



Building Block Commons

2019/2020

Preschool Parent Handbook

Building Block Commons is an independent school for students ages 2y9mo through early middle school/ 6th grade. The school is approved for attendance by the New Hampshire Department of Education. This specific handbook is dedicated to information regarding the preschool.

Our qualified preschool teachers embrace the physical, emotional and social growth of each individual child. **Science, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics** are the “**S.E.A.M**” that binds the students’ exploration of multiple academic pathways. Using our “Outdoor Classroom” and “Indoor Explorations,” the children are offered developmentally appropriate opportunities to find individual success and happiness through art and nature during a 3 hour block.

Objectives:

- Encourage kindness and “Social Thinking”
- Support the development of self-confidence
- Achieve individual academic objectives through a variety of means
- Offer opportunities for social and independent activities
- Laughter

Nitty-Gritty Important Stuff:

1. Please be sure to give the school an updated cell phone number where we can reach you ASAP in the event of an emergency.
2. All the children should bring a pair of slippers or indoor shoes to keep at school...**PLEASE LABEL THEM!** Because we use heavy blocks in the classroom, it is good for some children to have a pair of "indoor shoes" *instead* of slippers. Please send whatever is most comfortable for your child!
3. Necklaces and scarves are strictly forbidden by state law due to the risk of strangulation.
4. Please **label** all sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets and shoes. In other words, it's very helpful for you to **label everything!** Sometimes children forget which items belong to them and we frequently have more than one of the same piece of clothing come to school. Unlabeled items will be kept in the Lost and Found for 1 month prior to donation. It will be your job to come inside and take a look around for the item if it is forgotten at school.
5. Dress your child in layers for play! We get messy in our active play all the time, and it needs to be acceptable for us to allow this. Dresses and skirts make climbing very hard and dangerous.
6. Weather permitting ("Director's discretion"); we begin our school day outdoors. Please have your child dressed and ready for outdoor play when he/she arrives to school. It's easier to take off an extra sweater than to be cold. We'll let you know when it's time to start sending them in bib snow pants, coats, boots, hats and mittens!
7. Slip-on or Velcro sneakers are a must for the children. This will help encourage independence. No Crocs, tie shoes with laces (strangulation hazard) heels or flip flop sandals. If it's rainy, feel free to send them in some "Bogs" or galoshes, as we go outside when it is above 18 degrees.
8. If your child will be going home with someone other than the regular carpool driver, please let us know and put it in writing via email or a letter. If your child is leaving early, we need the note handed to the teacher on the day it will occur for our files. We are not a "sign in and sign out" school, therefore, we need these early dismissal occurrences to be very rare for the safety of the children.
9. Any messages at carpool should also get put in writing. We are trying to keep drop off and pick up time moving as quickly as possible. If you absolutely need to speak to a staff member and it cannot wait, please pull over and we will get to you as soon as carpool is over. Email the director if you want to schedule a time to chat at length!
10. Please make sure you are connected to SeeSaw, as most of our important messages are sent through that interface.
11. You are always welcome in our classroom. It's easiest for us to plan for visitors if you give us a heads up, but again, if you feel as though you need to drop in, just knock on the door.
12. **MEDICAL FORMS MUST BE UPDATED ON YOUR CHILD'S BIRTHDAY!** Every child is required by state law to have an up to date medical form and state registration form on file at Building Block Commons before they can be allowed to stay at school without a parent.
13. Unless medically necessary due to documented developmental delays, please do not send your child in diapers or pull-ups. Children are very smart and know that these are just like diapers. We will help your child remember to use the bathroom and will always give them time to return to their activity after using the bathroom. We have some extra changes of clothing at school for wetting accidents, please send many more if you think it will be an issue. If messy accidents become frequent, we will call you to come help us get your child cleaned up. We understand that toilet training is stressful for parents, too, so

please drop your teacher a note if you want to let us know of any tips and tricks that you know or need for the process!

14. Our school encourages students to use sticks, bricks, rocks and other large “loose parts” during their outdoor play time. The children are taught to use these correctly (ex: sticks are tools, not ever weapons... bricks are for building, not for throwing) Our expectation is that these rules are encouraged at home, as well. If students begin to show signs of using these to injure other children, the child will no longer be allowed to use these fun outdoor tools that day. Safety is imperative.
15. We are a farm school! We have goats and chickens on the property. To create a safe environment for children and animals, we ask that if you are visiting a different farm, you wash your boots/shoes and hands before coming to school. This form of “biosecurity” helps from transferring illnesses from one farm to another. Our animals are tested for many communicable diseases and behind at least one fence to keep children safe from feces and urine. Thanks for your help as we work to bring farm life into the lives of your kids!

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

At Building Block Commons, we celebrate holidays in a low-key manner. We feel this makes for a more relaxed and enjoyable time for the children.

Suggested ways to express your appreciation are through kind words, a nice note, a few packs of stickers, or a small classroom gift.

HALLOWEEN: We celebrate Halloween in our classroom by having pajama day! It can be a holiday themed set of pajamas, or just a favorite pair. The children **do not** wear or bring costumes to school for safety reasons. We enjoy a special snack and Halloween music. The children have their own little festivities in their classrooms using seasonal projects they have made at school.

CELEBRATIONS OF LIGHT/ CHRISTMAS: We celebrate 6 different holidays during the winter months, noting their origin from around the world. Parents and children come together to celebrate the season on the last day of school before our holiday break with a cookie decorating party. Please make arrangements to join us for this holiday celebration that takes place during the last 30 minutes of school as listed on the calendar.

VALENTINE’S DAY: We **do not** do card exchanges and we **cannot** deliver cards from home to other classmates. Each classroom has a writing center set up which will provide the children with materials to create their own cards for friends and family. They will also be enjoying many other developmentally appropriate activities relating to Valentine’s Day.

CELEBRATE ART: During the Celebrate Art days, we will have parents and students doing hands-on activities to create art.

BIRTHDAYS: We do celebrate birthdays! Skip the frosting or put a VERY thin layer on the top. (Students just lick off the frosting, dump the muffin and remain hungry!) We prefer that you keep the special snack to muffins or individual ice cream cups (please provide disposable plastic spoons). No candles or cakes. *We also ask that you do not pass out private birthday invitations or thank you notes at school* since it does hurt the feelings of those children not included. It is very important that we are sensitive to all the children's feelings. When at all possible, please invite the whole class.

EVACUATION PLANS:

In light of events in the world today, it is important to inform you of our state implemented evacuation plan in case of an emergency. To make sure emergency plans work well, they are tested (an exercise) regularly in the region. Our school is called during these exercises and visited yearly for any updates. In case of a region-wide evacuation, a school bus would be sent to our school. Teachers and children would be taken to Manchester Memorial High School, South Porter St, Manchester, NH. We would immediately get on the phones & SeeSaw with quick notes to all parents to inform you that our evacuation plan has been implemented. You would be encouraged to get your child before the bus arrives, but we are required to keep the children together with the teachers once it is time for the bus to leave. At this point we will post a notice on the door that will give you our departure time and the emergency reception area we will meet you at.

Your children are very important to us and all of us would stay close to them to get them to safety and comfort, nurture and reassure them. All of us here at Building Block Commons are dedicated to the profession and will not hesitate to do everything we need to do to keep your children safe. For further information contact: www.nhoem.state.nh.us

Fire drills and other recommended drills are done regularly and documented. You will be kept in the loop when these are occurring.

SCHOOL RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES

Our rules at Building Block Commons are all based on safety, respect, and kindness.

Our rules and limits are taught clearly and are stated in a positive way and are handled in a simple and direct manner. School rules are discussed and created by the class and are a positive way to guide children and help them learn acceptable behavior. They give children limits and encourage them to develop self-control.

Positive reinforcement is very effective by helping teach children appropriate behavior. It will help children see the relationship between their behavior and consequences so they can learn to make good choices and develop self-control. Children do respond to lots of praise! At Building Block Commons we always take time to recognize kindness and good behavior.

We do not view discipline as a punishment, but as guidance and learning. It is a training process that takes a great deal of time and patience. Our first step of discipline is always a gentle reminder. We then follow with positive redirection. With this, we encourage alternative behaviors and help teach the children socially acceptable ways of dealing with their feelings. Natural consequences then follow.

Example: If a child is throwing sand, they would get a reminder about the behavior being “unexpected” at school. If it continues, they must leave that area for that time. This helps children make the connection between their behavior and its impact on others. If the behavior is particularly dangerous, we will encourage a child to have a seat in a “waiting space” until they decide they are able to safely re-join the activities. It is used (sparingly!) to give the child to give them a moment to get their “big feelings” back in control.

There have been few occasions, for different reasons, that we have had to ask a parent to come and get their child early because of certain behaviors. This occurs when behaviors become dangerous. We feel this is a natural consequence for more serious behaviors.

If behaviors that are dangerous and disruptive continue without improvement, we will help you find support and guidance through pediatricians, public school systems, counselors, etc. It may be necessary to ask you to find other school arrangements if the behavior remains a danger to your child or others. At this point, we will refund you the unused portion of your tuition.

Parenting is really hard, and we always appreciate open communication with parents. If you have concerns, please let us know. We are here to help and support you and your children.

HEALTH POLICIES

We must comply with state operating standards as follows:

“No child with a communicable disease ... shall be accepted for care until proper medical treatment has been given and the child is no longer infectious.”

We appreciate your cooperation and help by keeping your child at home if he/she shows any symptoms of an illness such as pink eye, significant cough, significant runny nose, significant sleepiness or any diarrhea, fever, vomiting, etc. Please allow your child to be symptom free for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

If a child is too sick to go outside, they are too sick to come to school. If the child is unable to take part in all daily activities at school, but will be attending, a doctor's note and email from the parents needs to be addressed to all teachers.

All children must have the recommended vaccinations to attend any public or private school in the state of NH. Exceptions are only granted with a copy of medical records stating the conflict to the child's health or a notarized copy of religious exemption.

If your child or family member has lice, please ***notify the school immediately*** and treat with a doctor-recommended insecticide. The child may return to school after your family has been lice and nit free for at least 2 days.

When a tick is attached to your child, we use a "Tick Key" or scoop to remove it as soon as possible. We will cover the area with antibiotic ointment and try to put the tick in a bag for you to see at pickup time.

CARPOOL INFORMATION

THE POLICE & NH D.O.T. HAVE ASKED US TO COMPLY WITH THIS FOR SAFETY

To make the carpool flow smoothly and ease entrance and exit to the school driveway, we ask that you follow the suggested routes. The property across the street is private property and should not be used for waiting for the carpool line to shorten. Please help us to be courteous to all our neighbors by not blocking driveways or parking on their property.

Remember: Right Turn IN, Right Turn OUT!

All cars should **enter** the driveway from the **RIGHT** (the Exeter end of Kingston Road). Cars coming from the Kingston / Brentwood area should turn onto Cross Road, then Juniper Ridge Road and then another right onto Kingston Road. This small detour will enable you to enter from the **RIGHT** side.

When **leaving** the driveway, please turn **RIGHT** onto Kingston Road, Cross Road and Juniper Ridge to head back into Exeter rather than crossing traffic.

By following these rules, you will help to make carpool easier and safer for you and your child, other parents and children entering and exiting from our school and other drivers passing by!

You should be lined up for carpool 5 minutes before dismissal. (Ex: If your official dismissal is 11:45, all cars should be here by 11:40 so we can begin dismissing)

All children must remain in their cars until a teacher opens the car door to greet them. Do not let your child hang out of the car windows or sun roof. We have seen cars get bumped and very serious injuries occur. If the carpool line backs up onto Kingston Road, please circle the block. Please do not pull over on the road.

Please refrain from using your cell phones during drop off and pick up time. It is important to keep all of our focus on your children. We thank you for this courtesy.

We will also ask your cooperation in buckling your child up in his/her car seats if they cannot buckle themselves. Teachers are not allowed to do this. All children in this age range should still be in 5 point harnesses to stay safe. Please inform anyone who may be picking up your child of our pickup and drop off policy.

Absolutely no idling (allowing your car to run) while in our driveway. This is a state law and we take it very seriously.

We will do our best to help your child in/out of your car happily and quickly to keep the carpool moving along as efficiently as possible. Please do not ever get out of your car during drop off or pick up.

We will work at being diligent to begin carpool promptly at the stated times and would appreciate your promptness and consideration during our pick-up times. Children get concerned if they are the last one left to be picked up and we are very busy after classes cleaning, planning, setting up for the incoming classes and even trying to have a quick lunch!

Please show us respect and arrive to pick up your child during your scheduled pick up time.

WEATHER DELAYS & INFORMATION

As a reminder, we will follow the **SAU #16 [Exeter area]** for weather closings and delays. Please remember to watch **WMUR-TV, channel 9** for any chance of a snow cancellation or delayed opening, though we try to get an email or SeeSaw message sent if we have power. ***If the area schools have a late start/ delayed opening, we will NOT HAVE MORNING CLASSES, though afternoon classes will take place.*** Please watch and listen for any changes from delayed to closed! In the case of an afternoon storm, we will call parents via a phone line and ask you to pick up your child at a given time. In this situation, we will be mentioning the possibility at 12:30 p.m. drop off time.

Please keep in mind that snow days are considered when creating tuition rates and teachers have given up their time, and are therefore still paid for these days. There are no reimbursements for snow days while all staff are still working from home.

SNACK

We are *not* a “peanut free” environment. You will be told about easily-avoidable snack allergies on your Snack Basket Info Sheet.

Teddy Snack:

- Please bring one carbohydrate and one protein in individual servings for each child in the class on your snack day.

- Food Tasting is done once a week. Please select on “Food Tasting” item to send for a single day of your choice during your snack leader week.

Panda/Kangaroo/Koala:

- Please bring your snack in large “shareable” containers for the entire week on the first day of class when you are snack leader.
- We will put the food into sanitary group-serving containers.
- Write out a menu for the teachers so they know which items should be paired with one another.
- Please select one carbohydrate and one protein for each day you are snack leader.
- Food Tasting is done once a week. Please select one “Food Tasting” item (of your choice or use our list!) to send for a single day.
- Keep in mind we need to use the most perishable items in the beginning of the week!

Carbohydrate	Protein	“Food Tasting” Ideas
Muffins	Yogurt	Dried Tropical Fruits
Bread	Cheese sticks	Peppers
Trail Mix	Cheese slices	Mango
Applesauce	Hard boiled eggs	Pineapple
Mini Bagels	Almonds/Peanuts	Edamame
Crackers/Pretzels	Cream cheese	Smoothies
Carrots	Nut butters	Colored carrots
Fruit slices	Deli Meat roll ups	Quinoa
Granola Bars	Cottage Cheese	Kale Chips
Chips/Salsa	Black Beans	Unique Spices on Rice

These are just suggestions! Other things are welcome!

Strict avoidance is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction. The allergy can be life threatening. If a reaction occurs, we must immediately call 911 for help. Immediate injection of adrenaline is necessary and immediate medical care is required. Our staff has been trained and we have an emergency protocol in place.

The parents of these children take an active role in managing the allergies but need your help concerning daily class snacks and special treats for celebrations.

Please have your children wash their hands before arriving at school. A box of hand wipes in the car for after “snacking” is easy and helpful. Cross contamination from residue on hands can trigger a reaction.

Food allergies are becoming more common. We must do all we can to provide these children with a safe learning environment. Labeling home made items is very important. With your help, we will achieve our goal. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance. If you have any questions about any of the things noted in this handbook, please contact the school director to chat! We are looking forward to an awesome year!

Please always let us know if you have any questions!

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