All Members will be notified promptly of any changes. As with other policies of the Preschool, all members and staff, as well as all visitors to the Preschool, are expected to comply.

Medical Management

Each student at risk for a life-threatening allergic reaction must have a Food Allergy Action Plan completed annually by a physician and on file with the Gorham Cooperative Preschool (Food Allergy

Action Plan form is available from the preschool or may be provided by the child's allergist). One copy should be stored with each of the student's Epi-pens/Twinjects.

Parents of a child with food allergies, along with the student, are responsible for alerting the teacher to the food allergy and making plans with the co-chairs or board appointed member for how to best accommodate the student based on the guidelines presented in this policy.

Any student who has been given epinephrine, either manually or via an auto-injector device such as an Epi-pen, must be transported to the hospital via emergency services personnel.

All teachers should be instructed to recognize the signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction, as well as how and when to administer an Epi-pen or Twinject. This training should take place at the beginning of each school year.

Parents of children with food allergies are responsible for their emergency medications at off-site activities such as field trips.

Student's Epi-pens or Twinjects must be stored in a secure but unlocked location easily accessible by classroom teachers to ensure prompt availability in the event of an allergic emergency at school.

Risk Reduction – Classrooms

All classrooms are to be peanut and tree nut FREE. Depending on the presence or absence of students with food allergies using the classroom and the severity of the allergy itself, packaged snacks which bear a warning that they were processed in a facility with, shares equipment with or processed on a line with peanuts or tree nuts may not be acceptable.

Dry snacks will be purchased by the board appointed "Purchaser" and will be reviewed by parents of children with food allergies prior to serving.

Celebratory Snacks brought into the classroom for class parties, birthdays, etc. must be listed on the Approved Celebratory Snack List, meet these same peanut and nut-free criteria, and should include full labeling information. No student with a food allergy should be allowed to eat any food not specifically approved by his/her parent.

Classroom activities that involve the use of food, either for craft or educational purposes, should require advance permission from the parent of a child with food allergies. In no instance should the use of peanuts or tree nuts be allowed in any classroom.

Teachers must make a note in their plan books and post a notice in their classroom regarding the presence of students with food allergies in their class, as well all locations of the appropriate medications. This will enable anyone who comes into the classroom as a substitute to be prepared for an allergic emergency.

Risk Reduction – Field Trips

Field trips, especially those involving food consumption or contact, should be communicated in advance to parents of children with food allergies. If food will be used or consumed as part of the field trip, the parents of children will have to grant permission in advance and may provide a substitute food or activity. They will be encouraged to attend along with their children or should arrange for a guardian to attend.

One designated person (parent or guardian) should supervise a student with a food allergy during a field trip. This person should be responsible for carrying a cell phone, emergency medicines and instructions, and the phone number of local emergency services at the destination and should be familiar with the

symptoms of anaphylaxis as well as how to administer an EpiPen or Twinject as applicable. This designated person should accompany the child for the entire field trip.

Risk Reduction – Preparing for an Emergency

All school staff should be trained in how to recognize life-threatening allergic reactions. The school food allergy emergency plans must include coordination with local EMS on emergency response in the event of anaphylaxis. Allergy-free foods and access to epinephrine must be ensured in plans for fire drills, lockdowns, etc.

Allergy Protocol

Outlined below are the measures that will be taken to keep these children safe. These simple steps allow everyone to fully participate in classroom activities and ensure that our staff can confidently focus on providing all students with a fun and enriching preschool experience.

An email or letter informing parents of the “Allergy Plan” will be sent home before the commencement of each school year. Before the start of the school year families will be notified of the allergens (in addition to peanuts and tree nuts) that are not allowed at the school. Items (both food and curriculum related) containing the listed allergens will NOT be permitted in the Preschool or on Preschool grounds. Parents, siblings and other visitors to the Preschool are required to abide by these guidelines.

Upon arriving at the Preschool all children will use hand sanitizer and/or wash their hands with warm soapy water upon entering the classroom and cubby room. All adults will wash their hands upon entrance. All children staying for school must wash their hands before Circle Time. All classrooms occupants (students, teachers and Parent Helpers) will wash their hands before snack.

Because the children are so young and even a small amount of exposure (either contact or ingestion) can have serious consequences; therefore the snack eaten by classes must be allergy friendly. To assure the dry snack is allergy friendly our school appointed “Purchaser” will purchase the snacks according to our schools allergy restrictions.

Potential Food Risks

All food items IF purchased by the Preschool must be reviewed and initialed by all Parents of allergenic children on a bi-weekly basis. Food items not initialed by all such Parents will not be served. Members are not permitted to bring food items into the Preschool or on Preschool grounds, with the exception of a child who is bringing in snack for health-related reasons and the Parent Helper on duty.

Identification of Children at Risk

It is the responsibility of the Parent and/or the Guardian, herein called the Parent, to inform the Preschool that his or her Child, herein called the Child, has allergies or is anaphylactic or potentially anaphylactic. Staff and Co-Chairs shall be aware of these children.

A list of all children with allergies will be clearly posted in the classroom. In addition, this location will house copies of each child’s Allergy Action Plans, medications and Epi-Pens. The Parent, along with the Child’s doctor or Allergist, must complete an Allergy Action Plan, herein called AAP, form annually. AAPs must be signed by a doctor or allergist before the commencement of each school year. In addition, the form must be updated and signed by the doctor and Parent if there are any updates to the allergy status of the Child. The co-chairs or a board appointed member will discuss the Child's allergies with the

Parent prior to the commencement of each school year. Every child with allergies will have an AAP posted in the classroom.

AAPs will include the following:

List of specific allergens

Protocol for ingestion of food allergens with no symptoms

Protocol if symptoms are swelling/tingling/itching of face/mouth/tongue/extremities; skin hives; itching; rash; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; tightening of throat; hoarseness; hacking cough

Protocol if symptoms are shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, weak pulse; low blood pressure; fainting; paleness or blueness

Included in the above mentioned protocols will be contact information, emergency contact information, as well as specific information pertaining to the administration of medication (e.g., Benadryl, inhaler, etc.) in a non-emergency situation and use of an EpiPen Jr. in an emergency situation.

Availability and Location of Allergy Medications and EpiPens

The EpiPen Jr. is an auto-injector containing epinephrine (adrenaline). This medicine is an alpha -and beta-receptor stimulant used to treat severe allergic reactions. It may also be used to treat severe allergic reactions that affect breathing. Parents of an anaphylactic Child must provide an EpiPen Jr. to be left at the Preschool, along with any other allergy medications the child may need. The Parent must promptly replace the EpiPen Jr. and other medications when the expiration date is reached. Staff is trained to administer the EpiPen Jr. and other medications.

Children who are no longer allergic, or no longer require an EpiPen Jr. and other medications, must present a signed and dated letter of explanation from their doctor or allergist so their name may be removed from the Preschool's allergy lists.

Co-chairs and parents will check the EpiPens and medications monthly to ensure they have not reached their expiration date. If the EpiPen Jr. or medication has expired, the Parent will be required to supply another by the next day of class. The Child will not be permitted to attend Preschool until a current EpiPen Jr. or medication is provided for the school.

Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction

A person experiencing an allergic reaction may have any of the following symptoms:

Trouble breathing, speaking or swallowing.

A drop in blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, loss of consciousness.

Flushed face, hives or a rash, red and itchy skin.

Swelling of the eyes, face, lips, throat and tongue.

Anxiousness, distress, faintness, paleness, sense of doom, weakness.

Cramps, diarrhea, vomiting.

It is important to understand that reactions can vary and may range from mild to severe depending on how the child's body responds to allergens, as well as how much of the allergen(s) was ingested. Reactions can also occur from skin contact with, or inhalation of certain allergens.

Anaphylactic Treatment Protocol

Teachers are trained in the management of an anaphylactic emergency. If there is an anaphylactic emergency, the protocol is as follows:

1. Head Teacher will administer EPIPEN JR. (Note time of symptoms and time of injection).
2. Assistant Teacher will call 911. Assistant teacher will call Parent. If the Parent can't be reached, the Assistant Teacher will call the Alternate Emergency Contact.
3. Parent Helper will help maintain control of class.
4. Head Teacher will remain with student, as well as provide emergency care until 911 arrives.
5. If the emergency warrants a trip to the hospital, and the Parent is not available, a teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance and into the medical center. (Note: Take used EPIPEN JR and GCP Allergy Action Plan to the hospital).
6. The remaining teacher and Parent Helper will then assume responsibility for the class.

2017-2018 Allergy Plan

PEANUTS and TREE NUTS are never permitted in the school as part of the Preschools Allergy Policy.

Allergic reactions may be caused by both ingestion of an allergen or by simple skin contact. Special attention should also be paid to items and clothing brought into the school to ensure accidental exposure does not occur.

If any snacks are prepared outside of the school, all food preparation surfaces and items should be washed in advance of use to ensure contamination does not occur.

2017-2018 APPROVED CELEBRATORY SNACK LIST

Dole: Outshine Popsicles	Kellogg's: Frosted Mini Wheats
Nabisco: Honey Maid Graham Crackers	General Mills: Chex (Rice and Corn)
Nabisco: Teddy Grahams	Nabisco: Barnum's Animal Crackers
Nabisco: Ritz original	Beanitos: Original black bean chips
Nabisco: Wheat Thins	Enjoy Life Bars: Sunbutter, berry, apple caramel, chocolate bars
Nabisco: Triscuits	Kashi Cereal Bars: Blackberry graham, ripe strawberry, and cherry vanilla
Quaker: Apple Cinnamon Rice Cakes	Annie's: Pretzel Bunnies
Frito Lay: Original Sunchips	Annie's: Bunny fruit snacks
Rold Gold: Pretzels	Annie's: Bunny Grahams (Chocolate, Chocolate Chip, and Original)
Newman's Own: Fig Newmans (Wheat Free, Dairy Free product in purple package)	Enjoy Life Foods: Any of their line of snacks
Pirate's Booty: Veggie Booty	Enjoy Life: Trail Mix
Sensible Portion: Garden Veggie Sticks	Dunkin Hines Cake Mix (Vanilla, Devil's food, Chocolate, other varieties may not be dairy free. Please read ingredients list to verify)
Tostitos: Tortilla chips (original)	

Items not list above may be used as a celebratory snacks provided that the ingredients are peanut, tree nut and dairy free. Foods that indicate they “May Contain...”, “Manufactured in a facility that also produces...”, or “Processed using equipment that also...” should be avoided.

To increase the diversity of items on this, please send suggestions by email to gcp.cochairs@gmail.com. Suggestions will be reviewed and added to the posted Celebratory Snack List.

How to Read a Label:

In the United States, all food manufacturers are required to list the top eight most common allergens in their ingredients list. These are milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy. This information can usually be found directly underneath the ingredient list. All of these allergens must be listed so that they are easily understood by the consumer. Currently food manufacturers are not required by law to list possible cross- contamination with other food allergens during production, although many companies do list this information voluntarily. They usually list it under the ingredients as “May Contain...” or “Manufactured in facility that also produces...”

IMPORTANT: Ingredients & manufacturing processes can & do change, so it is necessary to check the ingredients list every time before consumption, even if you have purchased the same item before.