

**HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE EARLY LEARNING CENTER
PARENT HANDBOOK
2025-2026**

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WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Families,

The teachers and I are thrilled to enter into a new year of growth, learning, play, exploration and creativity with you and your child.

We have compiled this parent handbook as a means of communicating to you our goals, approach, and policies for this coming year. We hope that this handbook will be a resource for you and will help to support you and your family in acclimating to the Early Learning Center.

We are looking forward to building (or continuing to build) a collaborative and supportive relationship with our families and hope that you will feel free to approach us with questions or for further clarification on the information in this handbook.

Welcome to the Hampshire College Early Learning Center!

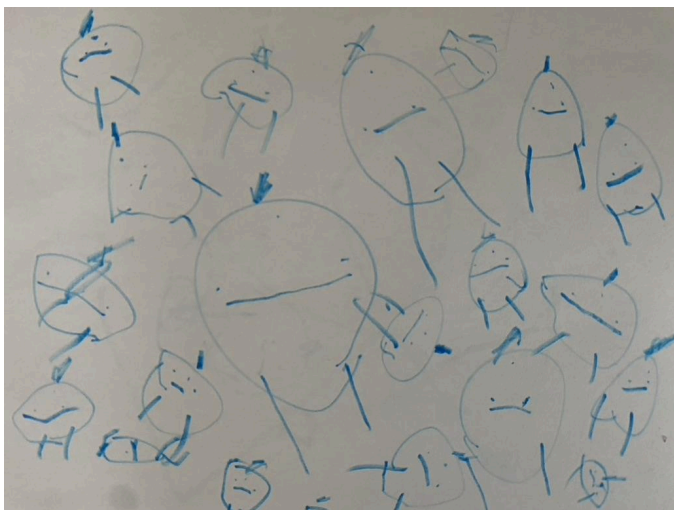
Ronit Ben-Shir
Director, HCELC

INTRODUCTION

The Hampshire College Early Learning Center (formerly the Hampshire College Children's Center) opened its doors in the spring of 1981 to 8 children and their families, after over a year of planning on the part of a group of Hampshire staff, students, and faculty. Through the next 8 years, located in the basement of a dormitory, the center expanded 4 times and finally relocated in the summer of 1988 to our present facility, designed with input from staff and parents to meet the needs of children, staff and parents. In the spring of 2003, we accomplished our first renovation to the space, converting an indoor storage room into a studio.

We presently serve about 40 families, about 20% of whom are Hampshire College-affiliated. In the fall of 2011, we changed our name from the Children's Center to the Early Learning Center in order to be inclusive of the various constituents of our early learning community, including children, parents, teachers, Hampshire College work-study student assistants, Hampshire students and faculty who utilize the Center as a laboratory for study, and visitors who come to observe and learn more about the work we do.

This handbook will address how we work to meet the needs of these varied constituencies, and how we seek to build a community that honors and is enriched by the contributions of all who play, learn, work, teach, study and visit our Early Learning Center.



-Georgia, age 3

THE EARLY LEARNING CENTER AT A GLANCE

Early Learning Center Staff:

Center Director: *Ronit Ben-Shir (she/her)*

Infant Room Teachers: *Kim Ripley (she/her)*, *Michelle Sullivan (she/her)*

Toddler Room Teachers: *Kate Nicolaou (she/her)*

Preschool Room Teachers: *Paul Murphy (he/him)*, *Tensel Escobar (she/her)*

Licensing and Accreditation:

Licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Parents may obtain information regarding the regulatory compliance history of the HCELC by contacting the Department of Early Education and Care regional office at 95 Liberty Street, Springfield, MA 01103 at: (413) 788-8401.

Ages: 2 months- 5 years

Teacher: Child Ratios and Maximum Group Sizes:

We enjoy the benefits of having a talented team of co-teachers, assistant teachers, Hampshire students and volunteers that keep our ratios much lower than our licensing mandates. However, at minimum, we adhere to the teacher:child ratios and maximum group sizes mandated by the Department of Early Education and Care:

AGE GROUP	MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE	TEACHER: CHILD RATIO
<i>Infants:</i> 2-15 months	7	1:3
<i>Toddlers:</i> 15 months-2.9 years	9	1:4
<i>Preschoolers:</i> 2.9-5 years	17	1:10

HCELC CALENDAR 2025-2026

AUGUST

- *Planning, Set-up days, Teacher-Family home visits, Staff meetings:* Monday, August 4th-Friday August 15th
- *Orientation Meeting for all Parents:* Thursday, August 14th 7:15-8:45pm
- *First Day of School:* Monday, August 18th
- *Staggered enrollment:* August 18th- August 29th

SEPTEMBER

- *School Closed-Labor Day Holiday:* Monday, September 1st
- *Preschool Extended Day Start:* Tuesday, September 2nd
- *Fall Parent-Teacher Night:* Dates to be announced

OCTOBER

- *After School Gathering:* Week of October 6th, exact date TBD. 3:00-4:00pm
- *School Closed- Indigenous People's Day:* Monday, October 13th
- *School Closed-Curriculum Day:* Tuesday, October 14th

NOVEMBER

- *School Closed-Curriculum and Veterans Day:* Tuesday, November 11th
- *After School Gathering:* Week of November 10th, exact date TBD. 3:00-4:00pm
- *School Closed- Thanksgiving Break:* Monday, Nov. 24th-Friday Nov. 28th

DECEMBER

- *School Closed-Winter Break:* Monday, Dec 22nd- Friday, January 2nd, 2026
- *Return to school:* Monday, January 5th

JANUARY

- *School Closed- MLK Jr. Day:* Monday, January 19th

FEBRUARY

- *After School Gathering:* Week of February 2nd, exact date TBD. 3:00-4:00pm
- *School Closed- Curriculum Day:* Thursday, February 19th

MARCH

- *School Closed- Spring Break:* Monday, March 16th-Friday, March 20th

APRIL

- *School Closed- Curriculum Day:* Friday, April 17th
- *After School Gathering:* Week of April 20th, exact date TBD. 3:00-4:00pm

MAY

- *School Closed- Memorial Day:* Monday, May 25th
- *Toddler Room End-of-Year Party:* Friday, May 29th

JUNE

- *Closing Activities: Preschool Bridging:* Tuesday, June 2nd 3:30pm
- *Last Day of Academic Year Session:* Tuesday, June 2nd

SUMMER PROGRAM:

- *First Session:* TBD
- *Second Session:* TBD
- *School Closed- Juneteenth Holiday:* Friday, June 19th

- *School Closed-Independence Day, Friday, July 3rd*

AUGUST

- *Staff Preparation: Monday, Aug 3rd- Friday, Aug 14th*
- *First Day of School: Monday, August 17th, 2026*

FAQ ABOUT OUR CALENDAR

Families often have questions about why we close on certain days of the school year. The following information is provided to explain the licensing regulations, staffing needs and educational goals that guide our creation of the center calendar.

Staff Preparation

During the two weeks of staff preparation the teachers go for home visits, set up the environments for play and learning, and participate in professional development.

August Staggered Schedule

All licensed large group children's centers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are required to have a plan for transitioning into the new school year. This transition is not only required by the licenser, but it represents best practice. HCELC observes a slow start, using a staggered schedule, for two weeks in August/September. We ask parents to give up one day each week during the slow start period so that teachers are able to provide children and their families with more individualized attention during this period. This is essential to ease the transition into a new classroom or, in many cases, into the Center itself. In addition, Hampshire College students are not yet back on campus and to hire and have reliable, screened student workers is essential.

Vacation Closings

The teachers at the Center are entitled to vacation days as are all other permanent staff at the College. In order to facilitate this, we close during the week of Thanksgiving and two weeks at the end of December. In an effort to minimize disruption for the children by bringing in substitutes and to keep the costs for tuition as low as possible by not hiring substitutes while teachers are on vacation, the Center closes for vacation when students are typically away (Spring break in March). Further, the Center closes between the Summer Session and the beginning of the new academic year. This allows the teachers time to prepare for incoming students and, importantly, allows the teachers time to conduct home visits.

Curriculum Days

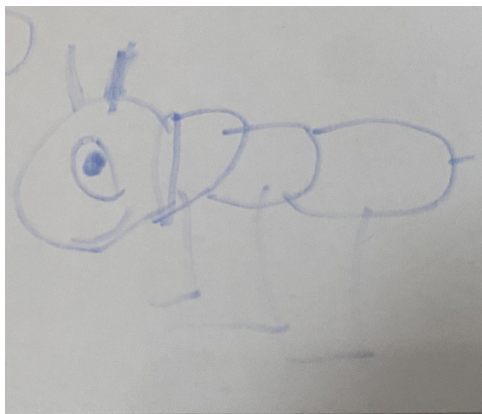
In order to maintain their certification, teachers are required to attend professional development training. The Center's licenser stipulates that each teacher must receive at least 30 hours per year. This equates roughly to four curriculum days during the year.

Changes to the Calendar

Occasionally, changes will be made to the calendar after it is published due to changes to the Hampshire College staff calendar. For example, the President of Hampshire College will sometimes announce an extended winter break or a summer vacation day for College staff as a gift of appreciation. As employees of the College, ELC staff are entitled to participate in these benefits. The Director will announce these closures as soon as possible to allow families opportunities to find alternate care for these days as needed. When these closures occur during the summer program, families will not pay for care on the days in which the Center is closed. When the closures happen during the academic year program, such as the extended winter break, monthly tuition charges will remain the same, just as with other vacation and holiday days built into the ELC calendar.

Emergency Closures

Occasionally the ELC will have to close unexpectedly due to a weather emergency or a power, water or other outage, or in the case of public health emergencies such as Pandemics. When the College is closed, the ELC will follow suit. In situations in which there is an outage at the ELC but the College is open, the ELC will close until the situation has been resolved. As a program that is governed by the MA Department of Early Education and Care, we are licensed to conduct our program within our specific facility and must meet a multitude of regulations within our physical space, including specifics such as the temperature of our refrigerator, distance between sleeping surfaces, types of cleaning products available near diapering, toileting and eating areas, the number of toilets and sinks available for children and the location of diapering surfaces in relation to areas for playing. Since we are unable to guarantee that we can meet these regulations outside of our physical space, we must close when the conditions within our building do not allow us to provide appropriate electricity, air temperatures and water sources.



- Celine, age 4

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Hampshire College Early Learning Center Mission and Vision Statement

We believe in the child's right to play with a tangible sense of adventure, exuberance and joy. We value the transcendent nature of unrushed, spontaneous play and the powerful inquiries and relationships that are built when children are given uninterrupted time with materials and with each other. Play provides an imaginary world in which children can master skills, can develop deeper understandings of what they observe in their daily lives, and can safely explore issues of power and agency. We believe that thoughtful risk-taking is an important part of the learning process. When given opportunities to challenge their bodies and minds, children develop trust in themselves and expand their self-view of their own capabilities.

We value the peer mentorship that emerges when children of varying ages are encouraged to work together as a community. As members of a group learning environment, children develop a deep understanding of citizenship and social democracy and revel in the joy that is harnessed when they learn from one another. We witness the children's role as participants within and creators of their own cultural communities. Their spontaneous, invented classroom rituals are passed down from year to year and become a part of our Center's tradition.

As educators, we strive for collaborative inquiry, observation and reflection to facilitate the development of a daily program that responds to the social, cognitive and sensory needs of the individual and group. We observe the children at play and translate it, giving value and language to deepen our adult understanding of their work. We nurture the scientist in the child and the child's natural inclination toward discovery and innovation. We invite the children to build on and articulate their knowledge through dialogue with art, literacy and sensory materials that provoke their curiosity. We document our work with children and colleagues and the children's work with each other- our goal is to capture the uniqueness and capability of each child, the value of their words and discoveries, and our teaching practices of observation, reflection, self-assessment and co-construction.

We strive for authenticity in our interactions with children, in our development of a curriculum that reflects the uniqueness of each group of learners, and in our commitment to reflecting the values of our community in our philosophy and daily practice. We appreciate the ways in which the culture of our community changes with the individuals who inhabit it. We honor our history and yet, every year, we respond to the changing pulse of the new children and families who walk through our doors. We value collaboration in every aspect of our work, including our ongoing dialogue and partnership with colleagues, children, families and members of the larger college community. We appreciate the talents, diversity and enrichment that our work with the students, faculty and staff of Hampshire College provide for our program. We aim to be a resource for educators and for future educators in training. In our role as teacher researchers, we are

charged with the mission of expanding our society's image of the capabilities of the young child. We advocate for childhood and for the rights of children and actively challenge educational practices that undermine the possibility that children can be agents of change in their communities.

The children who pass through the Early Learning Center will view themselves as powerful and vital citizens, with rights and responsibilities within their classroom, school, family, and larger communities. They will celebrate and experience joy in group accomplishment and in group challenge. They will develop a strong sense of self and an appreciation for their own uniqueness. As life-long learners, the children of the Early Learning Center will embrace the endless possibilities of discovery that exist in that sacred space of listening, wondering and asking.

Social Justice

The Hampshire College Early Learning Center educators would like to reach out to our community about social justice across our nation. While we need to reassure children about the world, it is okay to express that we don't know everything and that we want to learn more. We encourage parents and caregivers to reflect visibly on your own social identities and values and their relationship to race and racism. At the ELC our values of the image of the child reflect in our Mission and Vision statement above and in our daily practice:

"...children develop a deep understanding of citizenship and social democracy and revel in the joy that is harnessed when they learn from one another. We witness the children's role as participants within and creators of their own cultural communities.

The children who pass through the Early Learning Center will view themselves as powerful and vital citizens, with rights and responsibilities within their classroom, school, family, and larger communities. They will develop a strong sense of self and an appreciation for their own uniqueness".

Inspiration from Northern Italy

Our staff continues to be inspired by the world-renown infant/toddler/preschool programs in Reggio Emilia and Pistoia, Italy. Though our pedagogy at the Early Learning Center is eclectic, we find that many of the principles of the approaches used by educators in Northern Italy bring new insight and depth to our work with children, families, and each other.

In short, we find inspiration in the following principles:

The image of the child as strong, rich, and powerful, and having "potential, plasticity, the desire to grow, curiosity, the ability to be amazed, and the desire to relate to others and communicate."
(Carlina Rinaldi)

The role of the teacher as a resource for the children and a 'co-researcher'—not to answer questions for children but to help children ask good questions and discover the answers on their own. "In Reggio, teachers know how to listen to children, how to allow them to take initiative and yet how to guide them in productive ways." (Howard Gardner)

The importance of the organization and aesthetics of the environment. The environment has been called "the third teacher" (in addition to the team of teachers) and is seen as a place for discovery and comfort.

Documentation of children's projects and activities provides a memory for the children, parents and teachers and illuminates the thinking of the children, which can be used as a springboard for future discovery. Transcripts of the children's words, photographs, objects, video and audio tapes are all part of the process.

Emergent curriculum, which signifies that the ideas and plans for activities and materials emerge from the interests of the children in collaboration with teachers. Documentation helps teachers look closely at what the children are interested in, what questions they are asking and what theories they are developing.

Collaboration at every level—children with one another, teachers and children, teachers with one another, teachers and parents, and parents with one another.

The educators in Reggio Emilia say that each school is like a person, with its own personality. We are fortunate to have developed a special personality at the Early Learning Center through our rich history, and we continue to find inspiration in the wonderful and special group of schools in northern Italy.



- Ezra, Age 5

PLAY AS CURRICULUM

Traditional and modern educational theorists and researchers, such as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Vivian Gussin Paley, Loris Malaguzzi, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Ellen Galisky have written about the importance of learning through play not only for children, but for people of all ages.

At the Early Learning Center, we believe that play is children's work and provides the most effective stage for brain development and learning in the early childhood years. ELC teachers present materials and experiences to children that allow them to access curricular concepts and skills in authentic, developmentally appropriate ways. Teachers scaffold these experiences and expand on them from one day to the next, allowing children to build on previous knowledge while engaging in long-term investigations.

Through play, children at the ELC learn:

Social-Emotional Skills		
Collaboration	Sharing Ideas	Listening
Persisting when challenged	Creative alternative solutions	Expressing ideas and feelings through a variety of mediums
Making decisions and choices	Developing confidence in abilities and interests	Accepting responsibility
Positive associations with learning	Developing empathy	Curiosity
Initiative	Being able to identify and label feelings	Developing ability to interpret facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice
How to identify their learning strengths and strategies	Developing community awareness	Developing an awareness of the customs of others' cultures and how all people are alike and different

Developing an awareness of home, school and neighboring communities	Developing independence and the ability to care for oneself in age appropriate ways	
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Cognitive Skills		
How to expand on ideas and elaborate on play	How to reflect on work and revise ideas	Developing symbolic play and the ability to use representational objects
Developing the ability to match identical objects, colors, sounds and textures	Problem-solving	

Science		
Sorting and classifying	Predicting	Hypothesizing
Theorizing	Developing questions	Developing methods of gathering information
Developing methods of gathering information	Observation	Documentation

Math		
Concepts of shape, size, weight, position, symmetry, balance, direction and number	Tools and strategies for measurement	Positional/quantitative concepts, such as big/little, tall/short, more/less, full/empty, up/down, over/under, beginning/middle/end, forward/backward, next to, front/back, etc
Developing mathematical concepts and skills, such as one-to-one correspondence, counting, sequencing and identification of shapes		

Language and Literacy		
Using writing and drawing as a method for representing ideas	Using books and pictures as reference	Storytelling
Being able to match sensory experiences to descriptive terms, such as sour/sweet, warm/cold, rough/smooth, hard/soft	Retelling sequence of events from a story	Developing print awareness

Creative Arts		
Developing musical appreciation and understanding rhythm, beat, pitch and tone	Acquiring techniques and skills for using a variety of art materials	Learning about the properties of various art materials and tools
Developing the ability to express their ideas through a variety of mediums, such as art, storytelling, music and creative movement		

Motor Skills		
How to challenge their bodies	How to plan actions	Developing fine motor skills through purposeful manipulation and problem solving with small objects
Developing balance, strength, dexterity, flexibility and spatial awareness through physical movement		

CENTER ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Early Learning Center offers children a variety of activities including: motor activities, pretend play and creative dramatics, cooking, creative arts, nature study/gardening, books and storytelling, woodworking/construction, music and movement, and science. In all of the activities planned and materials which are available to the children, the staff plan carefully for the developmental and individual needs and interests of the children, and with a mind toward family background, diversity, and constellation.

Our backyard playground is where most of the outdoor time is spent; teachers also take children on many exploration walks throughout campus. The young infants are taken on strolls about campus. Teachers and children also go on walks to the campus art gallery, the woods, etc. The Hampshire College Farm Center is another wonderful resource, and they welcome our visits and our participation in their CSA farm share program. And the Eric Carle Museum is just across the driveway!

In the beginning of the year, a daily rhythm is designed (for preschoolers and toddlers) in an attempt to give children a sense of "what happens next." This allows them the autonomy of knowing what is expected and knowing what they can expect from teachers. For infants, daily routines are, of course, very individualized. As the year progresses, however, rhythms develop around snack times, rest times, etc.

The large part of each morning for toddlers and preschoolers is spent as free choice activity/project time. Each classroom environment is carefully planned to provide materials and activities which are both familiar and challenging, which reflect the interests of the children, which promote cooperation, individual learning, and problem solving. The morning also includes a time for snack, group meeting, small group project work and outdoor time. Children may visit other classrooms when convenient. This gives the older children an opportunity to help with the younger children and the younger children are able to visit with "the big kids" and enjoy different classroom spaces. Periodically, we convene as a community in our playroom and participate in song, dance, theater and foreign language activities that are led by classroom teachers, Hampshire College students, faculty and enrichment specialists.

Here is more information about each age group as shared by the classroom teachers:

Infants

All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in constructing their learning, in engaging in social interaction and in negotiating with everything the environment brings to them.

Lella Gandini, (1993) Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education, *Young Children*, 49, p.5

The Hampshire College Early Learning Center Infant Program welcomes children from six weeks to 14 months of age at the start of our school year. These children stay together as a community for a full year or two depending on their age. Our class naturally shifts from an infant group to an infant/toddler mixed cohort as the year progresses. We are licensed for seven children each day, with support from two Co-Lead teachers, and two assistant teachers and/or student teachers.

Our program is inspired by the work of educators in [Reggio Emilia and Pistoia, Italy](#).

Our work stems from the image of the child as powerful, autonomous, joyful agents in their own learning. We strive to demonstrate respect for each infant's autonomy by giving them ample time and space to move and explore. We aim to extend their curiosity by curating a rich, dynamic space that is responsive to their changing abilities and interests. We understand the importance of meaningful connections between children and adults for [cognitive development](#), and work to maximize opportunities for “serve and return” interactions.

"Relationships are at the very heart of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. That philosophy is reflected in an environment that encircles the child with three 'teachers,' or protagonists. The first teacher—the parent—takes on the role of active partner and guide in the education of the child. The second is the classroom teacher. Often working in pairs, the classroom teacher assumes the role of researcher and intentionally engages children in meaningful work and conversation. The third teacher is the environment—a setting designed to be not only functional but also beautiful and reflective of the child's learning. It is the child's relationship with parent, teacher, and environment that ignites learning. — Mary Ann Biermeier (2015) Inspired by Reggio Emilia: *Emergent Curriculum in Relationship-Driven Learning Environments*, *Young Children*

Further Reading Resources:

- [Reggio Children](#)
- [Harvard University Center on the Developing Child](#)
- [NAEYC Emergent Curriculum](#)

Toddlers

Hampshire College Early Learning Center's Toddler Group is a socially minded, compassionate group of young children and continually learning adults, who aim to create a caring community, develop empowering self-help skills, and nurture creativity, empathy, and fun. As nine 15 month-2 year 10-month-old children have an immeasurable amount of energy, we spend a LOT of time outside, exploring the natural materials and open-ended activities that the playground, magical hideout, and greater Hampshire College campus provide us. While our activities vary with the emerging interests and skills of the children in

our group, we have clear routines that give a sense of stability amidst the fun and chaos of toddlerhood. Children are in the group for one to two years and have ample opportunities for exploration and reciprocal learning.

We participate in a regular meeting circle time during which music and movement activities practice regulation, turn-taking, waiting, and repetition through music and movement together. We share group meal times and facilitate small group activities to enhance social learning, offer mentorship opportunities, and meet individual and group needs. The day also includes a much-needed rest time, and we have a separate nap room for children's naps.

Toddler Rhythm of the Day:

- Welcoming 8:15-9:15 a.m. (hand washing, connecting with families, teachers, and children)
- Open-ended play outside or in the classroom with sensory play, art activities, and open-ended materials. Small group activities available in large studio/playroom
- Pottying
- Snack time (provided by home)
- Meeting time
- Outdoor adventures/walks/small group experiences
- More pottying
- Noon Lunch (also provided by home)
- Quieter play/pottying
- 1 p.m. Naptime, followed by groggy reconnection time leading into play
- 3-3:30 p.m. reunion with families

The Early Learning Center recognizes that raising toddlers can be an exciting and demanding time. We also work toward creating a community of caregivers and establishing peer connections through transparency about home and school challenges and accomplishments. We offer frequent "come early, stay late" days for families to meet together at the end of the day, and provide adult-only caregiver forums to nurture adult relationships.

Our toddler program is deeply connected to our home at Hampshire College. We collaborate with Hampshire College professors and students on projects and show the capabilities young people have. We become connected with College student support teachers who gain experience and understanding of best teaching practices for children and enrich our program with their skills. We explore the campus at large and take walks on the trails. We are grateful to share and receive reciprocal joy from this community.

Teachers work alongside children to create an environment where toddlers have autonomy and their presence is the largest in our space. We observe and document the children's learning through photography, videos, and written notes as reflection tools that help adapt our physical environment to respond to the group's interests and needs. Toddlerhood is a

time of building independence, figuring out boundaries, and developing communication and social skills.

Teachers scaffold children's communication and problem-solving skills to create a strong community with one another. We provide space for children to experiment and test these skills independently from teachers as much as possible. When faced with challenging situations, teachers encourage children to seek help, comfort, and support from one another, rather than relying solely on the adults around them. We all benefit from the cohesion and confidence that emerges in children throughout toddlerhood.

Preschool

The preschool room at the Hampshire College Early Learning Center is a mixed-aged classroom with children of three to five years old. In the preschool room, we spend most of our day outdoors either in the play yard or exploring the Hampshire campus. We play with [loose parts](#), and ambiguous objects that can be used in multiple ways. Loose parts invite the children to interpret and make meaning from their environment as part of their play.

We are very fortunate to be located on the Hampshire College campus. Across the street from our school is the [Eric Carle Museum](#), the leading children's book museum in the country. We enjoy visiting for story time and art making in the art studio and experiencing the tremendous rotating art exhibits of world class children's book art. The College's campus is full of outdoor spaces to explore bursting with beautiful nature: community gardens, pathways with big rocks to climb, outdoor sculptures and forest trails. We often visit the art gallery, library, dance studio, and other adored spaces filled with colleagues and friends of the Early Learning Center.

Our days are spacious, following a flexible schedule that allows for spontaneity while offering routine and consistency to the children. We find this to be an empowering combination for preschoolers. At the start of the school year, the classroom follows a more specific routine to support preschoolers transitioning into a new environment. As they grow more comfortable, the daily schedule shifts to become more fluid and dynamic. This flexibility allows people (preschoolers and teachers alike) to dive deep into their interests and relationships. It also grants the teachers more capacity to meet the needs of individual children and allows us to honor and embrace unique styles of learning.

Our teaching team, which this year consists of two co-teachers and two assistant teachers, practices a very collaborative and highly creative teaching style. As teachers, we consider ourselves co-researchers alongside the children, parents, and with each other. Together with preschoolers, we deliberately fabricate a strong sense of authentic and empowered community, composed of individuals who are encouraged to be themselves and have a voice. We focus on community building as the nucleus of social/emotional learning and critical thinking. Preschoolers participate in shared experiences as a whole group and also regularly participate in small group activities. Teachers curate small group experiences to experiment with different social configurations and provide more individualized social

scaffolding for the children. The small groups encourage children to try things outside of their comfort zone and give time for certain relationships or dynamics to be explored.

Community building is important in preschool because participation in a group can foster a lifelong love of learning. Children learn how to speak for themselves and explore conflict resolution with their peers. They develop and discover independence and autonomy, while also practicing empathy and consideration of others. This relational approach to the preschool classroom gives way to the inquiry based research of the children. When people feel empowered in their community, they are able to ask questions and have more access to curiosity. We find that starting from this social community baseline, children feel more confident in their capacity to learn and freedom to be themselves while they are learning.

We share the rich, complex, and entertaining adventures of the preschoolers in our emails to parents and families. Our classroom documentation tells the story of the group; how its identity and values are emerging, and provides developmental context for the culture and dynamics that develop. We try to center the children's voices in our messages to parents, and sometimes preschoolers will help recount stories from the day.

Once or twice a day, teachers and preschoolers gather for meeting time. Meeting time is a time for shared experience; it can be group songs and games, story time, or group discussions about things that matter to the preschoolers. At meeting time, people practice taking up space and giving space to others. Empowering each child's unique voice and encouraging mutual respect gives the opportunity for children to be active protagonists in their own educational experience and lives. It also sets us up to engage in reciprocal collaboration with the Hampshire College community and our peers at the Early Learning Center.

Later in the year we often wind up doing dynamic and complex collaborations with Hampshire College students. We have had ongoing collaborations with professors and classes over the years where students and preschoolers participate in projects together. We have had the honor and privilege of getting to work with students on their final thesis projects around nature education, dance and movement, and Early Childhood education program comparative analysis. In these collaborations and interactions with Hampshire students, preschoolers' ideas and voices are heard and respected. Their presence on campus and in the world is valued and appreciated by Hampshire students as the brilliant, creative, ingenuitive, compassionate, thoughtful, and interesting young community members that they are!

CHILD GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Our guidance and management philosophy, is, simply stated, that children and adults may not misuse/hurt themselves, others or materials. However, it is common and age-appropriate for young children to test limits and behave “out of bounds”. This is their way of exploring relationships, expressing their deep feelings, and testing their own autonomy. Infants and toddlers especially may hit, pull hair, poke, push, snatch toys, bite and yell, as a means to get what they want, or to express frustration, or to simply explore another person’s response. Depending on the age and motivation for the child’s “mis”-behavior, our intervention strategies will vary. Though these behaviors are “normal”, our message to the children is that their feelings are acceptable and important but that hurtful behaviors are not acceptable. Instead, our strategies entail helping children develop legitimate, appropriate ways of meeting their needs without hurting others, themselves, or the materials.

Our goal in guidance is to help children develop self-control and to accept, understand, and label a wide range of feelings. Our goal is not to be punitive or to merely exercise control over the children. The aim of this process is a child with positive feelings of self, whose behavior is motivated by self-control and understanding, not by fear of adult intervention or control.

Staff use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, anticipation, positive reinforcement and encouragement, rather than criticism or comparison. Corporal punishment and verbal abuse of any kind is strictly prohibited. No child will ever be denied food as a form of punishment. No child will ever be punished for toileting accidents. No child will ever be confined to a swing, high chair, crib, playpen or any other piece of equipment for an extended period of time in lieu of supervision. Consistent clear rules are explained and understood by adults (e.g. “We don’t allow hitting in this school. It hurts; use your words to tell her what you want or I can help you.”)

With infants and toddlers, a child who is very frustrated and aggressive may need removal from the other children to spend one-on-one time with a teacher in order to reestablish equilibrium. However, “time outs” are not, we feel, appropriate for very young children, and we do not use this technique with infants and toddlers. Instead, redirection, or, when appropriate, discussion of alternative strategies is our preferred direction.

With preschoolers, a problem-solving approach is the basis for guidance and limit-setting. Teachers help children develop tools to handle conflict through individual discussion, discussion with peers and in group meetings. In addition, each

teaching team problem solves together about ways to alter the environment, supervision or the activities in the classroom to affect children's behavior, minimize conflict and promote negotiation and cooperation.

Logical consequences is also a technique used with older toddlers and preschoolers, e.g. if a child is misusing a material they try first to use it appropriately but if that's not possible, the child must give up that activity, to try again later or the next day. Or, if two children are over- stimulating each other or disturbing others, they may be asked to spend some time apart, to re-channel their energies.

Discipline involves setting limits and at times restricting or prohibiting, but it involves much more. It incorporates respect and caring for self and others, explaining the reasons for limits, and helping provide control for a child who lacks self-control. It also involves helping a child distinguish between feelings and behaviors, developing an appropriate repertoire for expressing one's feelings and needs, and developing empathy.

REFERRAL SERVICE PROCEDURE

The philosophy of the Early Learning Center is to provide early intervention, when necessary, related to learning disabilities, physical disabilities, psychological and developmental concerns, in the most supportive, least restrictive, cooperative fashion.

When a staff member has concerns about a child in any of these areas, the following referral plan will be used. Any written reports are of course confidential and are only available to the child's parents and center staff. Parents must sign a release form before any written information can be shared with consultants or other agencies.

1. The teachers will observe the child and informally document observations.
2. The Director will observe the child and will conference with the child's teachers. The observations and conference will be documented informally.
3. Classroom strategies may be developed to help alleviate the problem.
4. Should the concern persist; the teacher will arrange a conference with the parents at which the Director may be present. During this meeting, observations and strategies for supporting the child will be discussed. If there are concerns about the safety of the child or other children/adults in the classroom, a plan may be made to reduce the child's scheduled hours or to request that parents pick their child up from the center when safety cannot be ensured.
5. During the conference, the parents and staff may decide to make a referral to the special education department of the public schools, or to an early intervention agency.

The Director will provide the parent(s) with referral information and will inform parents of their rights under Chapter 766.

6. The conference will be documented by the Director, and a copy placed in the child's file.

7. If a referral is made to the public schools or other outside agency or specialist, the teachers and Director will communicate regularly with specialists (parents will be provided with a release form to sign) and will attend evaluation meetings. If a child receives services such as physical therapy or occupational therapy, we welcome service delivery at the Center.

8. Should the parent(s) choose not to participate in the evaluation or treatment plan, the Director reserves the right to deny further participation in the child care program to the family.

9. A child may be terminated from the Center if:

- The health and safety of the child at the Center cannot be assured.
- The child's developmental needs are not being met at the Center.
- Tuition has not been paid for more than 2 months.

Parents will be notified both in writing and at a face-to-face meeting, when possible, about the circumstances including the reasons for termination, and a copy of this letter will be kept in the child's file. The Director will inform the parents of the availability of information and referral for other services.

When any child leaves the Center (whether initiated by the parents or the Center), we feel it is important for the child and her/his friends and teachers to say good-bye and prepare for the departure however it is possible.

10. Reporting to DSS: If the center staff has reason to suspect a child in care is a victim of physical, psychological or sexual abuse, or neglect, they are mandated by law to report facts and circumstances to the Department of Social Services Protective Investigation Unit.

A staff member accused of abuse or neglect will be removed from direct work with children until the DSS investigation is completed, as The Department of Early Education and Care requires, and in consultation with the Office of Human Resources at Hampshire College. A complete policy on accusations of abuse and neglect is on file and given to all staff.

STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

The Center employs one Director, 6 lead teachers, and one office assistant. All staff members are trained in the field of Early Childhood Education or a related field, and have

had substantial experience teaching young children. All are certified as Lead Teachers by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, and are certified in First Aid and CPR. All teachers have a CORI, DCF, SORI and fingerprint checks before starting work.

The Center also employs Hampshire College work-study students and casual employees as assistant teachers, and they are essential to the operation of the program.

Each room is staffed with at least one student or casual employee at all times, who assists the teachers in all aspects of the early education program, and teachers supervise the students in their room. The Director screens, interviews and selects student/casual employee assistants, and all have a CORI, DCF, SORI and fingerprint background check. It is a priority in recruiting assistants to balance the composition of workers with regard to race, national origin and gender. We enlist the help of the student Employment Office and the Cultural Center in this endeavor, as well as our current assistant teachers.

We also have volunteers working with us. Volunteers tend to be either Hampshire College students who do not qualify for work-study or community members who have an interest in working with young children.

The center contracts with professionals in a variety of fields to act as consultants. These consultants provide us with general information, consultation and in-service training:

- **REACH/Regional Public School Special Education Coordinators** provide observations, evaluations and support services for children, families and teachers to help support children's success at ELC and beyond.
- **Dr. Bruce Weinstock** is our health care consultant and is available to us on an on-call basis for consultation at no charge about medical questions/concerns.

Staff Development

Staff supervision, evaluation and training are mandated by the Department of Early Education and Care and are important components of our program. Staff development (a minimum of 30 hours/year) helps keep teachers growing and learning which enriches the program for us all.

Each teacher is directly supervised by the Director. Individual supervision meetings are held with each educator. In addition, the Director meets with each teaching team periodically.

Discussion includes program development, environmental design, observations of individual children, group dynamics, project work and documentation, team dynamics and goal setting. In addition to informal classroom observations, the Director conducts classroom observations of each staff member daily. These observations are discussed in

supervision and team meetings and are used to create professional goals as well as to inform our annual performance evaluations. The full staff meets weekly to discuss any business pertinent to teaching, collaboration, professional development and the running of the Center program. The staff reads and discusses articles and books, and discusses each other's classroom projects and documentation.

Staff training is many faceted and includes: a program orientation (for newly hired staff members), two weeks of meetings, set-up and home visits in late August, a staff retreat in the fall; curriculum days throughout the year which include in-house discussions, presenters on topics of interest, and team meetings/work in classrooms; and topical staff meetings facilitated by professional consultants. In addition, each teacher is granted individual professional days to attend conferences/workshops or observe in other schools.

Substitute Teachers

The Early Learning Center provides employee and family sick leave as well as personal/professional leave and vacation to all the permanent teaching staff, so substitute teachers in our center are commonplace. We make every effort to find qualified and competent substitute teachers. We screen substitutes by requiring an interview with the Director, checking at least 2 references, and requiring a CORI and DSS check. Substitutes receive a policy packet and are given an orientation to the program by the Director. Substitutes are almost always working under the supervision of a permanent teacher, or, at the very least, with one of our College students. Whenever possible, we try to schedule a few substitutes repeatedly so that they become familiar to the children, staff and parents.

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS/ OBSERVATION AND RESEARCH

One of the features of our association with Hampshire College is our participation in observation, research and class projects carried out by faculty and students. We feel that this participation is of value in increasing the collective knowledge of children and their development and also in training professionals for careers in early childhood or related fields. These collaborations also solidify the role of the Early Learning Center in the core academic mission of Hampshire College.

Observation in the classroom will not involve any intentional interaction between observer and children. Parents sign a blanket permission form for observation. Children will not be identified by family name, unless additional parental permission is given. Observers may come once or twice for a class assignment, or may come weekly to observe children over the course of the semester.

All research or class projects carried out at the Early Learning Center are first approved by a College faculty member and then reviewed by the Director and the Teachers. Faculty

and students who interact with children directly must obtain prior parental permission for all projects. Written informed consent will mean that parents will receive the specifics of: the nature and purpose of the research or project; the identity of the individual(s) conducting the research/project; the duration of the tasks and frequency of contact between child and faculty member or student; the specific location of the research or project. Parents can then choose/choose not to sign a permission for their child(ren) to participate.

Faculty/students will work with children only at the center, in either their classroom or, in the atelier or playroom (with teacher supervision) and are instructed to be sensitive to the needs of the children, at all times honoring any request by a child to terminate the task. Teachers will determine if a child is initially willing and able to participate. In general, children will be working on tasks that resemble their play at the center. Past studies have included such activities as drawing pictures from stories which are read; fashioning self-portraits and describing/remembering them; looking at pictures of animals on a computer screen and describing them; designing a garden and planting it; counting/comparing numbers of pennies. Most often, projects involve 3-5 year olds; occasionally toddlers; rarely infants. On occasion, tasks are audio taped or videotaped.

In recent years, we have been working with Hampshire College professors and their students over the course of an entire semester. Students have come to observe children weekly over the course of the semester, as a way to bring to life their class readings about children. Early Learning Center staff have been invited to Hampshire classes to speak with the students about their observations and also to discuss our educational philosophy and pedagogy. Students from Children's Theater classes come regularly to try out "lessons" with the children in storytelling, creative dramatics and playwriting. Students from child study classes have come to the Center weekly, using art projects with the children to deepen understanding of how the children make sense of their identity and of family and culture.



- Cedar, age 5

PHONES AND EMAIL AT THE CENTER

*When phoning the Early Learning Center, please dial **413-559-5706** and you will be connected to the Director's office. If the Director is not available, a voice mail system will take your message. These messages are checked frequently and calls will be returned as soon as possible. Or you may phone your child's classroom directly (each phone has voice mail).*

We ask, though, that you be sensitive to the possible intrusion of the ringing telephone, particularly during rest time. For substantive discussions or questions, please email your child's teachers. All Early Learning Center staff check their email on a daily basis. Families will be given teacher email addresses at the start of the school year.

Classroom	Phone Number	Email
Director	413-559-5706	rbKC@hampshire.edu
Infant Room	413-559-5641	infants@hampshire.edu
Toddler Room	413- 559-5642	toddlers@hampshire.edu
Preschool Room	413-559-5640	preschool@hampshire.edu

On occasion, e.g. if all the children are outdoors and the Director is not in the center, the phone may not be answered, but voice mail will take your message. Please try again after a short while, if you wish. Please feel free to call the Director any time during center hours with feedback, concerns, comments, or suggestions, or reach out through email.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Ongoing comfortable communication between parents and teachers is the backbone of a quality child care program. To enhance this process, the Early Learning Center has developed the following:

1. Teacher Visits to Family Homes

In late August (or, in the case of a child entering at another time of the year, when convenient), teachers will visit the homes of families in their classroom. This visit is a comfortable opportunity for children to meet their teacher(s) on their home turf, and for parents and teachers to get to know one another. Visits usually are short (1/2 hour to an hour) and informal, and enjoyable for all. Teachers may take a family photograph to display at the Center.

2. Primary Caregiver/Teacher

Each family will be assigned to one co-teacher each semester who will be the family's primary caregiver. This teacher will be your primary source of information and should be the person you keep informed about your child, and we hope this will simplify the sharing of information. The teacher assigned to each family will be responsible for writing progress reports of the children, conducting parent conferences, and updating you on any pertinent information.

If the teacher assigned to you is not available, feel free to talk with the other teacher as all teachers within a team interact with your child daily, and communicate constantly with each other.

3. Parent Notebook or Clipboard

Each classroom has a clipboard where teachers record information about children's toileting, meals, nap times and other important information. This clipboard is available for parents to view at the end of each day.

4. Arrival and Departure times

For the 2025-2026 academic year, we will use the front or back doors. Each classroom has an external door that leads to the backyard playground. The classroom doors for admittance of students will open strictly at 8:15am every day. Departures will be done similarly to arrivals.

It is important that, at these parent-teacher contact times, information is exchanged about the child which might help facilitate the transition between home and school. This can be, however, a busy time in a classroom, and lacks privacy for discussion. Teachers are greeting many families at once, and also trying to maintain the activities in the classroom. Children also need help transitioning and focusing. Therefore, though it is important that parents and teachers connect at these times, these are not the best times for substantive discussions. We ask that, if you need time for unimpeded discussion with a teacher, you arrange a time to talk and/or phone during call-in time.

5. Emails, Calls and Text

Because arrival and pick up times are somewhat demanding for teachers, parents and children, this is not a good time to discuss any concerns requiring the undivided attention of the teacher. Instead, please reach out to your child's teachers over email during the day, or by calling the classroom phones in the case of urgent situations or emergencies.

Please respect the privacy of the staff at the Early Learning Center after center hours, and do not call or text staff at home unless a time has been prearranged or it is an emergency.

6. Parent-Teacher Conferences

Formal conferences will be held in the fall and spring of the academic year during center hours. They run approximately 30 minutes. Infants will have an additional opportunity for checking in with a mini conference during the school year. At these conferences you will discuss the growth and progress of your child, adjustment to school, peer interactions, play interests, etc. This is also a time for you to discuss any concerns about your child in depth with the teacher, and to share your insights and perceptions of your child. Before the first conference, you will receive from your primary teacher a short questionnaire to fill out with your questions/concerns, and observations about your child to help shape your conference. Although formal conferences are held twice a year, you may request a conference with your child's teacher at any time. Arrangements will be made as soon as possible for such meetings which will take place during center hours.

7. Progress Reports

Teachers will write full-length anecdotal progress reports for each child in their care twice a year (late fall and spring) as required by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (our state licensing agency). Fall reports will focus on the child's adjustment to the program in the fall and will be shorter than spring reports, which include a detailed narrative about your child's growth in many areas of development (language, social-emotional, motor, cognitive, play interests, creativity etc.) as well as future goals.

Progress reports are based on extensive observation and record keeping by the staff throughout the year. We have chosen a narrative format rather than a checklist or short comment format because we feel that descriptions of a child's play and interactions are the most useful means of understanding the child's development and skills.

Reports are a helpful tool, we feel, for parents and staff to look closely at the whole child at various points in time. They may also be shared, with parents' written permission, with specialists or consultants or with future school personnel, should the need arise.

8. Documentation

The staff at the Early Learning Center use various tools to document the children's play, learning and developing interests. Some of these documentation methods

include video recording, digital photography, transcribed conversations and written anecdotes. These artifacts are used to plan for the curriculum, support the progress reports and are used as a method of communicating with families about the daily experiences of the children at the Center. Each classroom team has developed its own method of displaying this information and we continue to reflect on and practice new techniques. Past methods of displaying documentation include family emails with photos, blogs, and documentation panels on the bulletin boards.

9. Parent Workshops/Forums

Throughout the year, suggestions for discussion and workshop topics are elicited from families or educators and used to plan for all-center Parent Nights as well as for individual classroom gatherings. Forums and workshops are led by classroom teachers, the Director and specialists. These informational gatherings are optional. Past topics have included information on curriculum and the Reggio Emilia approach to early education as well as sessions on developmental expectations and behavior management.

Parent-Teacher communication is crucial in ensuring the best possible care for your child. We want to hear from you often about your child's life outside the center. If there are changes in your child's life at home, special events, new accomplishments, the death of a relative or pet, stressful situations-anything that might be important to our understanding of your child's feelings and behavior, please let us know.

We feel it is very informative for parents to visit the center to observe the program in action. You may visit anytime, but it works best if you set up a time in advance with the Director. We receive many requests for visits from professionals, students and prospective parents, and we try to keep the numbers of visitors at one time to a minimum.

PARENT WORK

Although we are not a parent cooperative, parental participation in the operation and development of HCELC programs is essential. We count on parental contributions to enrich the educational program and to help hold the line in expenses.

Families can choose a job from the work checklist provided in the registration packet (or craft a job of their choosing. Any contribution above and beyond these guidelines is always appreciated and can only make for a richer, more complete program for our Early Learning Center community).

QUESTIONS/FEEDBACK/CONCERNS

The Early Learning Center is a collaborative enterprise entailing the efforts of teachers, parents, and the Director to ensure a safe and nurturing atmosphere for the children. Parent feedback is vitally necessary to ensure that the Center adequately serves the needs of our diverse parent/child population. Described here are the Center's procedures for parent feedback and evaluation, and for the resolution of parent-initiated concerns.

Chain of Contact for Family Questions, Feedback and Concerns

We hope that parents will utilize the teachers as the primary sources of information regarding their child, classroom curriculum, philosophy, goals and routines and we want to encourage families to provide teachers with questions and constructive feedback that can help to inform our practice. Our goal is to cultivate a culture of partnership between families and educators. Open and direct communication between teachers and families is vital to this goal.

Sometimes additional support or an alternate perspective is needed and to that end, the Director is always available to support families in ensuring that their concerns are heard and addressed in an appropriate manner. To contact the Director, you can email Ronit at rbKC@hampshire.edu to set up a meeting or come to her office hours.

Suggested guidelines for parent feedback/concerns:

- If you have a question/concern about your child, please speak directly to your child's teacher(s).
- If you have a question/concern about a teacher, either speak directly to the teacher or discuss your concerns with the Director.
- If you have a question/concern about the Director, please speak directly with the Director or with Nick Mason, Director of Auxiliary Services at Hampshire College
- If you have a question/concern about a center policy, speak with a Parent Mentor (for new families, see below), the Director or a PAC member and, when appropriate, the item will be placed on the agenda of the next PAC meeting.
- The PAC member representing your classroom will send an email to all parents asking about topics for discussion.

Parent Advisory Committee

When a parent has a concern or question that is not specific to their child, they may want to raise the issue for consideration with the larger community. In these cases, the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) can serve as a resource for families to ensure that their concerns are heard and discussed in a respectful and constructive manner. The PAC acts in an advisory capacity to the Director and discusses programmatic issues raised by the staff,

parents and the College. It consists of parent members, staff members and community members. The PAC meets about every other month throughout the year to discuss issues related to program policy, center activities and other topics that impact the center as a whole. Discussion of parent feedback at PAC meetings and from the annual Parent Feedback Form have resulted in a variety of programmatic changes including: the addition of parent social events throughout the year, parent emails/photos as a method of family communication, the addition of the Parent Mentorship Program, changes to the Parent Handbook to clarify policies, etc...

PAC members volunteer for a 2-year term. The staff designates a staff representative, and the Director also serves on the PAC. Non-center members may also be appointed.

The Hampshire College Business Office has oversight of the Early Learning Center and must be consulted about budgetary issues and policies, which affect the Center's relationship to the College and the community.

The best chance for prompt action on an issue is that it be placed on the PAC meeting agenda. Respond to the emails from classroom representatives before each meeting to add an issue to the agenda. Notes from each PAC meeting will be distributed to the parent community and to the staff.

Parent Mentors

Before the beginning of the school year we will distribute a list of parent mentors for new families at the Center. Parent Mentors have been a part of the HCELC community for one or more years and are another resource for new families who may have questions about the Center's operations. Parent Mentors can provide new families with general information regarding the ELC program and can support families in finding the appropriate venues for communicating questions and/or concerns. Only families who volunteer will be mentors.

Parent-Parent Communication

Facilitating the connections among the parents in the center is an important goal of our program. The front hall and staff lounge are cozy spaces for parents to meet and talk with other parents informally. Center events such as evening parents' meetings help develop such connections. In addition, we have developed other organized activities for parents throughout the year.

Morning Coffee with Ronit Get-Togethers for Parents

We provide opportunities to get together outdoors in the morning. These coffee hours provide an informal opportunity for parents to get to know one another and share

questions and anecdotes about children, parenting, etc.. Parents can either stay for the duration of the hour or drop in for shorter periods of time.

Parent Classroom Coordinators

PAC parents serve as classroom coordinators and help plan family events and welcome new families to the Center. Family events can include: pot luck dinners, get-togethers at families' homes; trips, etc..

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the responsibility of all of our staff including assistants, volunteers and substitutes, to respect the privacy of the families in our program, in addition to the privacy of the other ELC staff. *Please do not discuss the children or their parents in front of other children or parents, and please do not discuss private information about families outside of the Early Learning Center.* If work study students provide to ELC families childcare services outside of school hours, it is important that you do not discuss other children, families, or ELC staff under any circumstances.

ADMISSIONS AND RE-ENROLLMENT

Re-enrollment forms are distributed in January-February. *All Hampshire College-affiliated families, once enrolled, are guaranteed enrollment in the Early Learning Center until the child is kindergarten age.* Families who choose not to enroll during the summer may nevertheless be guaranteed their space for the following fall. *Non-Hampshire families are guaranteed a continuous space in the center after the first toddler-room year.*

Siblings of presently attending children are not automatically enrolled in the center. Parents should request an application form from the Director, fill it out and return with the application filing fee before March 1st prior to the year of requested enrollment.

The center's admission priorities are:

1. Presently enrolled children
2. Siblings of presently enrolled Hampshire College-affiliated families
3. Waitlisted children of new full-time Hampshire College-affiliated families
4. Siblings of other presently enrolled children
5. Five College-affiliated families on the waiting list (first priority to part-time employees of Hampshire College, 'Cultural Village' employees, e.g. Eric Carle Museum, Yiddish Book Center)
6. New community children on the waiting list

***Admission to the infant room does not guarantee admission to the toddler room.
Admission to the toddler room will follow these priorities:***

1. Presently enrolled Hampshire College-affiliated families
2. Presently enrolled "other" families (first Five College, then community)
3. Hampshire College-affiliated families
4. Siblings of presently enrolled "other" families (first Five College, then community)
5. Five College-affiliated families
6. New community children

Siblings are defined as children who will be attending the center simultaneously. Full-time Hampshire College employees are defined as benefits-eligible employees of the college with an FTE of .75-1.0. Part-time Hampshire families are defined as benefits-eligible employees with an FTE of .5-.74.

All enrollment decisions involving new children, regardless of the above categories of priority, are governed by our goal of multi-racial and multicultural diversity. Families designating themselves as members of federally-designated minority groups will be given priority in admissions, within each admissions priority category. Additionally, the age, gender and scheduling needs of an incoming child are considerations in enrollment decisions.

Families must enroll for the entire academic year program. Given budgetary considerations, the Center cannot save a space for a child whose family is on leave. The child will be placed on the waiting list for the next enrollment period. The only way to ensure a space is to contract and pay tuition for the full year. Priority will be given to a child who has been in the Center in the past and asks to be readmitted. Admission depends on space availability.

The ELC Director will make all final eligibility and enrollment decisions.

Children's Group Placement Decisions

Children are placed in a particular group based on their chronological age (as of August 1). If there is a question about a child's group placement, a consensus is hopefully reached through discussions among the child's parents and center staff. Information is gathered and shared about the child's experiences at home and at the center, as a basis for making a placement decision which best meets the child's needs. *However, the Center staff reserves the right to consider the best interests of the child and the program in determining a child's placement.* Should consensus not be reached about a child's placement, our mental health consultant would be asked to observe the child and meet with parents and staff to reach a decision.

We feel that the continuity of a peer group and stable caregivers is of utmost importance to young children. Therefore, we keep groups of children together for an entire academic year and then move them “en masse” in September, rather than moving children as they become of age for the next group. Depending on enrollment, children may be re-grouped during the summer program as a way to help them begin their transition into the next classroom while enjoying the benefits of smaller class size. Summer classroom placement decisions will be made in consultation with families and with special consideration given to keeping familiar groups of children together as well as meeting each child’s developmental needs.

Scheduling and Withdrawal from the Program

Children may attend the center only during contracted schedule time. Days may not be changed or substituted on an ad hoc basis. Schedules may be permanently changed with the authorization of the Director and on a space available basis only. Schedule changes at mid-year (December) for the 2nd semester may occur on a space available basis; we do try to accommodate those parents whose class schedules have changed, if possible. Contracted scheduled times must be paid for even if your child is absent. Fees are calculated to cover our costs, including vacation closings during which time our staff are paid.

Registration for the summer session takes place in March. Specific information on summer enrollment options is available at the time of registration.

For both academic year and summer programs, the schedule parents contract for at the time of enrollment is the schedule to which they (and the Center) are committed. If a parent wishes to decrease scheduled time after formally enrolling, it is the parent’s responsibility to help the Director find another enrolled child to pick up those days/hours. Tuition continues until the space is filled.

Requests to change days of the week or to increase time should be submitted in writing to the Director and will be granted on a space-available basis.

Given budgetary considerations, the Center cannot save a space for a child whose family is on leave. The child will be placed on the waiting list for the next enrollment period. The only way to ensure a space is to contract and pay tuition for the full year. Priority will be given to a child who has been in the Center in the past and asks to be readmitted. Admission depends on space availability.

While we expect and hope that all families will remain in the Center through the entire academic year, occasionally a family must withdraw due to a change of employment, relocation, etc. In this event, please refer to the terms in our Tuition Policy. Families who withdraw mid-year forfeit their tuition deposit.

ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES

Please arrive in the morning **no earlier than 8:15 A.M.** It is important that the teachers have time to set-up activities and prepare the environment for the arrival of children. If you should arrive before 8:15, you may stay with your child in the front hall or on the playground until 8:15 and then enter the classroom.

Upon arriving, please help your child put their belongings away, bring your child into the classroom, and feel free to stay for a while to help your child settle in. If your child is one with separation difficulty, it is recommended that you speak with your primary teacher in order to develop a plan for the amount of time you should stay and how best to negotiate departure.

We also ask that all children arrive no later than 9:00 and that you call us before 9:00 if your child will be arriving late or will not attend. The morning is a building block for the rest of the day. During this time, children have the opportunity to gradually ease into the classroom and reunite with friends, enjoy planned classroom activities related to the curriculum and participate in community-building routines such as snack and circle time. When children arrive after 9:00, they miss out on these important aspects of our program. In addition, a late arrival can disrupt the flow of the routine for the other children in the classroom and can be a strong trigger for children who miss their parents and have already gone through the transition process from home to school. Classroom teachers will also be less able to give transition support to children entering once the daily activities have already begun.

If your child has a medical check-up or other appointment scheduled in the morning, you may bring your child to the Center **until 11:00 A.M.** When you arrive, please bring documentation from your doctor's visit. This helps to keep us informed of the status of your child's health as well as maintain accurate and up-to-date medical forms for our files. **Children may not arrive for the day after 11:00** unless an alternate arrangement has been made with the Director or in the case of an emergency. Families with questions regarding a late arrival should contact the Director.

The school day ends promptly at 3:30pm. Again, it is important that these times be respected as teachers may plan small group activities, walks away from the center, etc.

NEW this coming year. T,TH Extended day option until 4:45pm for preschool children. An Extended Day option is available for the Preschool Room on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30pm with pickup from 4:30 to 4:45pm. Tuition is charged separately at a higher hourly rate. The program is limited to 10 students and begins after the initial two week staggered start at the beginning of the school year.

Departure times mean that children and parents should be out of the classroom or out of the building so staff can lock up. Therefore, in order to allow time for parent-child greeting and transitioning, parent- teacher contact, dressing of children and collecting of paraphernalia, pick-up times are designated as **no later than** 3:15- 3:30 for Infants, toddlers and preschoolers

Children may, of course, be picked up earlier at any time.

We ask that you inform teachers of early pick-ups, so children may be prepared and also so parents know of special activities (walks, visitors, etc) which might affect early departure.

There will be occasions when you must schedule medical/dental/other appointments for your child during center hours. Please try and schedule these appointments first thing in the morning or at the end of the day so that your child does not have to negotiate arriving and departing twice in the same day. If early AM or late PM scheduling is impossible, **please do not return with your child after 11:00.** This is lunch and nap time, and is a very difficult transition time for children to enter the Center.

We appreciate your help in providing predictability and continuity for children and staff around arrivals and departures.

Late Pick-Up Policy

On-time departures are crucial to the flow of the day for children and staff. At the end of sessions, a teacher goes home for the day and will be late leaving if parents are late. *After one "warning"(per family) for which no fee will be charged, a late fee will be charged to anyone who is late in picking up their child.* If you are going to be late, please call the Center. Calling does not excuse you from the late fee, but will help the staff to prepare your child for a late departure. **You will be billed for the late fee.** Late pick-up fees assessed are (per child):

- The first 3 times you are late:
 - \$10.00 for the first 15 minutes or less
 - \$5.00 for every additional 5 minutes or less
- After 3 incidents:
 - \$20.00 for the first 15 minutes or less
 - \$10.00 for each additional 5 minutes

Inclement Weather and School Closing

The Early Learning Center generally will follow Hampshire College's openings and closings due to poor weather. *The Early Learning Center may also decide to close for the day while the College stays open, or close earlier than the College, if we find that closing is the best course of action for the safety of the children and educators. These decisions will be made in consultation with the College.* Inclement weather closings are inconvenient, but a reality in New England. Given that we are an on-campus child care facility subsidized by Hampshire College, we have been asked by the College to echo their snow closing policy as closely as possible.

In the event that the College closes and or has a delay due to inclement weather, the ELC will follow the decision of the College. If the College stays open, the inclement weather team will keep a close eye on the weather/conditions to determine if the ELC shall open, close and or have a delay.

If Hampshire College closes during the day due to weather conditions deteriorating (ice, freezing rain, heavy snow), the Early Learning Center will close. Should this happen, you will receive a call and text from Hampshire College. If the ELC decides to close while the College remains open, you will receive a call and an email directly from the ELC. We ask that you come and pick up your child(ren) as soon as possible, in order for children, parents and staff to make it home safely in a timely fashion. At least one teacher or the Director will remain at the center until all children are picked up.

In the event of inclement weather that does not close the school, we would ask that parents remain in the morning with their children until we have adequate staffing coverage. This is in case a teacher is late arriving due to weather. All staff will, of course, make every effort to arrive on time.

Please have in place accessible, available, back-up child care arrangements in case you are unable to pick up your child. Parents are encouraged to plan ahead for the possibility of needing alternate care and to share care with other families. Early in each semester, the Hampshire student work schedule will not be shared with families. If parents want to contact them, they will need to reach out to students on their own. In past years, some parents have contacted each other to arrange for a "preschool home day" in which parents take turns watching a group of children throughout a day when there is an unexpected Center closure. Snow days are not reimbursable and may not be deducted from tuition.

TUITION/BILLING- ACADEMIC YEAR PROGRAM

Tuition is computed for the entire 43-week academic year and divided into ten equal payments which will start on August 1, 2025. The academic year tuition is calculated by multiplying the weekly rate by 43 weeks. This includes Teacher Preparation weeks, vacations and holidays. Tuition is paid in monthly installments calculated by dividing the annual tuition into 10 equal payments. In order to qualify for the Hampshire College employee tuition rates, at least one of the child's parents/guardians must be a benefits-eligible employee of the college with an FTE of .75-1.0. Monthly tuition is paid a month in advance.

When families enroll at the ELC they will make a \$300 deposit which will be applied to their yearly tuition. Parents will continue to pay the \$300 tuition deposit every year that they re-enroll at the ELC, with the deposit being applied to their tuition in the same manner every academic year. If a family breaks their contract by not staying at the ELC for the full 10 months, they forfeit their deposit. Families who enroll at the ELC, then withdraw before the start of the academic year, also forfeit their deposit.

The ELC uses the platform **Brightwheel** for tuition payments. Parents can pay by direct payment from a bank account, by credit card or with checks. If you choose to pay by credit card, the platform will charge you an additional 2.9% processing fee to your payment. If you use direct Bank Transfers (ACH): 0.6% - *with a new minimum fee of \$0.25 and maximum of \$2*. There will be no additional charge for paying by check. Tuition payments are due by the 1st of the month.

HCELC Tuition Rates 2025-2026

*The Center is open from **8:15am-3:30pm***

HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - AFFILIATED FAMILIES	
Classroom	Daily Rate
Infants	\$95
Toddlers	\$86
Preschool	\$76

NON-HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - AFFILIATED FAMILIES	
Classroom	Daily Rate
Infants	\$107
Toddlers	\$93
Preschool	\$86

Extended Day:

Classroom	Daily Rate
Preschool	\$20

Tuition Policy

In accordance with the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations, tuition must be paid based on your contract with the Hampshire College Early Learning Center (HCELC). Fees are due on the first day of each month.

1. Non-Payment: If payment is not received by the due date, a Non-Payment Warning Notice will be issued. If payment is not made within three days from the first of the month, further action will be taken.
2. Termination: Failure to pay your monthly fee by the due date may result in the termination of childcare services.
3. Notice of Termination: If payment is not received, a Notice of Termination will be issued. Childcare services will end 14 calendar days from the notice date unless the full balance is paid.
4. Request for Review: If you believe your tuition has been calculated incorrectly or there is an error with your balance, you may file a Request for Review for further evaluation.
5. Terms of Withdrawal:
 - Written notice of withdrawal must be submitted to the Early Learning Center Director at least *30 days* prior to your child's last day of attendance. Email notification is acceptable.
 - Families are responsible for payment of tuition during the 30-day notice period, regardless of whether the child attends during that time.

- Failure to provide the required 30-day notice will result in tuition being charged for the full 30-day period from the date notice is given.
- Any prepaid tuition beyond the 30-day notice period will be refunded within 30 days of the child's last day.
- Registration fees and deposits are non-refundable.
- *Failure to pay any outstanding tuition or fees will result in your account being sent to a third-party collection agency. Families will be responsible for all additional fees associated with the collection process, including but not limited to collection agency fees.*

Tuition Policy in Case of Pandemic-Related Closures

The Hampshire College Early Learning Center may be forced to close down temporarily because of a public health emergency. This may happen because we are forced to shut down by a government agency or because we believe it is in the best interest of our families and staff that we do so. *If this happens, we will switch to remote learning via Zoom.* Remote learning will consist of some if not all of the following: Developmentally appropriate online group engagement, whole school online social and support meetings; Individual parent and/or child phone or Zoom conversations; Small group gatherings; video readings and social stories created by the teachers. If this occurs, the following tuition policies will apply:

1. The first two weeks of shutdown during each semester, we will charge full tuition
2. The next two weeks of shutdown that semester, we will charge 75% tuition
3. If the shutdown continues, we will charge 50% of tuition for the remaining weeks the school is closed

If a parent keeps their child at home when the school is open, then the parent will be charged full tuition.

If the center has to close and a parent decides not to continue to be part of the remote instruction, the Parent is responsible for paying full tuition until a new family is registered to fill the space. When the new family is registered, the exiting child will be unenrolled and, if desired, put on the waitlist for a future opening. Families who choose this option, will lose their priority status on the waitlist.

SUMMER PROGRAM

The center operates a summer program for 8 weeks--from early June through the end of July. In general, the program is shaped around more flexible scheduling arrangements for families. *Families must enroll for a minimum of 2 weeks, but may choose any number of weeks between 2 and 8.* The full day program runs until 3:30pm in summer for all children.

Parents may enroll their children for just the academic year program or for both the academic year and the summer programs. Registration for summer is separate from the academic year, and takes place in March.

All families enrolled in the academic year program are guaranteed to be admitted to the following summer program, i.e. non-Hampshire infant families may not be "bumped" until the new academic year program begins.

The summer groups are smaller than academic year enrollments and so require less staff. There is always at least one permanent teacher or substitute teacher in each classroom in the summer, assisted by Hampshire students or other ELC staff. **We may need to decrease some days from families' schedules if the number of children is higher than our teacher: child ratio.**

EATING, CLOTHING, AND CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS

Lunch

Parents provide lunches for their children each day (and all the bottles/ food needed by infants). We request that these lunches be nutritious and appealing to the child. Please keep the following guidelines in mind when preparing the child's lunch bag or box:

- Please provide all the food, beverage, baby bottles, water bottle, bibs and utensils needed that day
- Provide small portions, cut in pieces the child can manage without assistance
- Choose items you know your child likes
- Send milk or juice in a thermos or a juice box (and include a small frozen cold pack which will keep drink and food cold)
- No candy or gum at all, please
- Further details provided by classroom teachers for each age group

***** We are a nut-free school. Please do not send food containing nuts of any kind in your child's lunch.*****

Infant provisions and toddler lunches can be stored in the classroom's refrigerator. For preschoolers however, refrigerator space is inadequate for 17 children, so we ask you to include a cold pack in the lunch box, and store it in your child's cubby. **Please label lunch boxes with your child's name as well as all thermoses, containers and lids.**

We will return all leftovers in your child's bag or box so you will know what your child has eaten. Infant parents will send all the food and bottles for the day (all labeled please). Please check in with infant teachers for more details.

Snack

We are asking that parents provide snacks for your children. We ask that snacks be packed in a separate snack bag that is easily accessible apart from the lunch food. Please include utensils, if necessary, along with a water bottle.

Packing Snack and Lunch Requirements

- Parents / Guardians will provide both morning snacks and lunch from home.
- Snacks and lunches are to be sent to school clearly labeled with the child's name.
- We ask parents to help the Teachers by packing lunches that do not require heating up.
- Please send in your child's cup / bottle / sippy cup filled with water or milk.
- Cups, bottles, and sippy cups must be clearly labeled with your child's name.

Children's Belongings

Children's belongings will be stored in a manner that they do not touch another child's belongings. Children are limited to bringing in one closeable bag per day (backpack / tote bag).

- Sheets and blankets must be laundered weekly
- Should sheets and blankets become soiled during the week they will be sent home for laundering and the family will be asked to send in a clean set for the child's next day at school

Clean Clothing Policy

Staff and children are required to wear clean laundered clothing to school each day. We understand that some children have favorites that they like to wear every day. Per EEC Regulations for Health and Safety once an item of clothing is worn to school, it must be washed in a washing machine with hot water before it can be worn to school again.

Nap Time

The Early Learning Center provides nap mats for each child (cribs for infants up to 1 year). Parents are asked to bring blankets and Sheets (labeled, please) as well as a comfort object (blanket, soft toy, etc.). It is requested that parents take blankets and sheets home weekly for laundering. Infants must bring a sleepsack that meets EEC requirements; infants cannot sleep with blankets.

During nap time, children are encouraged to bring their comfort object (blanket, animal, etc.) and teachers offer back rubs in an effort to help children relax. Soft music is played to set a calm tone in the room. Infant's sleeping needs are met individually and continuously throughout the session. All infants under the age of 12 months are placed on their backs for sleeping unless the child's health care professional orders otherwise in writing. For the safety of our youngest children, infants under the age of 12 months will not be napped with pillows, comforters, stuffed animals or other soft, padded materials.

Some of the older preschool children no longer need this time for sleeping, but still do need a quiet rest time. These children are asked to rest quietly on their mats with books and after a short time, are offered puzzles, writing/drawing materials, and then quiet activities. It is understood that this time can be difficult for these children and teachers are sensitive to this. The stimulation of group care can be quite trying for young children, and we feel that a consistent, relaxing, rest time helps them refuel. We prefer not to wake soundly sleeping children, but staff are open to discussing the children's individual sleep/nap needs with parents in order to arrive at a plan which best suits each child and family.

Toys from Home

In general, we discourage children from bringing their toys to the center as they may be lost, misplaced or broken. In addition, it is often difficult for a child to share special possessions.

We do recognize, though, that it is important for some children to bring an object that helps facilitate the transition from home to center. We ask that the child leave the object in her/his cubby or art basket for the day, or a teacher can help the child safely place the object in the cubby or art basket after parents depart.

Young children are often very attached to a "transitional object"—a toy, blanket, etc. which brings comfort and security. We welcome such objects and we ask that they remain in the cubby as much as is possible for the child. At rest time or other times when a child needs to self-soothe, it's helpful to have the object available.

Field Trips On Campus

Excursions into the campus community are an occasional part of the program at the center for toddlers and preschoolers. Field trips provide a jumping-off point from which children and teachers develop meaningful learning experiences.

Impromptu walking trips on campus are an integral part of our program for all ages of children. Prior notice is usually not sent out, but a sign will be posted telling you where the group has gone and when they will return. Small Infants are taken daily for a morning stroll around campus (weather permitting) and, on occasion, for an afternoon stroll as well. Children are always supervised by classroom teachers during walking trips around campus. Teachers bring with them a first aid kit, a phone and a list of emergency contact numbers.

Toileting/Diapering

Parents provide diapers and ointments for children not yet toilet trained. The Early Learning Center provides wipes. Children in diapers are changed at specific times during the mornings but are also changed whenever necessary. Teachers will remind you when your supply of diapering materials needs to be replenished, but please check regularly. Both cloth and disposable diapers are fine to use at the Center.

Children who are toilet trained are reminded periodically throughout each day to use the toilet. Child-sized toilets are located in the preschool and toddler rooms for the convenience and safety of the children.

Children will be toilet trained in accordance with the requests of parents and consistent with the child's physical and emotional abilities. The Center respects individual family's philosophies. We find that consistency between home and school is most successful. However, teachers cannot maintain requests if they are disruptive to the child, to other children or to the program. Parents and teachers will discuss toilet training together and craft a plan that works best for the child, family and teachers. We do ask that, as children begin to engage in the toilet training process, parents dress their children in clothing that will support the process. We find that onesies and overalls can make toileting difficult for children who are in the early stages of the toilet training process.

Clothing

Please dress your children in suitable clothing. Remember, children are constantly engaging with paint, glue, mud, water and other potentially messy materials throughout each day. Every effort is made to protect clothing from these materials, but young children are hard to keep clean and we feel that participation in sensory, art and gross motor activities are essential to their early learning experience (although definitely

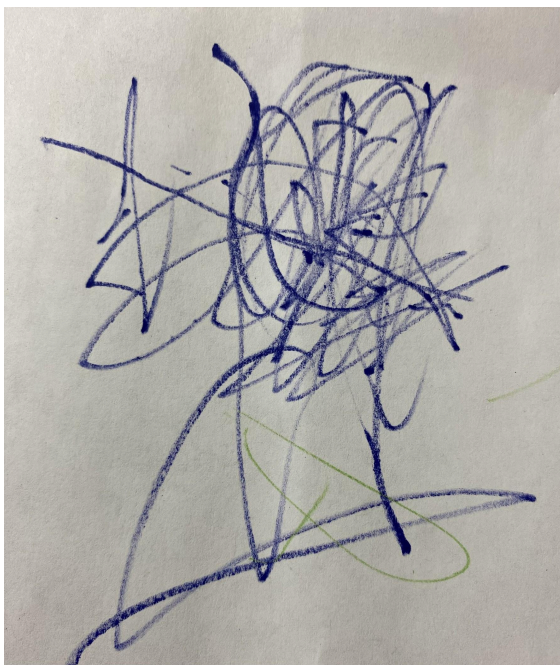
messy)! Also, please send your child in appropriate shoes. (Flip-flops and dress-up shoes are not safe for vigorous activity.)

Remember - there is much climbing, running and pedaling outdoors!

Each child needs a complete set of extra clothing (pants, shirt, socks, underwear) clearly marked with the child's name. These clothes should be stored in a plastic bag and placed in your child's cubby. Please replace them if the child uses them. Also, if center clothes are borrowed, please launder and return.

Children participate in outdoor activities on most days. In the winter children will go outside when wind chill temperatures are 20 degrees and higher (for infants 40 degrees and higher) and in the summer months when the temperature is 92 degrees and lower, so it is important that children have weather-appropriate clothing. During the winter months, please send boots, snow pants, a hat, and mittens (labeled!) everyday. It would be helpful to your child (and to the teachers helping your child) if you bring garments that are easy to manipulate. For example, zippers are easier than buttons, mittens are easier (and warmer) than gloves. Our goal is to help the children do as much dressing of themselves as they are capable of.

The Early Learning Center always welcomes the donation of extra clothing that can be lent out to families when needed. As your child grows out of their clothing, please feel free to donate hats, mittens, socks, boots, coats, snow pants, shirts and pants to the Center.



- Zora, age 3

GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REMINDERS

1. Please always close the front door and/ or playground gate when entering or departing.
2. Please do not leave cars running unattended. This could make for a dangerous situation.
3. Never pick up a child from the center without informing a teacher.
4. Always notify a teacher if someone other than a parent will be picking up a child or if you are taking another child with you. In addition, you must fill out an Authorized Alternate Pick-Up form for all adults who you would like to be able to pick up your child from school. These adults should be reminded to bring a photo ID with them on the first day that they come to pick up your child.
5. If your child becomes ill with a communicable disease, please contact the center, so that other parents may be alerted.
6. Please phone the center in the early morning if your child will not attend that day, or will be late.
7. Please make sure you inform teachers of your child's allergies or special health needs.

Healthcare Policy

Our health care policy is in compliance with the Department of Early Education and Care and Department of Public Health regulations and is approved by our health care consultant, Dr. Bruce Weinstock. Each child is required to be in good health, to have an annual physical examination and to be fully immunized or have a written plan for immunization. All children between 9 months and 3 years must have a lead screening annually, which must be documented on the health form. As of 1998, a chickenpox vaccination or documentation of the disease is required for children, as is age appropriate.

As we move into the 2025-2026 school year, it is clear that maximizing vaccination rates within the Hampshire College Early Learning Center community represents the best and most effective means to limit the spread of Covid-19. The CDC recommends that young children ages 6 months and older be vaccinated with annual Covid-19 and Flu vaccines: [COVID-19 vaccine and an annual flu vaccine](#).

If your child has a chronic illness, we ask that you and your child's doctor share as much information with us as possible to ensure that we can do our best to monitor your child's health needs while they are at school. In the event of an ongoing health condition or an allergy, an individualized health care plan will be created with the child's pediatrician. We encourage parents, with the written permission of their child's health care practitioner, to train staff in the implementation of their child's individual health care plan. The Director will work with teaching staff and consult with our healthcare consultant and/or children's therapeutic services to ensure that the health requirements of children enrolled in the

program are being met in accordance with the individualized health care plan. Please note that all infants twelve months of age or younger must be placed on their backs for sleeping, unless we are given a written order from the child's pediatrician.

Illness in young children in group care is a very difficult area to manage. On the one hand, we realize that parents depend on us to provide care for their children, but, on the other hand, we are not equipped to take care of children when they are ill. Our main concerns when children are ill are the comfort and well-being of the individual child, but also the health of the other children, staff and parents. Clearly, parents differ in their assessments of and definitions of what constitutes illness, so the center's illness protocol attempts to develop a standard for health. In our attempt to implement a consistent standard of wellness, the staff (teachers and Director) will make final decisions about whether or not a child is well enough to attend the center.

We ask you to observe your child carefully to determine whether or not they are well enough to come to the center. **Please remember that this is group care, and your child has the potential of infecting many other children, staff, and parents.** Keep in mind that the demands on children's stamina are great, due to the stimulation of the program, and children who are not really feeling well will have a difficult time enjoying their day. Sometimes, a day at home to rest will be a great help for a child who is not quite themselves. We ask that you notify the center by 9:00 A.M. if you are keeping your child home for any illness, so that we do not worry.

Children must be able to fully participate (as evaluated by their typical activity levels/abilities) in all activities of the day (outdoor play, group activities, etc.), in order to attend the center. **The teachers and Director (in consultation with one another) reserve the right to send your child home if, in their judgment, your child is contagious to other children or too ill and uncomfortable to be at the center. You will be informed immediately of this decision and are expected to pick up your child within 30 minutes.** If you cannot pick up your child, you will need to make arrangements for someone else to pick up your child. If we cannot reach you, we will contact your emergency designee. Your child will be isolated from the other children either in an area of the classroom or in the office with the Director and will be encouraged to rest quietly until your arrival.

When your child becomes ill at the center, you may want to have them seen as soon as possible by your medical care provider. If your provider gives your child a clean bill of health, please do not bring them back to the center again that day. Instead, take some time to observe your child and assess how they feel. Sometimes a child can feel poorly without visible signs of infectious disease. Also, it is difficult for a young child to have to renegotiate entering the center and saying good-bye again to you on the same day. Please notify us of any illness or injury, we must report the incident to the Department of Early Education and Care.

If you need to schedule routine or follow-up medical appointments for your child during the day, we ask that you please try to do so at the beginning or end of the day, so that your child is not leaving and returning several times in the course of one day. Just notify the staff that you will be arriving late or picking up early. In any case, **please do not arrive at the center after 11:00am** as lunch followed by rest is a most difficult transition time for the children.

The following list details many of the signs and symptoms which indicate that your child should remain home and for which the staff will send your child home.

Certainly, there are others as well, but space does not allow that we list every communicable disease possible for young children. Guidelines about when children can return to school after each illness is also listed for your convenience.

1. Fever of 100.0 degrees or higher in the morning (Please read your thermometer directions carefully to be sure that you are making the correct adjustments to the temperature reading). A child must have a normal temp for 24 hours before returning to the center.
2. Any contagious disease. Some of these are:
 - a. **Bronchitis or persistent cough-** Bronchitis can begin with hoarseness, cough, and a slight elevation in temperature. The cough may be dry and painful, but it gradually becomes productive. With bacterial bronchitis, a child may return after 24 hours on antibiotics. With persistent cough, a child should be seen by a health care provider to check for infection, asthma etc.
 - b. **Chicken pox** - Child may return one week after rash first appears or until all blisters are crusted over and dry.
 - c. **Conjunctivitis-** an eye infection commonly referred to as "pink eye." The eye is generally red with some burning and there is thick yellow drainage being secreted (and usually 'crusting' in the morning after sleep). The child may return to care when no more drainage or secretion occurs, after a 24 hour course of antibiotics or with a note from your healthcare provider.
 - d. **Coxsackie-** Also called "Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease". Symptoms can include fever, diaper rash, rash on the hands, feet, and trunk, sores in the mouth, runny nose, and sore throat. Children who have symptoms of Coxsackie virus should stay home until they have been fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication, and any sores from their rash have scabbed over.
 - e. **Diarrhea** - an increase in the number and formation of stools, as compared to what is normal for the child. Child may return when firm stool is present.
 - f. **Giardia** - Child should not attend if diarrhea is present and they are ill. Child may return after treatment with medication, when symptoms are gone, with documentation of a negative stool test and with a note from the

health care provider stating that the child is cured. A child who tests positive but is asymptomatic (no diarrhea, not sick) may attend the center if the child is competent at self-toileting and is able to use care in this area or is in diapers, so that a stool may be contained.

- g. **Head Lice** - lice or nits may be found in hair. Child may return after treatment with lice shampoo and removal of nits (re-treatment required in 10 days).
 - h. **Herpes Simplex** - skin blisters or sores in mouth, on lips (cold sores). Child may return when scabs are dry and not oozing.
 - i. **Impetigo of the skin**- Shows up as red pimples. These eventually become small vesicles surrounded by a reddened area. When the blister breaks, the surface is raw and weeping. The lesions occur in moist areas of the body such as the creases of the neck, under the nose, groin, and under arm, face, hands or edge of diaper. The child may return after 24 hours on antibiotics.
 - j. **Pinworms** - tiny worms which live in the small intestines; females lay eggs near the anus. Symptoms may include itchy anus and waking at night. Child can return after treatment.
 - k. **Rashes**- Rashes that you cannot identify or that have not been diagnosed by a physician. Child must be seen by a pediatrician and may return with written documentation of the pediatrician's permission.
 - l. **Severe Cold with fever**- much sneezing and nose drainage (green discharge may signal a sinus infection, which should be checked by your health provider), severe tiredness or irritability, complaints of specific aches or pains (earache, sore throat etc.). A child with a minor cold may come to the center if none of the above symptoms are present and if they are well enough to participate in all activities of the day.
 - m. **Strep throat** - Child may return 24 hours after antibiotics are begun. A child awaiting the results of a strep culture may not return to the center until results are received or the child has been receiving antibiotics for 24 hours. Symptoms of Strep may include: sore throat, fever, listlessness, stomachache, a rash.
 - n. **Vomiting**- (more than usual "spitting up") A child may return to the center 24 hours after the last vomiting episode.
3. If a child seems really sick without obvious symptoms. In this case, a child may look and act differently. There may be unusual paleness, irritability, unusual tiredness, lack of interest or lack of appetite.

Parents will be notified whenever there is an infectious disease in the center. An exposure notice will be posted which details the symptoms of the disease, the recommended treatment, and when a child may return to the center. In some instances of more virulent contagious diseases, a memo will be sent to all parents and staff in the

center with details about symptoms and treatment. Many diseases are required to be reported to the Department of Public Health. A list of these is kept in the office.

Any time a child contracts a disease for which we do not have an explicit policy on treatment and return, the Director will consult with our consulting pediatrician and the Department of Public Health for the current protocol. In the event that the information is contradictory, the PAC will be consulted to weigh medical information and formulate a protocol.

Please do not medicate your child with aspirin, cough syrup etc. before sending them to the center. We find that, in these cases, when the medications wear off in 2-3 hours, we have an ill and unhappy child on our hands. A child who is ill enough to need such medications should probably be at home.).

If your daily schedule does not allow you the flexibility to stay home with your sick child or to pick up your child during the day, please have alternate care persons available, whom you designate as such, and who know they have been designated and might be called to pick up your child.

One simple important preventative health measure: **Hand washing is the first line of defense against infectious disease.** We are vigilant with both children and adults that hands are washed before eating or handling food, after toileting, before and after giving medication, after handling bodily secretions, after cleaning and each morning upon entering the center (all staff, children and parents).

Thank you for helping us ensure the good health and well-being of all the children in our care as well as the staff and parents, by using special care with your own child and being community-minded when you make decisions about your child's health and ability to attend the center.

COVID-19 Policy:

From Hampshire College's current COVID-19 Information Page:

"Throughout the pandemic, the Hampshire College community built a culture and associated policies that prioritize care and consideration for one another. I invite our community to continue focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable, to create an environment in which the burdens and challenges of COVID are not placed solely on those most at risk, even as the political, cultural, and public health context moves away from those values. Despite the end of the state of emergency and cessation of governmental support to address it, COVID-19 continues to circulate, exposing portions of our community, particularly people with disabilities, to serious complications. We have tried to

develop policies that recognize this reality while acknowledging the implications of the social and political shifts in the society within which we operate.”

COVID-19 vaccination/most current booster is recommended for everyone ages 6 months and older in the United States for the prevention of COVID-19.

Masking at the ELC will continue to be recommended for adults.

COVID-19 Symptoms

People with COVID-19 have a wide range of symptoms ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may start as mild, and some people will progress to more severe symptoms.

Possible common COVID-19 symptoms may include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- **COVID-19 Close Contacts (Children and Adults):**
 - **No Symptoms:** Can continue to come to school.
 - **With Any Mild Symptoms:** Can continue to come to school with a negative rapid test in the morning.
 - **Please inform us** if close contact has occurred at home/outside of school.
- **Adults with COVID-19:** Must stay home from school for at least 24 hours. Can return to school when symptoms have resolved (please refer to list above) and fever free for 24 hours. Those returning must wear a mask until day 11. A “well fitted, high quality mask, kn95 or higher” is the type that is called for by best practice and Hampshire’s current COVID policy, not surgical or cloth.
- **Children with COVID-19:** Must stay home from school for 5 full days (*our policy considers “day 1” to be the first day of testing positive*). Can return to school on day 6 if symptoms have resolved (please refer to list above) and fever free for 24 hours. If mild symptoms continue between days 6 to 11, a child may return to school with a negative test.
- Please consult with Ronit prior to coming to school in the morning if you are unclear regarding your particular situation.

Medication

All HCELC staff have been trained in the safe administration of medication by the Department of Early Education and Care. On an annual basis, the Director will evaluate each staff member's ability to safely and properly administer medication to young children.

Administration of Medication: If a child is no longer ill but needs medication to complete a prescribed dosage, we will administer the prescription. To do so we need the following (according to Department of Early Education and Care regulations):

- **For Non-prescription medication:** A written order from the physician stating the name of the medication, the dosage to be given, as well as parental permission (ask a teacher for an authorization form). A physician may give a standing order for medication, valid for 1 year from the date signed. An attempt will be made to contact the parent before the medication is administered unless the need is urgent or permission has been given in the morning by the parent. Non-prescription medication includes: Tylenol, cough expectorant, nose drops, etc. We cannot administer any of these products without a Doctor's note.
- **Prescription medication:** The pharmacy label on the prescription container will suffice as physician's order, and parental permission will be needed, as well.
- **Authorization for Medication form:** Medication forms can be obtained from a teacher or Director. The form must show the date, name of medication, dosage, time to be administered, number of days administration is to continue and must be signed by a parent or guardian.
- All medication must be given to a teacher or the Director, along with instructions. Never leave medication in your child's lunch box or cubby. Please bring a measuring utensil with medication. All medication containers will be returned to the parent when no longer needed, empty and/or when the medication has expired. The first dose of any new medication must be administered at home.

Emergency & Non-Emergency Medical Procedures

The Department of Early Education and Care requires us to list for parents the contents of our first aid kits, which are located in each classroom: Band-aids, adhesive tape, bandage compress, gauze pads, gauze roller bandage, thermometer, disposable latex gloves, instant cold pack, scissors, tweezers, eyecup, alcohol, CPR mouth guards.

First aid kits are in each classroom and in backpacks taken on field trips. Backpacks for field trips also contain moist towelettes and emergency phone information for each child. When on a field trip, at least one teacher will have a charged cell phone and that number will be posted in the office and outside of the classroom door.

In case of minor accident or injury:

1. Staff will administer first aid to the child.
2. The child's parent or physician will be called, if necessary.
3. If any treatment is administered, no matter how minor, an injury report will be filled out by the teacher and signed by the parent. One copy will be placed in the child's file.
4. The Director is informed of any injury, no matter how mild, to a child. All injuries are logged by the Director.

In case of serious illness or accident:

1. The staff will immediately call 911 for an ambulance.
2. Emergency first aid will be administered by a staff member, if necessary. All full-time staff are first aid certified and recertified every 2 years, as required. They are also CPR certified annually, which exceeds EEC requirements.
3. The parent(s) will be called and asked to meet the child and teachers at the hospital. If unreachable, we may call the child's physician.
4. Two adults must accompany a child in an ambulance to Cooley Dickinson hospital.
5. The teachers will bring the child's authorization and consent form to the hospital.
6. If staff are unable to contact the parents, they will continue to attempt to do so.
7. The incident will be documented in writing, and a copy will be placed in the child's file.

Please note that HCELC educators are mandated reporters and must, by law, report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families.

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

In case of fire or other emergency, the building will be evacuated as follows:

1. When the Public Safety Department on campus receives information from local authorities regarding an emergency, such as a fire or natural disaster, they will sound the alarm in the Early Learning Center, and an officer will immediately contact the Early Learning Center either via phone or in person.

2. In case of an emergency that originates at the Center, such as a fire, missing child, or loss of power, heat or water, the Director or a teacher will immediately phone campus security, to relay the nature of the emergency. Once outside, the proper authorities can be contacted by cell phone, should an emergency arise. All teachers and the Director have emergency numbers programmed into their cell phones for easier access.

3. One teacher and a student assistant from each group will lead/carry the children out of the building to the grassy area by the adjacent fields. Teachers carry attendance records with them at all times and will check attendance once all children are outside. When there are children under the age of 12 months in the program, they will be transported in an evacuation crib.

4. Emergency exit routes are posted in each room, and staff are trained in emergency procedures.

5. One teacher from each group will check the classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, kitchens, etc. and will close doors and windows, if necessary, before exiting the building. All small and hidden areas of the classroom where children might hide will be checked to ensure that all children are out of the building.

6. If necessary, children will be brought to the Multi-Sport Center to await resolution of the emergency in either the room beneath the Weight Room, or the interior women's restroom. Families will be contacted in the event of an emergency or evacuation via the college's emergency notification system. They will receive an email, phone call and text notifying them of the emergency and where they can pick up their children. Parents will be phoned, if necessary, using either the phone at the Multi-Sport Center or a cell phone. Teachers carry emergency contact numbers with them at all times so that they can reach families in case of emergency. Teachers will also bring with them an emergency evacuation bag, which is located at the front entrance of the school. The bag contains clothing, bottled water, diapers, snacks and other provisions to ensure that children's needs are met during and after an emergency evacuation.

Building	Use	Liaison/ Alternates	Email	Fire Alarm Assembly Area	Severe Weather Shelter Area	Fire Alarm Panel Location

Early Learning Center	Daycare	Ronit Ben-Shir	rbKC@Hampshire.edu	Magical Hideout Field (fenced-in area next to playground, across from Eric Carle Museum)	Evacuate to Multi-Sport Center	Inside Main Entrance to the Left
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7. Parents will be informed of any emergency evacuation, even if quickly resolved.

We are required by state law and EEC to have an evacuation drill every month with the children.

Sheltering in Place

In case of an emergency requiring sheltering in place, such as a natural disaster, teachers will escort children to areas of the building that are safe and away from windows and doors, such as the hallways, kitchen and adult restrooms. Campus Safety will be notified and parents will be contacted via phone and email about the nature of the emergency and the plan of action. When the incident is over, parents will be notified of the time and place at which children may be picked up from the Center.

Missing Child

Families are asked to sign their children in and out every day by indicating the time of arrival and departure. Teachers are responsible for checking the parent attendance charts and for filling in the times of arrival and departure when parents do not. Additionally, teachers are responsible for keeping their own record of which children have arrived at school and which children have departed or are absent. When it is suspected that a child is missing, the classroom teachers will do a thorough search of the classroom and building spaces. Teachers will then gather the children in the classroom and check individual children against the teacher attendance sheet and the parent attendance sheet. If the child is still missing, the teachers will notify the Director and other classroom teachers and we will conduct a staff-wide search of the building and check all children against the classroom attendance records. If the child is still not found, the teachers and Director will notify Campus Safety and the child's parents.

Emergency Lockdown Procedure

In case of an incident involving the need to impose a lockdown procedure at the Early Learning Center, the following plan will be implemented:

1. A teacher and/or Director will notify the teachers that the lockdown plan is in place.
2. Teachers will gather children in their classrooms and/or studio or playroom they are assigned to and will do a head count to ensure that all children are accounted for. If we need to be in a place without windows, preschoolers will go into the kitchen, toddlers will go into the big bathroom and infants will go into the small bathroom.
3. Teachers will lock interior doors and pulldown shades.
4. Campus Safety will be notified of the emergency either by engaging the panic button or by calling from a classroom phone or cell phone.
5. Staff and children will remain in the rooms until Campus Safety gives the notice that it is safe to open doors.
6. Parents will be notified if a lockdown procedure is enacted.

TRANSITIONS AND BEGINNINGS AT THE CENTER

As this is a first group care experience for many children and parents, and a new class or teachers for returning children, the staff tries to be sensitive to the needs of both parent and child. It is normal and appropriate for children and parents to express a variety of feelings: excitement, caution, reluctance, sadness, fearfulness, delight, etc. Some children may have a delayed reaction - at first feeling very excited and after a few weeks feeling sad or hesitant about coming to school. Some children may "act out" their worries by clinging or by challenging the rules and adults in their lives. Some children may show signs of regression in their sleeping, eating, toileting or other self-help skills. During these moments, it is important to remember that your child is managing a big change in their life and may need some extra support and patience during the transition.

We have several practices in place to help support you and your child during the early welcoming process into the Early Learning Center as well as during the transition process between classrooms. When children are transitioning from one classroom to the next, the staff will help to support both children and families throughout the process. Parents are welcome to set up a time to visit and observe the older classrooms as well as to meet with the Director to address questions or concerns related to their child's transition.

In the Spring, the staff hosts a transition meeting at the center for each age group. This is an opportunity for teachers to communicate the changes in routine, child and parent expectations that may occur with the transition into the new classrooms. During this meeting, parents will have an opportunity to connect with other families who will be a part of the classroom.

Beginning in early Spring, the teachers will begin to bring small groups of children into the older classroom to give them a chance to explore the environment and become

familiar with the teachers in their new classroom. Families who do not participate in the summer program are encouraged to visit the new classroom with their child over the summer. Before a child transitions into a new classroom, their current and future teachers meet with each other to share and discuss portfolios and progress reports. The teachers discuss each child's individual needs and create an individualized plan for transitioning into the new classroom.

In the fall, classroom teachers conduct a home visit with each family during late August so that children can meet their teachers on their home turf and to give parents and teachers an opportunity to share information and plan the transition process together. Before the first day of school, ELC staff host an Orientation Meeting and Open House for families to begin to become familiar with the classroom and to begin developing connections with other families.

The first 2 weeks of the school year, children attend on a staggered enrollment schedule. During this time, each family gives up one of their scheduled days, allowing the children to enjoy the extra attention that comes along with a significantly smaller class size.

In addition, the staff would like to offer some suggestions on how to make the transition to the Center for you and your child as smooth as possible.

For toddlers and preschoolers:

1. Prepare your child as much as possible by driving by the center and visiting. These visits can be scheduled by phoning a classroom teacher. Talk about the teachers, other children, routines of the day, etc. at home. Plan what paraphernalia (blankets, extra clothing, special stuffed animals) will be kept at the center. Once your child begins, it is very helpful to develop a good-bye routine, which includes a time frame, a particular activity (reading a story, doing a puzzle together with your child, etc.) and then a special kiss/hug/wave/words. The predictability and consistency of this routine will help your child make the transition to begin her/his day. Please speak with your primary teacher about this transition ritual. Talk about who will be dropping off and picking up your child and at what time (after snack, after lunch, during afternoon outdoor time, etc.). The more concrete preparatory clues you can give, the more helpful it will be.
2. A favorite blanket, stuffed animal, bottle, book, etc. is a great help to a child and we encourage you to bring these "transitional objects." The staff will work towards having each child keep their special item in a cubby or on a designated shelf in the classroom. Check with your child's teachers about their plan, and share this with your child.
3. Having a photo of the family in a special place at the Center can be a great comfort, especially for toddlers and young preschoolers. You might want to

bring one in and find a special place to hang it. We will have a display of all family photos in each classroom.

4. A note or picture from you in the child's lunch box is often a nice "refueling" surprise.
5. During the first few days, plan to stay for a bit, if necessary.
6. This will give your child time to get acquainted with the classroom with you present. It will also give you time to get acquainted. When it is time for you to leave, tell your child and give some warning time (I'll be leaving in 5 minutes) to both child and teacher. No parent should ever leave their child without letting the child and teacher know. This could be frightening when realized by the child.

For infants:

A gradual transition into the program often works best for infants and their parents. Sometimes, it's helpful for children to attend with a parent for a short time during the first few days, and then the length of time the parents leave their child can be gradually increased on subsequent days. Often a child may be picked up at noontime for the first week before a full day is attempted. In general, we feel it's crucial that the initial transition be tailored to the individual needs of each child and parent. We also appreciate that work demands can preclude unlimited flexibility but, if possible, please try and think of the first week or two as a phase-in time for your baby.

Several visits to the Center before your baby begins will help acclimate her/him to the sights, smells, sounds and people of the room.

For all children:

The teachers are happy to help you with good-byes, by holding and soothing your child or engaging her/him in an activity. Children do cry and show distress at these times, and the teachers know this is a normal response. Children are generally soothed in a short period of time. If you would like a teacher's help in making the transition and they seem occupied at the moment, please do not hesitate to approach a teacher and let them know that you need some assistance with the goodbye.

Often developing a ritual is helpful (a certain number of kisses, waving at the "good-bye" window, using the same good-bye phrase, etc.). The teachers also need to hear from you what will soothe your child if distressed. Please feel free to phone the center and check on your child's status, especially if there has been a difficult morning separation. The Director or teachers are happy to speak with you when you check in.

The registration packet includes a list of children and families (with email addresses) who will be in your child's classroom. We encourage you to reach out to other families to set up playdates with your child's future classmates.

You may want to make the transition feel special for your child by having him/her pick out a new lunchbox and/or pick out the foods that you will pack for lunch. You can create a piece of artwork with your child for the new cubby and talk about where it will go. You can use pretend play to explore the idea of a new classroom or group of children, playing the roles of teacher and child throughout various routines of a typical school day.

You may also want to talk to your children about some of the differences between the classrooms, as well as the ways in which they are the same. For example:

MOVING UP TO TODDLER ROOM DIFFERENCES:

- There is a daily circle time
- There are small potties in the classroom
- The children nap in the playroom
- Children have cubbies for their belongings

MOVING UP TO THE PRESCHOOL ROOM DIFFERENCES:

- There is a daily morning meeting
- Children nap in the classroom
- Lunchboxes are stored in the cubbies

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CLASSROOMS:

- Children play outside and go for walks
- There are lots of activities and materials to play with
- Children eat meals with friends around a table
- The teachers are there to support and help the children

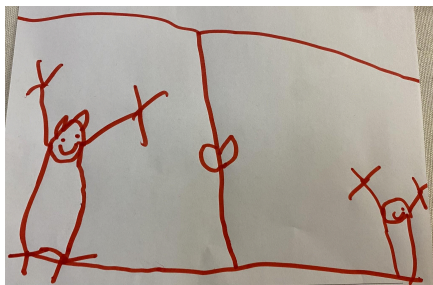
As a parent, you may also notice some differences between the classrooms, which can impact your own experience. Some parents note that while in the infant room, parents are often able to sit on the floor and connect with each other and the teachers while watching the infants at play, while the toddler room feels like less of a parent space and teachers are focused on facilitating the toddlers' activities. These differences are due to the physical set-up of the space and materials, which are geared towards supporting the toddlers' mobility and burgeoning sense of independence. Parents may find that it is more effective to have more in-depth conversations with toddler teachers outside of the classroom rather than during morning welcoming, when the attention is focused on the busy toddlers. Some parents have noted that the preschool room feels a lot busier and

louder than the toddler room, which is due in part to the increase from 9 toddlers to 17 preschoolers as well as the way in which this age group independently moves throughout the space, selecting their own materials and activities.

It is important to acknowledge your own feelings as a parent during your child's transition to school. Please discuss your concerns and questions with your child's teachers and reach out to other parents for support. Allow your child space to talk about their worries or questions while presenting the transition in a positive light. Children get their cues for how to feel about new experiences from their most trusted adults. If your child sees that you feel anxiety, fear or sadness about the experience, they will internalize these feelings as well. We also need to keep in mind that young children experience time differently than adults. We suggest that more in-depth conversations about the new classroom begin several weeks (rather than months) before the start of the school year. Focusing on big transitions with children too early can lead to months of unnecessary worry and anxiety.

Please discuss your concerns and questions with the teachers at the orientation meeting and in the weeks to follow. Forming a trusting alliance with your child's teachers is the best technique of all for facilitating a comfortable adjustment for you and your child.

We look forward to getting to know new children and families, and we are glad to see familiar faces return. This promises to be another stimulating, rewarding, and positive year at the Hampshire College Early Learning Center. Again, welcome - - and enjoy!



- Shiloh, age 5

POLICY & PROCEDURES AGREEMENT & CONTRACT

I / We have read the Health Care Policy and Procedures documents.

I / We understand these Policies are legally binding, and I / We agree to abide by the Policies and Procedures as they are written.

I/We understand that HCELC will do its best to provide written notice of changes to the attached Policies and Procedures seven days before they become effective, but that new information and research may impact EEC and other regulations, and some changes to the Policies and Procedures may become effective immediately as soon as written notice is provided via email.

By signing below, I / We (as a signer of your household) Agree to abide by the Policies and Procedures as outlined in the Parent Handbook and the Health Care Policy & Procedures.

Parent / Legal Guardian (Printed Name)

Date

Parent / Legal Guardian (Signature)