

*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

*HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE EARLY LEARNING CENTER*  
*PARENT HANDBOOK*

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**INTRODUCTION TO THE  
HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE EARLY LEARNING CENTER**

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 an atelier (studio). The atelier provides us with a well-lit, quiet, materials-rich space for small group work and long-term projects.

We presently serve about 40 families, about 1/2 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 many 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.





**THE EARLY LEARNING CENTER AT A GLANCE:**

**Early Learning Center Staff:**

Center Director: *Ronit Ben-Shir*

Infant Room Teachers: *Kim Ripley and Michelle Sullivan*

Toddler Room Teachers: *Kate Nicolaou & Lynn Warren*

Preschool Room Teachers: *Theresa Gold, Paul Murphy & Miranda LaPolice*

**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, 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	20	1:10

**Calendar:**

The academic year program runs for 43 weeks from mid-August to mid-June. The 8 ½ week summer program runs from mid-June to mid-August.

**Hours:**

8:15am-4:45pm Monday-Friday

The center is open 8:15am-3:30pm for infants and is open 8:15am-4:45pm (with a 3:30 optional pick-up time) for toddlers and preschoolers.

## **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.

### **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 licensor, but it represents best practice. Hampshire's Early Learning Center observes slow start for one to two weeks in August/September depending upon when Labor Day falls. We ask parents to give up one day each week during the slow start period. The Center also closes at 3:30 during this period. By giving up one day a week, 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. The reason for the early closing is primarily related to the availability of student workers. Students are not yet back on campus and in order to keep the Center open for one additional hour, having 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 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). 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, more 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 and the Center's licensor stipulates that each teacher must receive at least 30 hours per year in order to retain their certification. This equates roughly to four curriculum days. The Center typically strives to take professional development days on those days when the public schools are closed (President's Day for example) or on those days when the College offers floating holidays (Columbus Day and Veterans Day).

### **Center Hours**

Families sometimes ask why we do not offer a late day program in the infant room and why our day ends at 4:45 in the toddler and preschool classrooms. The Center hours for the toddler and preschool rooms (8:15-4:45) are built around the Hampshire College staff hours (8:30-4:30), allowing staff time to drop off and pick up their child at the start and end of their work day. Infant classrooms require special attention to staffing and supervision due to the individualized needs and schedules of each child throughout the day. As a result, the infant classroom hours have been created based on the maximum number of hours in a work week that our licensor will support for our infant teachers. As a small Center with only one classroom per age group, we are limited in our ability to stagger staff members' hours in order to cover more hours of the day. Due to the mandated licensing

regulations for adult-child ratio and the number of work hours a day our licenser will approve for our staff, we are limited to the number of hours that we currently offer in our classrooms. In order to extend the day for any of the classrooms, we would need to hire additional staff, which would lead to substantial tuition increases. The Center's hours allow us to meet our goal of providing a high quality program that is as cost-effective as possible for our parent community.

### **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. 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. Early in each semester, the Hampshire student work schedule will be shared with families so that they can contact student workers who have availability to work on a given day and who have shared their contact information with the parent community. 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.

## 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.**



### INSPIRATION FROM NORTHERN ITALY

Our staff continues to be inspired by the world-renown infant/toddler/pre-school 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.



## 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
- taking turns
- persisting when challenged
- creative alternative solutions
- expressing ideas and feelings through a variety of medium
- making decisions and choices
- developing confidence in abilities and interests
- accepting responsibility
- positive associations with learning
- developing empathy
- curiosity
- initiate
- 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 developmentally appropriate ways

### 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
- 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 of 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 medium, such as art, storytelling, music and creative movement

**Motor Skills**

- how to challenge their bodies
- how to plan their 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 outdoor time is spent; however, teachers do 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 provide challenge, 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. The classrooms may also visit the Atelier (Studio) on a daily or weekly basis. The Atelier is a space where children can explore art and natural materials, develop tools and techniques for representing their learning with materials, and expand on project work in small, focused groups. 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.

With the afternoon, for toddlers and preschoolers comes nap time, outdoor play, snack, and more exploration time.



## 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 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 pre-schoolers, 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 (s)he tries 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 rechannel 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.

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### **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.

13. 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. (A complete policy on accusations of abuse and neglect is on file and given to all staff).

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## STAFF

The Center employs one Director, and 7 professional teachers. 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 Mass. 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 as assistant teachers, and they are essential to the operation of the program. Each room is staffed with at least one student at all times, who assist 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 assistants, and all have a CORI, DCF, SORI and fingerprint Background Check. It is a priority in recruiting students to balance the composition of student 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 students.

On occasion, 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 a special interest in young children.

The center also 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.

David Slack, M.D. Valley Medical Group, is our health care consultant and is available to us on an on-call basis for consultation at no charge about medical questions/concerns.

Nancy Arons, M.S.W., a clinical social worker, is available to us, as needed, to observe classroom dynamics, consult with staff, and provide in-service training. She is also available to meet with parents and teachers together or to discuss on the telephone parental concerns not related to the child care center (the cost of which is to be paid for by the parent).

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**STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Staff supervision, evaluation and training are mandated by the Department of Early Education and Care and are an important component 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 once a month. In addition, the Director meets with each teaching team once a month. 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 formal classroom observations of each staff member at least every other month and records her observations. 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 Director meets with her supervisor on a monthly basis and receives an annual evaluation. The full staff meets weekly to discuss any business pertinent to teaching, collaboration 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), a week 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.

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**SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS**

The Early Learning Center provides sick 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 students. Whenever possible, we try to utilize a few substitutes repeatedly so that they become familiar to the children, staff and parents.

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## 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.

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**PHONES AND E-MAIL AT THE CENTER**

When phoning the Early Learning Center, please dial 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). The number for each classroom is:

- Infants: 559-5641
- Toddlers: 559-5642
- Pre-schoolers: 559-5640

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 call your child’s teachers - anytime for infants, and during call-in times (to be announced each fall) for toddlers and preschoolers.

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.

The Director may be contacted by email at [rbKC@hampshire.edu](mailto:rbKC@hampshire.edu). Email is also an effective way of communicating with teaching staff. 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.

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**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

A notebook or wipe-off board is located in each classroom for parents to relay information concerning anything which might affect the child's day (e.g. early pick-up, lack of sleep, etc.). This information may also be shared verbally with a teacher. The teachers will check your notations as children settle into the morning, or, in the case of afternoon teachers, as they arrive.

Infant and Toddler teachers may also use journals in which both teachers and parents write and share their observations, thoughts.

## 4. Arrival and Departure times

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. Parent Pouches/Bulletin Boards/E-mail

Each family has a message pouch located outside their child's classroom. Throughout the year you will receive memos/newsletters informing you of classroom activities and projects, field trips, center business, etc. We also use E-mail for these communications.

You will also find parent Advisory Committee minutes, articles of interest, book club info, monthly bills, and much more. Please check your pouch daily as they tend to fill up quickly. The pre-school staff have pouches just outside the pre-school room, and other staff pouches are next to the meeting room near the infant room.

## 6. Call-in Times

Call-in times are designated for each classroom. Because arrival and pick up times

are somewhat demanding for teachers, parents and children, we have established specific daily times during which a teacher will be available to speak with you. This is a good time to discuss any concerns requiring the undivided attention of the teacher. Teachers will designate these times early in the year.

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

#### 7. 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. 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 your 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.

#### 8. 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.

All progress reports are read in draft form and edited by the Director before final drafts are written, typed and distributed to parents.

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.

#### 9. 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.

10. Parent Workshops/Forums

Throughout the year, suggestions for discussion and workshop topics are elicited from families 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, although **we ask that each family attend at least one per year.** 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 also 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.

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**PARENT WORK**

Although we are not a parent cooperative per se, 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.

Each family will choose a job from the work checklist provided in the registration packet (or craft a job of their choosing. In past years parents have volunteered to share their musical talents with the children or to come in weekly and read stories/teach songs in languages other than English). We ask that each family will: volunteer an average of 2 hours each month, participate in 1-2 work days a year and attend fund raising events, and attend all center meetings. Families will be contacted early in the year to discuss work options. 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.

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**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 her at [rbKC@hampshire.edu](mailto:rbKC@hampshire.edu) to set up a meeting or come to her office hours.

*Here are some 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 a PAC member.
- If you have a question/concern about a center policy, speak with a Parent Mentor (for new families), the Director or a PAC member and, when appropriate, the item will be placed on the agenda of the next PAC meeting.
- To speak with PAC members, you may use the open forum at the beginning of each PAC meeting, or you may contact the PAC member directly, by placing a note in their mail pouch or by email.

### **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 regularly once a 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 has resulted in a variety of programmatic changes including: the addition of parent social events throughout the year, the addition of weekly parent emails/photos as a method of family communication, the removal of one Curriculum Day from our calendar and the reassignment of Curriculum Days to different days of the week, the addition of the Parent Mentorship Program, changes to the Parent Handbook to clarify policies, and the adjustment of summer program dates to allow for a "prep week" before the start of fall

college classes.

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.

**Open Forum at PAC Meetings:**

The first fifteen minutes of every ELC PAC meeting (normally 7:15-7:30 P.M.) are reserved for an "open forum" during which parents who are not PAC members are invited to appear and to raise any concerns that they might have about the operation of the Center. This time can be extended as necessary to hear and discuss such concerns. Non-PAC members may be asked, at the pleasure of the chair, to leave during board discussion, as will any PAC member with a conflict of interest. Dealing with issues not on the agenda or deferring them to the next PAC meeting will be at the PAC's discretion.

The best chance for prompt action on an issue is that it be placed on the PAC meeting agenda. PAC meetings are held once a month and the dates are announced in advance to the entire ELC community. Parents and staff are encouraged to bring items to the attention of a PAC member at least one week prior to the PAC meeting so that items can be placed on the agenda for that meeting. Notes from each PAC meeting will be distributed to the parent community and to the staff.

**Distribution of annual feedback form:**

Each year, the ELC PAC distributes a Program Feedback form to all parents and staff, asking them to evaluate, in whatever detail they wish, the programs, administration and operations of the center. These forms can be signed or not, and are intended to elicit frank responses from parents. These forms are studied closely by the PAC and staff who together are responsible for writing a collation which is distributed to the Center community and for addressing any problem areas that emerge from this process.

**Parent Mentors:**

In the fall semester, new families to the Center are assigned a Parent Mentor from their child's classroom. 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.

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**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 fundraiser concerts and fall and spring evening parents' meetings help develop such connections. In addition, we have developed other organized activities for parents.

Morning or Afternoon Coffee Get-Togethers for Parents

Periodically, each classroom group of parents will have the opportunity to get together for an hour or so at drop-off time (8:30-9:30 A.M. or at pick-up time) in the meeting room. Hosted by 2 parents in each group who are responsible for bringing coffee and bagels/pastry, 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

Each classroom will have 2 parent volunteers each year whose responsibility it is to plan family events and to welcome new families to the center. Family events will include: pot luck dinners in the spring and fall: Center; get-togethers at families' homes; trips etc.

Parent Mentors

Each family new to the Center will have a returning family as a 'mentor'. The mentor will be available to answer questions and help a new family settle in. Only families who volunteer will be mentors.



**ADMISSIONS AND RE-ENROLLMENT**

Re-enrollment forms are distributed in February. All Hampshire -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 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 1<sup>st</sup> prior to the year of requested enrollment.

The center's admission priorities are:

1. Presently enrolled children
2. Siblings of presently enrolled Hampshire families
3. Wait list children of new full-time Hampshire families
4. Siblings of other presently enrolled children

5. 5-College families on the waiting list (first priority to part-time Hampshire families, 'Cultural Village' employees, e.g. Eric Carle Museum, Yiddish Book Center)
6. New community children on the waitlist

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 families
2. Siblings of presently enrolled Hampshire families
3. New full-time Hampshire families
4. Presently enrolled 'other' families (first 5-college; then community)
5. Siblings of presently enrolled other families (first 5-college; then community)
6. 5-College affiliated families (first priority to part-time Hampshire families)
7. 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 multi-cultural 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.

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## 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.

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## SCHEDULING & 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 April. 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 such a case, the Director will make all possible efforts to find a new child to fill the spot or to find currently enrolled children to pick up the contracted days. The family is responsible for continued tuition payments until all contracted days are filled. If only some of the contracted days are able to be filled, the family is responsible for paying the remaining balance on the contracted tuition rate for the remainder of the academic year.

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### 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 happen to arrive before 8:15, you may stay with your child in the front hall or in the playroom until 8:15 and then enter the classroom.

Upon arriving, please help your child put her/his 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 until 11:00 A.M. to the Center. 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 mid-day session 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. after mid-day departures. Our staffing changes at these times, with a teacher leaving for the day, so if you are late, a teacher is late leaving as well.

The full-day session ends promptly at 4:45pm for toddlers and preschoolers. Teachers appreciate your consideration for these times as they too have families and outside

interests. Also, children may be worried to see friends depart, while they are waiting to be picked up.

Departure times mean that children and parents should be out of the classroom (mid-day) or out of the building (end of day) 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 Mid day infants, Mid-day toddlers and preschoolers
- 4:30- 4:45 Full-day preschoolers and toddlers

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.

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### **LATE PICK-UP POLICY**

On-time departures are crucial to the flow of the day for children and staff. At the end of sessions (3:30, 4:45), a teacher goes home for the day and will be late leaving if parents are late. Also, the remaining teachers need to carry on with the remaining children and must attend to their transition. We have a late pick-up policy in place to help discourage this kind of disruption for the kids and teachers.

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. Late pick-up fees assessed are (per child):

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

You will be billed for the late fee, and you should then pay the fee to *Trustees of Hampshire College* (separate from your tuition payment). The late pick-up fee fund is used to help defray the cost of a staff breakfast at the end of the year, to appreciate the staff.

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### INCLEMENT WEATHER AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

**The Early Learning Center will follow exactly Hampshire College’s openings and closings due to poor weather.** Inclement weather closings are inconvenient, but a reality in New England. Given that we are an on-campus child care facility heavily subsidized by Hampshire, we have been asked by the College to echo their snow closing policy as closely as possible.

#### Morning Openings

If the college closes for the day, we will do so as well.

If the college opens at its regular time, we will open at our regular time.

If the college opens late, we will follow suit.

We would ask however, that parents remain here in the morning with their children until we have adequate staffing coverage. If teachers are late arriving due to weather, we obviously cannot leave children unattended. Staff will, of course, make every effort to arrive on time.

Please listen to **WHMP 1400 AM or WTTT 1430 AM** in the early morning for closing announcements of schools and colleges. The Early Learning Center will not be mentioned specifically. You may also call the Hampshire College switchboard after 6:45 AM (**549-4600**) for closing information, or the special Hampshire weather line (**559-5508**). **A message will also be on the Early Learning Center office voice mail (599-5706).**

\*\*\*\*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, we will phone all parents, and 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.

Please do have in place accessible, available, back-up child care arrangements in case you are unable to pick up your child in such a situation. 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 be shared with families so that they can contact student workers who have availability to work on a given day and who have shared their contact information with the parent community. 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. 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. In the early fall, parents will be given an authorization form in order to enroll in our automatic bill payment system. The program allows families have their credit card or checking account directly charged every month for tuition. Tuition payments are due by the 1st of the month. The \$300.00 non-refundable application deposit will be refunded at the end of the child's stay in the center, and interest will accrue. For families on a pre-tax /flex-benefits plan through their employer, a receipt is required for child care tuition reimbursement. Please notify the Director if you require a paper receipt for your records.

**HCELC Tuition Schedule  
2020-2020**

**Hampshire College Affiliated Families**

**INFANTS (2-14 MONTHS)**

| Schedule            | Daily Rate |
|---------------------|------------|
| Mid Day (8:15-3:30) | \$78.54    |

**TODDLERS (15 MONTHS-2.8 YEARS)**

| Schedule             | Daily Rate |
|----------------------|------------|
| Mid Day (8:15-3:30)  | \$69.36    |
| Full Day (8:15-4:45) | \$80.58    |

**PRESCHOOLERS (2.9-5 YEARS)**

| Schedule             | Daily Rate |
|----------------------|------------|
| Mid Day (8:15-3:30)  | \$62.22    |
| Full Day (8:15-4:45) | \$72.42    |

**Non-Hampshire College Affiliated Families**

**INFANTS (2-14 MONTHS)**

| Schedule            | Daily Rate |
|---------------------|------------|
| Mid Day (8:15-3:30) | \$86.70    |

**TODDLERS (15 MONTHS-2.8 YEARS)**

| Schedule             | Daily Rate |
|----------------------|------------|
| Mid Day (8:15-3:30)  | \$76.50    |
| Full Day (8:15-4:45) | \$89.76    |

**PRESCHOOLERS (2.9-5 YEARS)**

| <b>Schedule</b>      | <b>Daily Rate</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Mid-Day (8:15-3:30)  | \$69.36           |
| Full Day (8:15-4:45) | \$80.58           |

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**SUMMER PROGRAM**

The center operates a summer program for 8 1/2 weeks--from mid- June through mid- August. The 2019 summer program will run from Monday, June 17, 2019– Wednesday, August 14, 2019. In general, the program is shaped around more flexible scheduling arrangements for families. Families must enroll for a minimum of 4 weeks, but may choose any number of weeks between 4 and 8 1/2. The full day program runs until 3:45pm 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 April.

All families enrolled in the academic year program are guaranteed child care in 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.

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**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, 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.

**\*\*\* We are currently a nut-free school. Please do not send food containing tree nuts in your child's lunch.**

Infant provisions and toddler lunches can be stored in the classroom's refrigerator. For pre-schoolers 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 you 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.

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### SNACK

The Early Learning Center provides daily morning and afternoon snacks. Teachers take great care in ensuring that these snacks are nutritious and balanced and much thought is given to providing a variety of different foods and presenting them in an enjoyable manner. A snack menu is posted in each room in an effort to keep you informed. Examples of snack foods commonly served include: cereal and milk, fresh fruit and vegetables, hummus, yogurt, pasta, cheese, bagels, nachos, rice cakes & jam. In the fall, most of our produce comes from our CSA share at the Hampshire College Farm Center. Children with food allergies may have a supply of non-allergenic foods provided by their parent(s) and stored at the Center.

On special occasions, such as birthdays, you may provide a special treat for snack for your child's group. Please discuss this with the teachers in advance. They will have some suggestions about special treats, and will also be able to tell you how many treats to bring.

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### NAP TIME

The Department of Early Education and Care requires all centers in operation for more than 4 hours to provide a quiet nap time of at least 45 minutes. The Early Learning Center provides nap mats for each child (cribs for infants) and sheets. Parents are asked to bring blankets (labeled, please) as well as a comfort object (blanket, soft toy, etc.). It is requested that parents take blankets home on occasion for laundering but they will otherwise be kept at the Center. **We provide sheets and launder them weekly or as needed.**

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 pre-schoolers. 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 can not 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.

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### 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 windchill 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!) every day. 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 his/her clothing, please feel

free to donate hats, mittens, socks, boots, coats, snowpants, shirts and pants to the Center.

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**GENERAL SAFETY AND HEALTH 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 remove 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.

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**HEALTH CARE 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. David Slack (Valley Medical Group- (413) 529-9300). 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 (or present written documentation of a religious or medical exemption). All children between 9 months and 3 years must have a lead paint test annually, which must be documented on the health form. As of 1998, a chicken pox vaccination or documentation of the disease is required for children, as is age appropriate.

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 he/she is 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 health care 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 s/he is 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 him/herself. 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 don't 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 him/her 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 him/her back to the center again that day. Instead, take some time to observe your child and assess how s/he feels. 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. Our illness protocol is in accordance with Department of Health protocol (the manual on preschool health is kept in the office, if you wish to see it) and has been approved by our health care consultant, Dr. David Slack.

1. **Fever** of 100.6 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:

**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, child may return after 24 hours on antibiotics. With persistent cough child should be seen by health care provider to check for infection, asthma etc.

**Chicken pox -** Child may return one week after rash first appears or until all blisters are crusted over and dry.

**Conjunctivitis-** which is 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 health care provider.

**Coxsackie-** 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.

**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.

**Giardia -** Child should not attend if diarrhea is present and s/he is 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.

**Head Lice** - lice or nits may be found in hair. Child may return after treatment with special shampoo and removal of nits (re-treatment required in 10 days).

**Herpes Simplex** - skin blisters or sores in mouth, on lips (coldsore). Child may return when scabs are dry and not oozing.

**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.

**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.

**Rashes**- Rashes that you cannot identify or that have not been diagnosed by a physician. Child must be seen by pediatrician and may return with written documentation of pediatrician's permission.

**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 s/he is well enough to participate in all activities of the day.

**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 (or not), fever, listlessness, stomachache, a rash.

**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 different. 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. It includes (but is not limited to) chicken pox, giardia, haemophilus infection, hepatitis, kawasaki disease, lyme disease, measles, mumps and rubella.

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 her/him 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. (See the medication policy for medication).

N.B. 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 cooking, 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 insure 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.

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### 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 does of any new medication must be administered at home.

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**EMERGENCY & NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL PROCEDURES**

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.

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): Bandaids, adhesive tape, bandage compress, gauze pads, gauze roller bandage, thermometer, disposable latex gloves, instant coldpack, scissors, tweezers, eyecup, alcohol, CPR mouth guards. Backpacks for field trips

also contain change for a phone call, moist towelettes and emergency phone information for each child. When on a field trip, at least one teacher will have a cell phone and that number will be posted in the office and outside of the classroom door.

In case of *serious illness or accident*:

1. The staff will immediately call Hampshire Public Safety. They will dispense an EMT and will call 911 for an ambulance immediately.
2. Emergency first aid will be administered by a staff member, if necessary (all permanent staff are required to be first aid certified and recertified every 3 years. Most staff are CPR certified annually as well, though it is not required of all staff on site).
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.

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### **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. In case of an emergency that originates from the Center, such as a fire, missing child, or loss of power, heat or water, a staff member will push the emergency contact button, which will sound the fire alarm in the building, at campus security and at the Amherst Fire Department.
2. 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 Adele Simmons Hall Room 111 to await resolution of the emergency. 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-sports 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.

7. Parents will be informed of any emergency evacuation, even if quickly resolved.

We are required by state law to have an evacuation drill every other month with the children. Our drills are supervised by a Public Safety officer of Hampshire College.

### **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 the classrooms and/or studio or playroom and will do a head count to ensure that all children are accounted for.
3. Teachers will lock interior doors and pull down shades.
4. Public 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 public 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 his/her 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, his/her 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. During the first 1-2 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 animal) 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 his/her 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. 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. Please stay and observe through the one-way mirror, if it would help you to feel more comfortable.

**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 interesting 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. We will also have a Parent Gathering Space during the first two weeks of the school year so that you can stay on the premises and receive updates on your child while giving her/him space to transition and bond with the adults and classmates.

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 play dates 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
- Kate and Lynn will be their teachers.

Moving up to the preschool room:

*Differences:*

- There is a daily morning meeting
- Children nap in the classroom
- Lunchboxes are stored in the cubbies
- Miranda, Paul and Theresa are the teachers.

*Similarities between classrooms:*

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

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, 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 his/her 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.

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*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!*

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