



New Canaan Nature Center Preschool

Family Handbook

2017 – 2018

New Canaan Nature Center

144 Oenoke Ridge, New Canaan, CT 06840

(203) 966-9577

www.newcanaannature.org

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in." ~ Rachel Carson



New Canaan Nature Center Contact Information

NCNC Main Number: 203 966 9577

NCNC FAX: 203 966 6536

NCNC website: www.newcanaannature.org

Mailing address: 144 Oenoke Ridge, New Canaan, CT 06840

Emails are first initial and last name @NewCanaanNature.org (e.g. Marianne Kay is mkay@NewCanaanNature.org) Please remember, preschool teachers only check their emails after their school day is over. Urgent messages, including changes in pickup plans, should be delivered by telephone

Messages should always be left on classroom extensions, or with Marianne Kay, ext. 1016. If you need to reach someone in person, also try the Front Desk at Ext 1010 or 1011.

New Canaan Nature Center Preschool Staff

Our preschool staff includes 12 preschool teachers, the Assistant Director, Preschool Director and the additional support of 4 buddy naturalists. Our preschool teachers are college-trained professionals with extensive experience in early childhood and environmental/nature education. Preschool teachers work collaboratively with environmental educator/naturalists from the Nature Center as an enthusiastic team with extensive knowledge about young children, the outdoors and the Nature Center's diverse habitats.

Mommy, Me & Nature Classes, Discovery Room, Ext. 1010 – Audrey Kallassy M, T, W or TH 9:15 -10:45

2 Year Old Preschool Class, Salamander Room, Ext.1031 – Judy Gilroy, Lisa Socci
T/Th 9:15 – 11:45

2 Year Old Preschool Class, Marsh Room, Ext.1032 – Aimee Mueller, Paula Yonkers
T/Th 9:15 – 11:45

2 Year Old Preschool Class, Marsh Room, Ext.1032 – Patrizia Dallemule, Lindsay Tucker
MWF 9:15 – 11:45

3 Year Old Preschool Class, Salamander Room, Ext. 1031 – Whitney McCarthy, Lisa Socci
MWF 9:00 – 12:00

3 Year Old Preschool Class, Meadow Room, Ext.1035 – Mary Hayes, Anna Zielinski
MTWTH 9:00 – 12:00

4 Year Old Preschool Class, Forest Room, Ext. 1029 – Claire Jones, Emily Kerchoff
M-Th 9:00 – 12:00, optional Tuesday/Thursday extended days

4 Year Old/PreK Preschool Class, Tree Room, Ext. 1033 – Christine Dinella, Meredith Ahlberg & Emily Kerchoff (Friday only)
M-F 9:00 – 12:00, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 9:00-2:00 for PreK. Optional Tuesday/Thursday extended days for 4 year olds.

Lunch Bunch – 3-5 y/o Mondays and/or Wednesdays 12:00-1:55pm

Preschool Director: Marianne Kay, mkay@NewCanaanNature.org , 203-966-9577, Ext 1016
The Preschool Director is available on a drop-in basis to meet with parents for informal conversations, or by appointment from 8:30 am-4:30 pm. Please drop in, call or email at any time.

Preschool Assistant Director: Anna Zielinski, Ext 1028, azielinski@NewCanaanNature.org

NCNC Registrar: Debbie Jaeger, Ext 1020, djaeger@NewCanaanNature.org

NCNC Front Desk: Ext 1010 or Ext 1011

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Welcome to our preschool! We are looking forward to sharing your child's journey through these amazing early learning years with you. We appreciate the time you will spend becoming familiar with the many details described in this Parent Handbook, and encourage you to ask any of us at any time for additional information about our programs and policies.

The NCNC Preschool Teachers & Staff

The New Canaan Nature Center

Founded in 1960, the New Canaan Nature Center (NCNC) is a non-profit environmental education center and sanctuary dedicated to helping people of all ages better understand, appreciate and care for the world of nature. The New Canaan Nature Center (NCNC) serves as a center for nature study and related activities. Its forty acres of meadows, woodlands, streams, ponds and marshes provide sanctuary for plants as well as animals and comprise an outdoor classroom for all. Over the last 55 years, the Nature Center has developed many educational facilities and programs for the benefit of area residents. Our Preschool is at the forefront of this vision.

NCNC Preschool Statement of Purpose

The New Canaan Nature Center Preschool provides the highest quality early childhood education environment that meets our children's developmental needs. Our holistic curriculum utilizes nature, science, art, language and math on our 40-acre campus to build each child's foundation for life-long learning and success.

NCNC Preschool Overview

Since 1967, the New Canaan Nature Center's Preschool (formerly the Beginner's Nature Program, or BNP) has been teaching 3, 4, and 5 year old children about themselves, the natural world and the age-appropriate essential building blocks for life. We emphasize hands-on, indoor and outdoor sensory experiences, using the natural world and thoughtfully balanced themes, lessons and activities that grow your child's skills in all developmental areas. We have created a unique, innovative, and nationally recognized nature-based curriculum that will allow your child's cognitive, creative, social and physical skills to be nurtured and challenged, guided and grown. In addition to simply being well prepared for kindergarten and beyond, your child's innate curiosity about and connection with nature will be enriched.

We believe children learn best through play and meaningful, concrete experiences. This active learning allows each child to develop at his/her own pace with the freedom to follow his/her own interests and make choices about daily activities, materials and friendships. Helping a child develop a positive self-image and become socially competent is the best foundation for his/her future. Nature as the venue is the best the world can offer these young children, and these experiences in these early years will last a lifetime.

NCNC Preschool Philosophy

Children are born with an avid desire to learn about the world around them – a desire that, if nurtured, will lead to becoming lifelong learners. Children learn best when they are actively involved in their own learning and when they are in an environment that is suited to their age and developmental needs. We, at the New Canaan Nature Center Preschool, believe that environment must include:

- Staff members who possess knowledge of child development and its impact on individual learning styles.
- Staff who understand and respect the importance of experiential learning, offering opportunities for concrete, meaningful experiences.
- Staff who understand that the emotional life of children cannot be separated from their learning, interests, and motivation.
- Hands-on experiences with the natural world.
- Compassionate, nurturing and caring professionals dedicated to young learners.

At the Nature Center, we focus on creating an awareness of, and appreciation for, the natural world. This unique preschool accomplishes environmental education goals while addressing the whole child's developmental needs. We integrate environmental and nature education into our curriculum – not as a separate subject, but as a pivotal element of language and literacy, math, art, music, dramatic play, and other areas of the curriculum. The nature-based curriculum addresses social, emotional, cognitive, creative, and physical skills. Most of all, we strive to teach children to love and value themselves and the world around them.

Children learn through direct, hands-on experiences. They must interact with their surroundings and materials and interpret their personal experiences for meaningful learning to occur. This is best accomplished in an open, carefully planned environment where children have the opportunity to make choices about their playtime activities. Children at play are actively involved in using language, exploring and establishing environments, creating themes, solving problems, developing shared understandings, and learning to make sense of their world. We believe that children need time to be just that: children. They need ample time and personal “space” to play, to develop and practice social skills with other children, and to gain and nurture their self-esteem.

NCNC Preschool Program Objectives

The NCNC Preschool serves 3, 4 and 5-year-old children with an emphasis upon direct sensory experiences with the natural world. Based upon seasonal changes, the thoughtfully balanced curriculum strives to enhance the young child's physical, emotional, social, intellectual and creative development while encouraging his/her natural curiosity about themselves and their world. Our program objectives include:

1. Develop within each child a positive feeling about him/herself.
2. Develop each child's ability to make choices and decisions about what to do and how to do it, using his or her own time and energy effectively.
3. Develop each child's self-discipline and ability to identify, pursue and complete self-chosen goals and tasks with originality and responsibility.
4. Develop each child's socialization skills: the ability to work with other children and adults in group planning, cooperative efforts and shared leadership.
5. Develop each child's knowledge of objects, skill in the arts and comfort with physical movement.
6. Develop each child's ability to express thoughts, ideas and feelings; to speak about, dramatize and graphically represent experiences in order to communicate them to others.
7. Develop each child's ability to comprehend spoken, written, dramatic and graphic representations.
8. Develop each child's ability to apply his/her reasoning abilities to a wide range of situations, using a variety of materials.
9. Develop each child's creativity, initiative, spirit of inquiry and openness to knowledge and other viewpoints.
10. Develop each child's awareness of the natural world and how our lives are interdependent with it.
11. Develop each child's appreciation of the natural world.
12. Provide a setting in which each child will feel safe and happy, as well as thrive individually.

We honor the traditions of all the children and families in our program. We believe that these traditions, when shared in the classroom by our families, can strengthen the connection between home and school. We invite families to share stories, customs, recipes and traditions with us. We encourage each of you to join us in our celebrations, whether it is your child's birthday, the sharing of a family recipe, or any special activity that reflects your heritage and family history.

NCNC Preschool is a Nature-Based Preschool

Our nature-based preschool provides children with special opportunities to learn about themselves, the world, and life. By connecting young children with the natural world, we instill in them a love of nature and science that will help foster an environmental ethic, caring attitude and inquisitive mind that will stay with them throughout their lives. We focus on environmental and nature education; creating an awareness and appreciation for the natural world. This unique preschool accomplishes our education goals while addressing the whole child's developmental needs. We infuse science, nature and environmental education into our curriculum through; art, music, math, language and literacy, dramatic play and other curriculum areas. The nature-based curriculum addresses social, emotional, cognitive, creative and physical skills. Most of all, we are learning to love—both ourselves and the environment.

Nature permeates the children's experiences. Nature-based activities happen indoors and outdoors; in whole group activities, small group activities, and individual activities all through seasonal based themes. Children are immersed in the natural world through teacher and child-initiated activities, as well as spontaneous "teachable moments."

Children can look at their experiences through the lens of a naturalist as they are encouraged to:

- Make observations and discoveries
- Satisfy their natural curiosity
- Hike on trails and climb on logs, trees and rocks on the Nature Center grounds
- Appreciate the beauty and value of the natural world
- Build an understanding of themselves as they relate to others and to the world around them
- Experiment and discover
- Communicate about and integrate nature through art, writing, and verbal activities

We offer unique preschool experiences:

1. Children will have daily experiences with animals.

These experiences can take the form of enjoying a classroom animal friend, visits from the animals in our teaching collection, learning about bees at our hives, saying hello to the birds at the aviaries, or observing animals in their natural habitat: the woods, meadows, ponds, and trails of the New Canaan Nature Center.

2. Children will have daily experiences with plant life.

Children will grow plants in the classrooms, in the gardens on campus, and in our greenhouse. In addition, there is always exploration and play in the woods, meadows, and ponds.

3. Children will enjoy the expertise of "buddy" naturalists and teachers who are experienced in introducing children to the natural world.

The education staff at the Nature Center (preschool teachers and naturalists) collaborate to provide our students with a positive introduction to the natural world that will allow them to appreciate its wonder and beauty.

4. Children will enjoy the seasons through experiencing programs like apple cider and maple syrup making and other seasonal highlights here at the Nature Center.

We also use guidelines and benchmarks as outlined in the Preschool Curriculum Framework provided by the State of Connecticut. It includes benchmarks for children in preschool programs, with program goals and content standards. Here at the New Canaan Nature Center Preschool, we use this framework as we plan experiences and activities for the children. Our curriculum is neither totally inclusive of, nor limited to, the

curriculum framework provided by the state. We are fortunate in having the Nature Center facility as our educational environment, and therefore have expanded the curriculum to include a much broader, nature-based focus. Additionally, curriculum is a living, evolving document; our staff is encouraged to explore new ideas manifested from their continuing studies, parents' input, and other sources.

Use of Technology

Technology is broadly defined as the application of science. The New Canaan Nature Center Preschool's philosophy emphasizes interactive play and the discoveries made therein. Magnifying lenses, measuring devices and other discovery devices are used in that play. The New Canaan Nature Center Preschool does not employ computers or other screens in the classrooms. The children live in a community where most houses have one or more computers and therefore, they have ample opportunity for use at home. Additionally, because they are at the Nature Center for only three hours per day computer use would limit their opportunities for interactive play and exploration. There is increasing evidence showing that a preponderance of screen time in young learners will hinder their development rather than enhance it.

NCNC Preschool Campus Experience

Throughout your child's experience at the NCNC Preschool, he/she will be exposed to and interact with many areas and people at the New Canaan Nature Center. We feel these opportunities and special offerings enhance each child's experience at our school. Our preschool program is unique because of the rich diversity of our buildings, grounds, natural setting, people, and programs.

Environmental Educators/Naturalists
Guide programs, walks and classroom visits

Grounds/Trails
Ponds, meadows, fields, forests, gardens, wetlands, beehives, chicken coop, sugar shack, cider house, wild animals

Discovery Room & Exhibits
Ponds, wetlands, field, forest, bee hive, live snakes, turtles, frogs and toads

Special Programs
Apple cidering,
maple sugaring, honey bees, egg laying chickens, birds, insects and pond studies



Greenhouse
Planting projects, plant observation, analysis and exploration

Ambassador Animals
Live hawks, owls, bald eagle, turkey vulture, snakes, turtles and mammals used for classroom visits

Other NCNC Staff and Consultants
Visits to Visitor Center, front desk, administrative offices, music and movement specialists

NCNC Preschool Daily Schedule

Each day's schedule provides opportunities for children to explore and express themselves through art, music and movement, language, math, dramatic play, and hands-on science and creative activities. The day also includes a nature walk and guided hike on the grounds of the Nature Center. Themes reflecting seasonal changes in nature provide the basis for daily activities.

A pre-established routine is followed each day. We try to follow a similar schedule day after day so that children can easily anticipate what will happen next. We want them to feel secure and independent, able to move from one activity to another with maximum ease and confidence. When changes to these routines are made, the children will be part of the considerations of how schedule adjustments will be made.

A typical day for all ages involves arrival followed by indoor free choice time where there are multiple areas that children can choose from (e.g. manipulatives, art experience, blocks, sensory, quiet area, etc.). Clean-up happens prior to Meeting Time where the class engages in story time, singing, animal ambassador visiting, and other group activities. A nutritious snack prepares them for their outdoor adventure that ranges from 30 minutes to 90 minutes typically before the end of the day and pick-up time. All daily activities are age appropriate and engages the young learner in fun and exciting ways.

NCNC Preschool Policy on Holidays and Celebrations

At the Nature Center, our curriculum is based on environmental and nature education. We celebrate the changing seasons. We thereby do not center our curriculum on the calendar holidays but rather the natural seasons.

We do, however, like to celebrate! We might celebrate the falling leaves, the first snow, or the new buds on the trees in spring. We also may celebrate the birth of a new sibling or a child's first lost tooth. Our holiday and celebration policy is to use activities that are concrete and meaningful to young children and in the context of their daily living. We acknowledge, but do not celebrate, major religious holidays, (Christmas, Chanukah, Easter, Passover, St. Patrick's Day, etc.) within the classroom. We acknowledge Halloween and Thanksgiving through the exploration of seasonal symbols such as pumpkins and gourds, as well as the autumn harvest. Also, on Valentine's Day, we believe it is more developmentally appropriate for young children to discuss love, friendship, and kindness than to exchange valentines or candy with their classmates.

Babysitting Policy

Teachers at the NCNC preschool are strongly discouraged from babysitting any enrolled preschool student. This type of arrangement is a conflict of interest regarding the role that the staff person has as an NCNC preschool teacher and the role as a caretaker outside of the school. It can also set up a difficult dynamic within the class if one student has their teacher as a babysitter and the others do not. The children are not always able to differentiate between the two positions. We ask that you please respect this policy.

NCNC Preschool Licensing & Accreditation

Our preschool is fully licensed by the Office of Early Childhood under Connecticut's Day Care Regulations (www.ctdph.gov) and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (www.naeyc.org.) Statutes and Regulations for licensing Child Care Centers are determined by the State of Connecticut, the Office of Early Childhood, and the Child Day Care Licensing Program. There is a copy of these

regulations in the parent library in each of our classroom cubby rooms for you to borrow. These regulations can also be found on the Office of Early Childhood, Child Day Care Licensing Homepage: http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day_Care/day_care.htm. Preschool Director, Marianne Kay is certified in her Connecticut Director's Credential.

NCNC Preschool Parents

The New Canaan Nature Center Preschool Parents meets frequently with the Preschool Director and/or Assistant Director and other NCNC staff throughout the preschool year to discuss issues and topics relating to the NCNC Preschool. The meetings also offer information about other programs offered at the Nature Center, such as camps, special events and public programs/events. All NCNC Preschool parents are members of the PPA, and class representatives from each class help make sure all parents are informed about class and preschool news, as well as giving feedback to the Director if more information and follow up is needed.

Class Parents: Class parents serve as a link between the NCNC preschool, its staff and the parents of our school. They are also an integral part of our Preschool Parent Meetings.

Specific duties that the job entails include the following:

- Send an introductory email to all parents in your child's class.
- Organize a parent coffee in the beginning of the school year.
- Attend New Canaan Nature Center Preschool Parent Meetings, encourage parents to attend and communicate information to those unable to attend.
- Assist in recruiting parent volunteers for special events and fundraising activities for Preschool and Nature Center events. This includes: spreading the word and generating excitement and asking the larger parent community for help in making events a success.
- Periodically check in with teachers for classroom updates and classroom needs.
- Act as a contact person for school closings and other emergent announcements.
- Coordinate end of year class gifts.
- Help in communicating with Preschool teachers and Director on parent concerns, questions and/or issues.

Other Volunteer Opportunities: Parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the NCNC Preschool through a variety of volunteer activities both within the preschool classroom as well as the greater Nature Center. Classroom volunteer opportunities include lending a hand with classroom activities, sharing family traditions, stories, recipes, etc, field trip transportation and assistance, and special enrichment projects. Parents are welcome to visit their child's preschool class at any time. Please speak with your child's teachers ahead of time to make sure other parents are not planning to visit at the same time.

Parent and Preschool Communication

We encourage parents to read emails and paper notices from our school. Class journals including detailed descriptions of your child's activities and upcoming events and more are featured in weekly emails. Important information is also posted in each cubby room.

We have established many avenues of open communication between parents and our school. Parent coffees are held to informally discuss topics relating to early childhood development and the NCNCPS. The NCNCPS staff publishes frequently in our newsletter, *The Monthly Dirt*.

Each spring, the NCNCPS Children's Art Show and fundraiser provides a creative and fun format for fundraising involving NCNCPS staff, students, and their families. Proceeds from this event support professional development opportunities for our teachers, care and maintenance of our trails and animals, financial assistance for families in need and facility and materials upgrades. We also host end-of-year slide shows and picnics for NCNCPS families. Parents are also encouraged to participate in the Nature Center's annual events, including our Fall Fair in October and Winter Wonderland in December. Participation in these events is a wonderful way to get to know the Nature Center and its creative and enthusiastic staff and volunteers.

Getting Ready for School

Most children are eager and enthusiastic about preschool. They look forward to being with other children, making friends and enjoying classroom activities. Share in your child's enthusiasm and support his/her school experiences. For those that this is a first time experience, talk to them about the fun to come and mentally prepare them for what it will look and feel like. The more you do this, the easier the transition will be.

During the first few weeks, young children sometimes react against the new routine of going to school. These "second thoughts" can take as many forms as there are children, but the most common is resistance to going to school and separation anxiety. If you do not waiver in your enthusiastic and positive support, your child will soon be over this first hurdle, gaining renewed security in school and increased self-esteem.

It may be necessary to adjust your schedule for school. School is a new and exciting experience, so for the first few weeks your child may appear more tired than usual. To help your child adjust to this change, include a quiet time or nap in his/her daily schedule. Consider moving bedtime up to allow for sufficient hours of sleep, so your child awakens on his/her own, well rested and with ample time to enjoy a good breakfast and get ready for school.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Classes begin at 9:00am. The classroom doors remain closed until these times in order to provide the teachers with time for classroom preparation. Should you arrive prior to 9:00am, please respect this preparation time and wait in the cubby area for class to begin. Do not leave children unattended – we cannot be responsible for the safety of children dropped off before 9:00am.

Please park in the lower parking lot and walk your child to class each day. It is important for children to arrive on time to fully experience the regular routine in their classroom, and to not disrupt class already in session later in the day. Please sign the class attendance book every day at drop off and pickup. A personal connection from a parent or caregiver to our teachers is not only imperative for your child's safety, but also a window for us into your child's day. Connecting with one of the teachers in some brief way – a smile, a wave, a pleasant greeting – all help enable the teachers to ascertain which children are in their care for the day.

It is also extremely important that you say good-bye to your child before you leave. This signals that he/she is now in the care of the classroom teachers and alleviates separation anxiety. If your child is worried at drop-off time that you might leave when he/she isn't watching, then he/she will resist getting involved in classroom activities, choosing instead to hang on tightly to you to be sure you don't "sneak" away. Be honest and upbeat: "Bye, I'll pick you up after you play with your friends and go on a nature walk!" Some children need some additional parent time in the classroom before you go while others will be better served by departing immediately. Work with your teachers to come up with the most effective transition for you and your child.

Please pick up your child promptly at 12:00pm or 1:55pm, and sign the class attendance book. The teachers need the time between the classes to clean-up, prep for the next class and get lunch. Plus, the children are eager to see their parents waiting for them at the end of their day so they can share their experiences, discoveries and accomplishments. It is really hard to wait, even for a few minutes, for that happy hug from a family member.

****Late Pick-up Policy:** The NCNC preschool has a late pick-up fee for any child left longer than 15 minutes after end of class. Late fees will be charged beginning the third instance of a late pick-up. The charge is \$25 for each time your child is picked up more than ten minutes past dismissal and an additional \$25 will be charged for every 15 minutes you are late beyond that. Children remaining on the premises 15 minutes past end of class will be brought to the Preschool Director's office for pick-up.

When an hour has lapsed and a child is not picked up as planned and all emergency contacts have been called, the local police department will be notified.

All children must be signed in at the beginning of the day and signed out at the end of the day. Please provide daily contact information on the sign in/out sheet.

According to Connecticut State Law, if someone other than a parent, guardian or regular baby-sitter will pick up your child from preschool, we must have a written note when your child is brought to school. The person picking up must present a photo I.D. There are also carpooling forms available for play date planning. Again, for your child's safety, we cannot release your child to anyone without your written consent.

NCNC Safety Speed Limit

The posted speed limit is 5 mph. This protects the wildlife, visitors and your children from being injured due to speeding cars. Classes often have to cross the road or walk through the parking lot, so please respect this speed limit. It is easy to come down the hill and pick up speed, but please remember the safety of your child and others are at risk. In addition, our parking lot is a one way travel route. Please respect this rule and do not cut across to get a parking spot.

Required Medical Forms

According to Connecticut State Day Care Regulations, we are required to have two current forms on file at all times for every student or else a religious or medical exemption form. **These forms must be handed in prior to the first day of school as they are mandatory for your child to attend the Preschool.**

1. The Emergency Contact Form – This form provides NCNC Staff with contact names and numbers in case of emergency. Please keep NCNC Staff updated with any changes to this information.
2. The Medical Health Form: this form must show that your child has had a complete physical exam within the past year and indicate that he/she has had all the required immunizations, or a form indicating medical or religious exemptions, as described here:

2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR

For 3-4 year olds: (Children entering after age 3 but before age 5)

DTaP: 4 doses

Polio: 3 doses

MMR: 1 dose on or after the 1st birthday

Hep B: 3 doses, last one on or after 24 weeks of age

Varicella: 1 dose on or after the 1st birthday or verification of disease

Hib: 1 dose on or after the 1st birthday

Pneumococcal: 1 dose on or after the 1st birthday

Influenza: 1 dose administered each year between August 1 - December 31st
(2 doses separated by at least 28 days required for those receiving flu for the first time)

Hepatitis A: 2 doses given six months apart, 1st dose on or after 1st birthday

For 5 year olds:

DTaP: At least 4 doses. The last dose must be given on or after 4th birthday

Polio: At least 3 doses. The last dose must be given on or after 4th birthday

MMR: 2 doses separated by at least 28 days, 1st dose on or after the 1st birthday

Hep B: 3 doses, last dose on or after 24 weeks of age

Varicella: 2 doses separated by at least 3 months-1st dose on or after the 1st birthday; or verification of disease

Hib: 1 dose on or after 1st birthday for children less than 5 years old

3. Pertinent information from this paperwork is collected in a student database detailing relevant expiration dates for paperwork and medications. As paperwork expires, parents receive reminders that the forms must be updated. The actual documents are filed by class in binders that stay with the class at all times, including during outdoor times. It is our goal that teachers always have the students' health and safety information on hand in case of an emergency. All health and safety information is confidential, however assessable to teachers and administrators in the event that parents need to be contacted or in an emergency. Parents also have the right to see their own paperwork, however other students' paperwork is confidential. State Licensing Inspectors have the right to check that all paperwork is current and that the paperwork is approved by the state.
4. Medication Administration Policies: NCNCPS will only administer medications that have been submitted with the proper paperwork and physician signature. Examples of medication that we will administer include emergency medications such as Epi Pens, Benadryl, Inhalers, Insulin, and other lifesaving medicines. All of these must be submitted to us in accordance with the Office of Early Education requirements.

Sick Time Policy and Absences When Should My Child Stay Home from School?

Please do not send your child to school if he/she shows any signs of illness or seems overly tired. A day of caution at the beginning may forestall a more lengthy illness. When your child will be out of school, please call his/her classroom and leave a message, as well as call the Preschool Director. **In cases of common childhood disease (i.e., chicken pox, strep, conjunctivitis, lice, pink eye, impetigo, hand-foot-and-mouth disease, fifth disease, etc.) please call us at once. When there has been such an exposure at school, we promptly notify all parents, with details about symptoms and incubation periods, etc., as appropriate, excluding the identity of the child. Please be on the look-out for early signs and symptoms. The sooner we catch an illness, the easier it is to prevent it from spreading in school.** All sick time policies and procedures apply to staff as well as children.

- If your child has a temperature over 99.6 degrees in the morning, the child should not come to school again until being fever free for 24 hours.
- If your child is vomiting or feels nauseous, the child should not come to school again until symptom-free for 24 hours.
- If your child has a cough that cannot be subdued.
- If your child has had a sore throat for 3 days and it hasn't improved, the child should not come to school again until being symptom free for 24 hours.

- If your child has yellow or green phlegm or nasal discharge, the child should stay home with these symptoms as young children are generally unable to care for themselves or prevent the spread of illness.
- If your child goes to bed with a stomach ache, and wakes up with a stomach ache, the child should stay home until feeling better.
- Remember that NCNC staff are not permitted to administer prescription or over the counter medications without written permission from a doctor.
- NCNC Staff follow these same guidelines when deciding if they are healthy enough to come to work.

Children do not perform well in school when they are not feeling well. The best place for a sick child is at home, especially if they are running a fever, have a contagious disease, or any other illness that requires an excessive amount of individual adult attention. Staying home will likely shorten the length of the illness and hopefully the sharing of germs in school will be interrupted.

If your child becomes sick at school, we will notify you as soon as possible to discuss early pick-up. If a parent cannot be reached, we will call the names listed on your emergency contacts form. If your child comes down with a contagious disease (i.e., chicken pox, conjunctivitis, lice, etc.) it is our policy to notify the other parents in your class that they and their child may have been exposed to the disease. This also applies to staff members.

If no adult can be reached to pick-up the sick child, and the staff believe that the child is contagious, the child will be made to feel comfortable by offering a warm, quiet spot to sit, typically in the Preschool Director's office, until an authorized caregiver arrives for pick-up.

If the family of a sick child disagrees with any of these policies, they may consult with our nurse or physician consultants.

School Closing Information

In the event of inclement weather, the New Canaan Nature Center Preschool always follows the lead of the New Canaan Public Schools.

- If New Canaan Public Schools are closed, the NCNC Preschool is closed.
- If the New Canaan Public Schools have a delayed opening, the NCNC preschool will open at 10:00. (Please note, this may be slightly earlier than the NCPS opening time.) *Dismissal times always remain the same as normal*, unless an early dismissal is also announced. However, with the uncertainty of weather and road conditions, please refer to the most up to date announcement from the NCNC Preschool via email or general NCNC phone message.
- If NCPS closes early, we will initiate an email and telephone tree until all families are contacted. Teachers will remain here until all children are safely dismissed from school. ***Please make arrangements for early dismissals*** in the event you are unable to get here quickly so that our teachers are not made to drive in worsening weather conditions.

Additional ways to learn about the status of schools being opened/closed/delayed:

- New Canaan Public Schools: <http://www2.newcanaan.k12.ct.us>
- Register for e-Notifications at www.ctweather.com for emails/texts from IAN – Internet Access Notification service. Individuals can sign up to have information on school closings and delays sent via email or by text to a cell phone. Go to the www.CTWeather.com website and click on e-

notifications. First, create an account, then log into your account, select the box for NCNC Preschool, and press “submit.”

- The NCNC general website (www.newcanaannature.org) will **not** have up to date preschool weather related information.

Snacks & Packed Lunches

Teaching about and modeling good nutrition in our classrooms is an important element of our curriculum and mission: we are teaching children to take good care of their bodies as well as the environment. Water and a nutritious snack are provided to children every day in class, and these snacks are delivered to school by preschool parents. When a child brings in snack, their job for the day is “snack helper” – a coveted role! Preschool parents are expected to sign up for snacks on the snack calendar in each cubby room. Children in the 5 year old Prekindergarten class and Lunch Bunch programs bring packed lunches from home.

We request parents contribute organic, locally sourced, and sustainably and minimally packaged snacks. We encourage a fresh fruit and/or vegetable with cheese or spread and crackers, pretzels or bread. Snacks should include items from at least two food groups, be as minimally processed as possible, and **low in sugar**. Please do not bring chocolate, nuts or candy. We prefer our children drink water, as it is the most refreshing and healthy drink for their active bodies while here at school. Some snack suggestions are:

- Sliced local, in season fruit or vegetables
- Organic graham crackers, crackers, pretzel sticks, bunnies, etc.
- Organic nacho chips and organic salsa
- Organic bread or bagels & cream cheese or fruit spread
- Organic, sugar free ice pops

PLEASE NOTE: No peanuts, peanut butter, peanut oil or any other nuts should be packed in lunches or served for snacks. NCNC is a nut-aware facility.

Peanut Aware Policy for the New Canaan Nature Center:

Because of the increasing occurrence of peanut allergies among children, the New Canaan Nature Center enforces a no-peanut policy. Peanuts, peanut butter, peanut oil, or even residue from peanut products can cause severe allergic reactions in children with peanut allergies, including anaphylactic shock. Please help us keep our facility peanut-free by not bringing snacks or lunches containing peanut butter or any peanut products into any public building at the New Canaan Nature Center. Public buildings include: the Education Building, the Visitor’s Center, the Education Annex and the Greenhouse. (Many “peanut-free” foods contain peanut products or peanut residue. Please check the manufacturer’s ingredients before bringing these to the Nature Center.)

Our teachers do not offer children younger than 4 years the following foods due to choking hazards: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas; hard pretzels; peanut butter; or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.

Please be mindful of children with food allergies in your child’s class, and make every effort to avoid snacks with known allergens in them. Your teachers will tell parents in your class which foods to avoid. Parents of children with food allergies should provide teachers with a list of safe alternatives, as well as a supply of safe snacks.

Lunches should be packed with equal care and attention to healthy eating habits and including foods from various food groups. Additionally, we request that lunches be packed in reusable containers with as little disposable wrapping as possible. We recommend LunchSkins as one brand of safe, reusable containers: <http://www.lunchskins.com/>.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthday celebrations are important to children, and we love to share them too! If your child wants to share a special snack with the class, please plan ahead with your teachers. Please do not bring chocolate, candy, party favors or candles to school. We encourage healthy birthday snacks, such as fruit muffins or fruit pops. Parents are asked not to use the cubbies to deliver invitations to any parties.

Fire Drills and other Emergency Drills

Practice evacuations of the buildings are held regularly. Children and teachers practice evacuating the building in a quiet, orderly fashion, and meeting in our designated safe location, to help assure our safety in the event of any real emergency.

Field Trips

To supplement the learning our nature based curriculum provides, field trips may be scheduled, and/or special visitors may be invited into our classrooms. Parents will be notified in advance, in writing of all field trips. Children are transported by their parents and/or caregivers in car seats that meet Connecticut Child Restraint standards.

Proper Preschool Clothing

Children should be dressed for active indoor **and** outdoor play in washable and comfortable clothes. For younger children, please have clothing and footwear that are easy for them to take on and off. In choosing clothes for preschool, keep in mind that each day may include messy art or cooking activities inside with mud splashing outside. There is nothing more frustrating for your child than having to worry about getting paint, glue, or mud on special clothes.

One of the most important parts of our program is our daily explorations outside on the Nature Center's trails. These expeditions take place in all kinds of weather. Please consider warmth, comfort and manageability when purchasing new clothing for rain or snow. Snow pants and a warm jacket will be needed for colder months, as well as mittens (not gloves) that should be attached to jackets with clips or connected with yarn pulled through jacket arms. Make sure hats or hoods are brought to school on colder days; much of our body heat escapes through our head and it doesn't take long for a small child to feel the effects. Snow boots should slip on easily and should keep your child's feet warm and dry. Please, no drawstrings near the neck area.

For rainy days, a raincoat with rain hat or hood is essential, as are waterproof puddle boots. The children love to explore the Nature Center in the rain; the woods, fields and marsh trails take on a new and inviting appearance on misty, foggy or rainy days. In the spring, it is common to encounter mud on our trails. Waterproof puddle boots are also just right for wading through streams and into the marsh's edge, as well as for trekking through mud. No umbrellas are permitted on our trail walks for safety.

Sturdy shoes and sneakers with nonskid soles are safest for active outdoor play. Velcro closures are easiest for children to manage themselves. High top shoes are impractical and time-consuming to put on and frequently have long laces which may trip your child.

Also, please do not send your child to school in flip-flops, sandals, crocs, or party shoes. These can be dangerous as we walk along our trails. Buttons, zippers and Velcro closures that children can handle by

themselves give them a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. Please remember that we want all of our children to have the best possible experience both inside and outside of our classrooms.

Please also pack a full change of clothes (underwear, socks, pants, shirt) for all occasions.

Items Brought from Home

Please discourage your child from bringing toys to school. Frequently, toys that are designed for home play are inappropriate and unsafe for classroom play. Super-hero toys and cartoon-inspired toys encourage specific kinds of play and may keep children from the open-ended activities that we offer and encourage. Preschool age children also have a sense of ownership for their toys and are very protective of them. They have difficulty sharing them. There is also the possibility of the toys getting misplaced or broken and this is obviously upsetting for children. Please leave personal treasures at home or in the car. Bringing in a special book to share with the class is welcomed and encouraged.

For children's transition at the start of school it is acceptable to have them bring a special object that brings comfort (e.g., a well loved teddy bear, blanket or something from Mommy).

Substitute Teacher Policy

There are times during the school year when it is necessary for a substitute teacher to be in the classroom and take the place of one of the regular teachers. These substitutes may be current or past Preschool staff, NCNC current environmental educator/teacher naturalists, professional substitute teachers or trained parents.

All substitutes that work in the classroom will follow all Preschool and NCNC policies, which include, but are not limited to:

- Preschool and Nature Center philosophies
- State Regulations & Accreditation
- Working with Children Policy/Confidentiality Policies
- New Canaan Nature Center Employee and Preschool Staff Handbooks
- Code of Ethical Conduct
- Snack policy, including peanut awareness
- Health and Safety Policies and Procedures/Emergency Management Plan

Before substituting in our classrooms, these potential substitutes will have training in the above policies and orientation to our unique program. Each person will receive and review with the Preschool Director and/or Assistant Director written copies of the above policies. In addition, all substitutes will receive a copy of the Preschool Parent Handbook as well as NCNC Working With Children document and be familiar with all the policies included.

NCNC Preschool Parent-Teacher Conferences

We conduct parent-teacher phone conferences early in the year (October). We schedule parent-teacher conferences in December to discuss each child's individual growth and progress in the classroom. Conference

dates are marked on the NCNCPS calendar and times will be made available to you through your child's teachers. A spring parent-teacher phone conference will also be held in March. The 3 year old classes that begin in January will have parent-teacher conferences in March/April. In addition to designated conferences, teachers are available for individual conferences by appointment at any time.

Statement of Confidentiality

Child information and assessment information is sensitive. We only discuss results with those who have a right and need to know. We do not describe children using labels, and recognize that all assessment information and children's files are confidential.

Child Assessments

Assessment is the basic process of finding out what the children in our classrooms, individually and as a group, know and are able to do in relation to their optimum development and to the goals of the program. With that knowledge, we can plan appropriate curriculum and effective instructional strategies to help them develop and learn, monitoring their progress along the way.

A basic definition of assessment is the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information.

Meaningful child assessment always involves looking at information from multiple sources gathered over time before drawing conclusions about a young child's development and learning. Assessment is ongoing. We begin observing children in September and continue throughout the school year, keeping track of their growth and development at various stages of their year with us.

To assess young children's strengths, progress, and needs, at the New Canaan Nature Center Preschool, we use methods that are:

- Developmentally appropriate,
- Culturally and linguistically responsive,
- Tied to children's daily activities,
- Supported by professional development,
- Inclusive of families,
- And connected to specific, beneficial purposes, such as:
 - Making sound decisions about teaching and learning
 - Identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children and
 - Helping us improve our educational and developmental interventions.

Why we assess young children:

- To monitor children's development and learning.
- To guide our planning and decision making.
- To identify children who might benefit from special services.
- To effectively communicate with families, staff and others where appropriate.

There are many different ways that we gather information about children at the New Canaan Nature Center Preschool. There are advantages and challenges to each. Some of these methods of documentation are:

- Narrative records and anecdotal notes
- Samples of children's work (writing, art, drawings, dictation)
- Photographs
- Checklists

- Rating scales
- Frequency counts (areas in the classroom, spending time with special friends)
- Participation charts
- Elicited responses from children

Finally, after we gather all this evidence about the children, our last step is organizing and interpreting it. At this point we compare our findings with our goals and expectations, as well as the families' goals and expectations.

Because parents are such an important part of the assessment process, we include them as much as we can. Prior to parent- teacher conferences, parents receive a copy of the checklist teachers use in assessing students. Parents have the opportunity to see the developmental areas the teachers observe in the classroom and make comments regarding how their child meets these at home. During conferences, parents can share their observations regarding these developmental milestones. Due to both parents and teachers providing input during conferences, we are able to work as a team to discuss the best possible assessment plans and implementations as well as goal setting. During December conferences, all parents receive a Connecticut Preschool Assessment Narrative Summary of their child.

Using student assessments to plan for Preschool program improvement:

We use student assessments in many ways. In addition to using them to help guide curriculum, we also use assessments to help assess our own programming. Based on the assessment results we are able to analyze the areas of our program that may need improvement. The Preschool Director meets with teaching teams to discuss and evaluate all the assessments of the students. In doing this we are able to see if there is an area in which the majority of the students need growth and how the teachers can meet these needs.

All assessment information is confidential and kept in a secure place. Information about your child is only discussed and shared with your child's family, co-teachers, the Preschool Director and/or Assistant Director and our Education Director; if needed. The Director or Assistant Director may be called in to observe and help assess a child if the teachers feel they would like an additional perspective.

Information about a child is never shared without a parent's written permission. If both the teachers and the family agree that outside professional help might be beneficial, then teachers first write their concerns and share them with the family, who must give written permission for any outside referral. All written information about any child (including the kindergarten entry forms), must be signed by the parents before it is released. By law, parents have the right to see their own child's files.

Individualized Education Program (IEP's) or other individualized learning plans. If a child has an IEP or other individualized learning plan that addresses disabilities or other special learning needs, our policy is that the child's parents and teachers meet, prior to the beginning of the school year, to determine how our school can support the child's learning and how to attain the goals set forth in the IEP.

Resource Specialists and Consultants

Throughout the preschool year, the NCNCPS staff frequently confer with other professional early childhood consultants. These include the following:

Nurse and Health Consultant – answers health questions from the staff and parents concerning students. Our Nurse consultant is Maria Magliacano, RN.

Early Childhood Education Consultant – provides professional development, advice and guidance for our developmentally appropriate curriculum and program. Our Education consultant is Kathleen Coppola, M.Ed

Social Service Consultant – provides social service advice and support for our program. Our Social Service consultant is Mary Pomerantz, LCSW.

The New Canaan Early Childhood Opportunity Center – provides a transdisciplinary team of consultants in the area of early childhood development.

Cooperative Educational Services, Early Childhood Network – regional coordinator available to professionally assist our NCNCPS staff through on-site visitation and consultation; the Network is also a source of current research information in the area of early childhood education.

Consultants are not members of our staff, and parents may feel free to speak with our staff as their first resource for advice or help.

Family Resources

In addition to the resource specialists listed above, other community agencies available to the preschool are:

- New Canaan Youth Services: (594-3080) offers free counseling and crisis intervention for young people and families, as well as short-term counseling to parents.
- New Canaan CARES (Community Awareness Responsibility Education) is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the incidence of substance abuse and promoting community wellness by providing preventive education and supportive programming. Contact is Rachel Weiss, PhD, Executive Director, 966-7862.
 - Speech and language consultant, available for screenings is Teresa Morganti, 594-4438.
 - Special Education Department of the New Canaan Public Schools: Darlene Pianka, Director of Special Education, 594-4020. For more information (definitions, rights, referrals, meetings), go to the New Canaan Public Schools web site, Special Education Department.
 - Opportunity Center Preschool: Eileen Donellan (594-4598).
 - Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut (324-6127 or 966-3967): is an independent nonprofit agency that offers a full array of outpatient mental health services to children, adolescents, and their families. The agency's focus is to thoroughly evaluate each child and family so that treatment services can be matched to specific developmental, dynamic, systemic and behavioral needs; The Center also provides consultative services to day care providers, Head Start and Early Head Start, public and private schools, and the local police departments. Community education is offered to community groups, parent groups and other professionals in the area. www.childguidancect.org.

Family support services and specialized consultants who are able to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services:

The New Canaan Nature Center Preschool staff can guide families to services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate through the 211 Info Line.

2-1-1 is an integrated system of help via the telephone – a single source for information about community services, referrals to human services, and crisis intervention. It is accessed toll-free from anywhere in Connecticut by simply dialing 2-1-1. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Multilingual call specialists and TDD access is available.

Professional call specialists help callers with such complex issues as substance abuse, gambling, domestic violence programs, suicide prevention, financial problems, and much more. Other callers may simply be looking for volunteer opportunities. By dialing 2-1-1, a caller is connected with a 2-1-1 call specialist who helps the caller assess their situation and find the community services in their area that can assist them.

Statutes and Regulations

Statutes and Regulations for licensing Child Care Centers are determined by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health, Community Based Regulation Section of the Child Day Care Licensing Program. There is a copy of these regulations in the parent library in each of our three cubby rooms for you to borrow. These regulations can also be found on the Department of Public Health, Child Day Care Licensing Homepage at http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day_Care/day_care.htm

NCNC Complaint Procedure:

If a parent in the New Canaan Nature Center Preschool has a concern, a conference should be set up with the parent(s) and the teacher(s) involved. If the parent/teacher conference does not solve the problem, another conference will be set up with the parent(s), the teachers, and the Preschool Director and/or the Director of Education. If the problem still persists, the Executive Director can be called in to meet with the parents, teachers, Preschool Director and Director of Education. A meeting with members of the Board of Trustees of the New Canaan Nature Center and the parties involved would be the final recourse.

Health & Safety Policy and Procedure at NCNC

- In addition to nurturing your child's growth and development, the health and safety of your child is our highest priority. Our standard safety practices include but are not limited to:
- Two teachers with children at all times
- We are a "nut aware" campus, and ask that all families avoid bringing food with tree nuts as ingredients onto campus
- All our teachers hold current training in first aid, CPR and EpiPen response
- Our Director of Education is a trained emergency First Responder and has extensive experience with young children and injuries in the field
- We are in constant radio contact with teachers, even when they are out exploring our campus with the children
- We regularly practice and improve our emergency response procedures
- For identification purposes, all NCNC staff wear nametags
- We have a registered nurse on call and available to us at all times for further consultation and guidance
- Building security: After drop-off, staff will lock the outside classroom doors each day. Visitors or workmen are asked to register at the front desk and get authorization before entering any of the preschool classes. All other volunteers are asked to sign in and out in the classroom visitor/substitute/volunteer notebook.
- In addition to the two-adult rule in the Working With Children Document, when assigned to specific areas, teachers are expected to constantly be aware of equipment where injury could occur. In the classroom this includes all play structures and tables. In the outdoor play area it includes natural objects such as tree stumps and on the natural structures in the Children's Play Garden. One teacher is always assigned to be a spotter on equipment that could cause injury.
- **Air pollution:** Our school policy is that we take the children outdoors, everyday, in all kinds of weather, including snow and rain. However, if the weather conditions are dangerous for the safety of

children or adults (lightning, heavy winds, torrential rain, smog or other high doses of air pollution), classes will remain indoors.

NCNC Working With Children Staff Policy Contents (selected portions)

Acting on behalf of children's best interests, the New Canaan Nature Center (NCNC) strives to keep children attending our programs safe and healthy in every way. The NCNC does not tolerate child abuse and/or neglect in any form. All children have equal rights to protection. The NCNC defines a child as a person below the age of eighteen. This policy pertains to all NCNC teachers, educators, staff members, Board members, volunteers and interns associated with the organization.

Our goal at the New Canaan Nature Center is to provide the highest quality educational experience to children, utilizing experienced and qualified staff to ensure a safe, secure and nurturing environment. The safety of the children and the staff are paramount and protected through this policy document.

A copy of the New Canaan Nature Center Working with Children Staff Policy is provided to all staff (teaching and administrative). In addition to compliance with this policy, all Preschool staff agree to abide by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment in all decisions and interactions with preschool students and their families. This document is available to all at: <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05.pdf>. Copies of the NCNC Working with Children Staff Policy and the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct are posted in the entry area to every classroom, and are available on our preschool website as well.

Recruiting and Screening

Established measures ensure that all NCNC teachers, educators, staff members, Board members, volunteers and interns have been properly screened. Every volunteer in the preschool classrooms must be over 18 years of age or older, unless working under the direct supervision of an adult who has met the qualifications of this policy. Other volunteers at NCNC, in positions not directly affiliated with the preschool, must be over 16 years of age, unless working under the direct supervision of an adult who has met the qualifications of this policy.

The NCNC reserves the right to perform background checks on current and prospective employees, Board members, volunteers and interns including a Department of Motor Vehicles check (for anyone who will be transporting children using NCNC- owned or NCNC-leased vehicles), a Criminal Records Bureau check including fingerprinting, a sex offenders list check, and a credit check. The NCNC will not voluntarily or intentionally employ anyone with a conviction for child abuse, pedophilia, or a related offense.

All personal information voluntarily disclosed or revealed through a background check, or the refusal of any person to authorize screening as a condition of employment, will be considered confidential. The results of the background checks will be reviewed by the Finance Director and the Executive Director, who share responsibility for Human Resource functions. If the result of the background check is questionable, the information will be reviewed with the applicant by one of these two staff members.

If an applicant disputes information that appears on his/her background checks, he or she may appeal through the Connecticut Department of Public Health. The Executive Director is to be notified of all concerns or cases relating to child protection. All issues should be brought to this individual's attention, however minor the concerns.

Staff Code of Conduct

Inappropriate behavior towards children, including failure to follow NCNC's behavior protocols, policy and standards is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship, or Board membership.

This policy will continue to apply to a person even after they have stopped their association with the NCNC if disciplinary action, related to an allegation of child abuse against that person, has commenced. This policy applies to any person being investigated on charges of child abuse or any matter that could make the person a prohibited person.

Two-adult rule

At least two adults should be present at every function, and in each classroom, vehicle or other enclosed area, during children's programs or events. A single adult may supervise small groups of children if the group is in an openly visible space with other adults present in the larger space. If at any time a staff member finds themselves in a position of being alone with a small group of children and no other adult is present, they need to call, by radio or phone, for additional adult supervision. NCNC teachers, educators, staff members, Board members, volunteers and interns should not take a child or children into an enclosed place out of view of other adults. One-to-one discussions between adults and children in an enclosed area are not permitted. Care must be taken to ensure that doors opening to occupied public spaces remain open.

Privacy

Adults must respect the privacy of children in situations including bathroom use and changing of clothes. Adults should only intrude to the extent that health and safety require. Adults should protect their own privacy in similar situations. For children under age eleven, an adult must accompany children to the restroom area as needed. The adult will ensure that the facility and hallway are safe, and is responsible for children returning from the restroom. An adult may assist any child under age six in the restroom. No caregiver may touch a child's private areas unless necessary to change a diaper or take another therapeutic measure. At all times that this help is needed, a second adult must be present.

Injury or illness

All persons supervising children are expected to take reasonable steps to prevent any person from coming into contact with any body fluids.

If a child receives a minor injury, an adult will provide first aid as needed at the time of injury, to the extent that they have been trained to administer first aid. The adult will notify the injured child's parent or guardian. A well-equipped and fully stocked first aid kit, with incident report forms, must be available at all times. An incident report form must be completed after any and each minor or major injury.

If a child receives an injury that requires medical treatment beyond simple first aid, an adult should provide immediate attention to the injured child, and contact one of the NCNC medical administrators. As soon as possible during or after treatment and/or evaluation by one of the NCNC medical administrators, notify the child's parent or guardian will be notified. 911 will be called only if the NCNC medical administrator deems this necessary or cannot be reached.

No medications will be administered without parental consent, a doctor's note *and* appropriate staff training. This includes acetaminophen and cough drops. Medications such as inhalers for asthma, or shots or oral medications for bee stings, that are required for an individual, should be safely stored with adult staff members, and procedures reviewed with the parent or guardian of the child before a child begins a program. Such situations must be noted on the child's medical release form. Staff training in administration of these medications is required.

Alcohol and smoking

Teachers, educators, staff members, Board members, volunteers and interns are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs prior to or while participating in NCNC programs or activities with children. Adults are prohibited from smoking in any NCNC building, and may not smoke in front of children or in any area that children can come upon and see any smoking activity. All smoking trash must be disposed of safely and out of view of all NCNC students and visitors.

Other circumstances

It is understood that circumstances may arise that necessitate the need for deviating from this code of conduct. For such infrequent and unusual situations that are not easily classified elsewhere in this document, the standards and spirit of the policy statement and code of conduct shall be recognized as being in force. Involvement with the parent(s)/caregivers will be sought for additional support and guidance.

Student Behavior Management Philosophy and Policies

Teachers and educators at the New Canaan Nature Center know that children learn best through concrete experiences. Therefore, they guide, nurture and direct the children to help them learn to cooperate with their peers and have positive, educational experiences. Most behavioral issues with a child can be minimized and perhaps even avoided altogether through proactive, flexible and responsive classroom management techniques and actions. We best support children by using positive facilitation techniques that include:

1. Using positive language with the children to give praise and encouragement for appropriate behavior. ("I like the way Susie is helping clean up the blocks.") Positive guidance techniques are used with every child every day.
2. Adhering to adult/student ratios below the state recommendations to achieve more teacher/student contact and support.
3. Using group management techniques, such as limiting the number of children in each area of the room. This avoids overcrowding and offers an opportunity for meaningful interactions with both children and the materials.
4. Having a variety of activities available for the children.
5. Being attentive. Sometimes a smile and a kind word can let a child know of the teacher's presence and help get the child back on the task at hand.

6. Setting clear, behaviorally appropriate limits with children. Teachers speak with the child about his/her behavior when it is inappropriate for the specific area of the room or the materials they are using. (“The blocks need to be taken down carefully.” Or “Please walk.”)
7. Using redirection techniques. After using other techniques, if a child is still having a problem cooperating in a certain area, he/she is asked to go to another area for a while. (“John, this is not the way to play in the block area; I need you to work on the puzzles for a while.”) As children mature and develop, they understand that when redirected to another area, it means their behavior was not appropriate.
 - a. If group behavior is a problem, the area that has become a problem can be closed. The group is broken up and redirected to other activities in the room.
 - b. If cleaning up is a problem for the group, the class can discuss it at a group meeting and learn to understand logical consequences. (“If it takes us a long time to clean up our activities, we might not have time for a longer trail walk today.”) This helps the children realize and internalize responsibility and what results can happen.
8. Using meeting/circle times to discuss specific classroom situations and challenges, and encouraging the children to come up with solutions and behavior rules on their own.
9. Using appropriate books, stories and role-plays to foster discussion and practice of appropriate behavior.
10. Children are encouraged to work out disagreements themselves without the intervention of adults whenever possible. Most often, discipline problems are easily handled by redirecting children to another area or activity.
11. Being consistent with classroom rules and routines so that the children know what is expected of them. This helps the children and leads to their success.

Behavior management with a child should be constructive. Corporal punishment and verbal reprimands are not acceptable. The following procedures are the primary behavior management measures used by NCNC staff members, Board members, volunteers or interns when working with children:

1. If a child is exhibiting a negative or unsafe behavior, an adult will tell the child to stop, using a firm but kind voice.
2. If the child continues the behavior, he or she will be verbally reminded once or twice more to stop the behavior. An adult may need to draw the child aside and clarify the behavior problem and the behavioral expectation.
3. Children should be allowed an opportunity to re-attempt the conversation or interaction in a positive and appropriate way before more steps are taken (i.e., the “rewind” principle.)
4. If the child continues the behavior after several verbal warnings, the child will be removed from the group and re-directed to a new activity, always within sight of the adult. The child is never made to sit or stand in a corner. When appropriate, the child should be invited to re-join the group.
5. Physical intervention – gentle restraint – will only be used when deemed necessary for the safety of the child or other children (such as in the case of hitting or biting), and then only as a temporary measure until the child has calmed down. A second adult must always be present when any restraint is being used or considered.
6. Adults who cannot resolve an incident involving a child’s inappropriate or unwanted behavior should consult with another teacher, teacher teams or their Director and take this as a learning opportunity to further their development as educators.
7. Children are not sent home unless a child’s behavior is dangerous or harmful to him/herself or others, and teachers are unable to manage behavior within the confines of the class group and school day. In

this rare situation, the parent(s) will be consulted on the situation and avenues for better supporting the child will be explored.

8. If, after reasonable effort on the part of the teachers, parents and resources available, a child's needs are still not able to be adequately met and/or behaviors are beyond our means of managing, withdrawing the child from the program may be necessary and/or required.

The following discipline methods are never used:

- Adults do not at any time use any form of abusive, negative, corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment;
- Adults do not use verbal threats or an abusive tone of voice;
- Adults do not threaten to withhold activities or snacks;
- Adults do not physically restrain any child, unless they deem it necessary to protect the health and safety of the child or other people.

Overview of Child Abuse and Neglect

All children have the right to be free from abuse and neglect. Child abuse is defined as: a child who has had non-accidental physical injury (i.e.) inflicted upon him or her, or has injuries which are at variance with the history given of them, or is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment such as, though not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment. (Connecticut General Statutes 46b-120)

Child abuse includes acts or omissions that cause or permit:

- Mental or emotional injury to a child;
- Physical injury or threat of physical injury to a child;
- Failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent action by another person that results in mental, emotional or physical injury to a child;
- Sexual contact with a child; and
- Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual contact with, or in the presence of, a child.

Child neglect is defined as: a child who has been abandoned, is being denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally, or morally, or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being. (CGS 46b-120)

Child neglect includes:

- Leaving a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of harm;
- Requiring a child to use judgment or take actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities;
- Failure to obtain medical care for a child; and
- Failure to provide a child with food, clothing or shelter necessary to sustain the life, health or well-being of the child.

To this end, all NCNC teachers, educators, staff members, Board members, volunteers and interns must:

- Familiarize themselves with situations that may present risks to children and learn how to prevent or minimize the risk of such harm;
- Act at all times in accordance with the NCNC Working with Children Staff Policy to safeguard both the children and themselves;

- Contribute to an environment where children are able to recognize or identify unacceptable and/or inappropriate behaviors toward them, and where children are confident that their concerns will be heard; and
- Immediately raise concerns of any suspected child abuse cases in accordance with applicable Connecticut state laws and procedures.
- Participate in frequent trainings and review of identifying signs of abuse and neglect as well as procedures involved for being a mandatory reporter.

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

The 24-hour child abuse and neglect hotline number is 1-800-842-2288.

The DCF Norwalk office number is 899-1400.

| | CHILD | INDICATORS | CARETAKER INDICATORS |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| | Physical Signs | Child's Behavior | |
| Physical Abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Unexplained bruises, welts or abrasions (--in various stages of healing; in shape of object (cord, roped, belt buckle); human bite marks) *Unexplained burns (--cigarette (on soles, palms, back, buttocks)—immersion (sock or glove-like) *Unexplained broken bones (--skull, nose, facial structure.—in various stages of healing) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Reports injury by a parent (or threatened injury) *Shrinks from adults' touch *Frightened of parents *Afraid to go home *Withdrawn or aggressive *Complains of soreness, moves uncomfortably *Wears clothing inappropriate to weather *Reluctant to change clothes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Offers vague, illogical, contradictory or no explanation of child's injury *Attempts to conceal child's injury *Delays or does not seek, medical treatment for injury when warranted *Uses harsh discipline inappropriate to child's age and transgression *Has unrealistic expectations of child *Significantly misperceives child (e.g. sees child as bad, stupid, different) *Misuses alcohol or drugs |
| Sexual Abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Torn, stained or bloody underwear *Difficulty walking or sitting *Pain or itching in genital area *Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia *Frequent urinary or genital infections *Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Reports sexual assault by caretaker *Reluctant to change clothes *Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior *Bizarre sexual behavior or detailed sexual knowledge, especially in young children *Poor peer relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Extremely protective or jealous of child *Sexually abused as a child *Misuses alcohol or drugs *Non-abusing caretaker/spouse is frequently absent from home |
| Emotional Abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Speech disorders *Lags in physical development *Failure to thrive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Sucking, biting, rocking in older child *Antisocial, destructive (and self-destructive) *Sleep disorders, inhibition of play *Compliant/passive or aggressive/demanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Excessively blames or belittles child *Repeatedly ignores or rejects child *Treats siblings unequally *Seems unconcerned about child's problems |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Inappropriately adult or infantile *Developmental lags (emotional, intellectual) *Attempts suicide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Unreasonable demands or impossible expectations without regard to child's developmental capability |
| Neglect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Constant hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress *Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods *Lack of needed medical or dental care *Abandonment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Arrives early at school, stays late; often absent; often falls asleep in class *Begs, steals food *Constant fatigue, listlessness *Says there is no caretaker *Shunned by peers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Misuses alcohol or drugs *Maintains chaotic home *Consistently fails to keep appointments *Demonstrates apathy or hopelessness *Has mental health problems. |

Policy for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

All NCNC staff are mandated by Connecticut State Law to report any suspicion or observation that a child is being abused, neglected or is at risk.

All NCNC staff are mandatory reporters and if a report or suspicion of child abuse/neglect comes to any staff member's attention, they must ensure that a report is made to the Department of Children and Families (DCF), before or after consultation with the Preschool Director, Director of Education or Executive Director,. The filing of a child abuse report must be done orally within 12 hours of the incident or first knowledge of an incident, and followed by a written report within 24 hours of the oral report. This form can be faxed or mailed to DCF. Copies of all documents should be kept for confidential NCNC records as well.

Once the appropriate NCNC staff and/or supervisors (Executive Director, Preschool Director and/or the Director of Education) have deemed that a report will be made, the process of reporting a case of suspected or observed child abuse/neglect follows standard protocol for the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our procedure is available upon request.

Failure by any teacher, educator, staff member, Board member, volunteer or intern to make a timely report to a supervisor about a suspected incidence of child abuse shall be considered a procedural violation of the NCNC Working with Children Staff Policy and shall be grounds for disciplinary actions up to dismissal.

Privacy Protection

At all times, the administration will take precautions to ensure that the privacy of the child and family are protected, as well as the privacy of the accused. An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. It is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or alleged perpetrator should be purely on a need-to-know basis and is not for public knowledge. This information should not be shared with staff, other than the Executive Director, Director of Education, and the Director reporting the abuse (if this is not the Executive Director.) Until abuse has been proven to have occurred by a state investigation, one must always refer to 'alleged abuse.'

Procedures in the Event of Accusations of Abuse/Neglect by Staff Members

Any teacher, educator, staff member, Board member, volunteer or intern accused of child abuse will immediately be notified, will be asked to provide all pertinent information, and suspended from participation with NCNC children's programs until an internal investigation takes place. After the internal investigation is

completed, the administrative team (including the Preschool Director, Director of Education and Executive Director) will determine the appropriate organizational course of action.

Status during Investigation

During both an NCNC internal investigation (conducted by Preschool Director and/or Director of Education and/or Executive Director) and a DCF led investigation, the following possible actions may be taken for staff accused of abuse/neglect are:

1. Suspend the individual without pay during the course of investigation;
2. Provide a leave of absence, with or without pay, during the investigation;
3. Remove teacher/educator from any child interactions but maintain employment on grounds;
4. Place individual under close supervision in a teaching setting during the investigation.

The NCNC Director(s) shall follow the guidelines of the Department of Children and Families during the investigation of any charges of abuse. The accused staff member shall be entitled to notice of the investigation and shall have the right to respond to all charges.

Conclusion

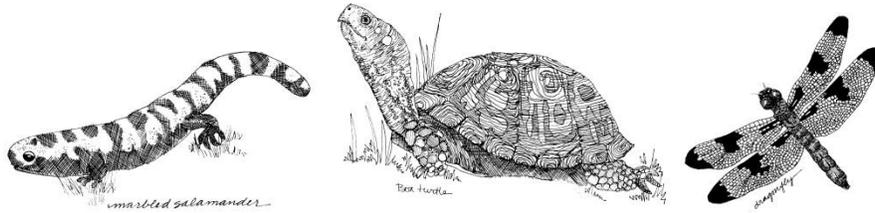
Upon conclusion of the investigation by the state agencies, the NCNC supervising Director (in consultation with the administrative team) shall take whatever personnel action deemed appropriate, including discharge. If the result of the investigation shows that the charges are without merit/unsubstantiated, the fact will be noted in the individual's personnel file.

When an accusation of abuse or neglect by a staff member is made, the program's director must immediately inform parents or guardians of the child in question that a report has been made to DCF. Health care officials may need to talk to a child's parents or guardians to assess the cause of the child's injuries and offer support and guidance.

Abuse and neglect prevention training

The staff of the New Canaan Nature Center (including all preschool teachers, educators, administrative and support staff) will review and revise the policy on suspected child abuse and neglect annually. Current and new staff will receive annual training on the educator's role in prevention, detection, intervention and reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect.

The Hot Line phone number (**1-800-842-2288**) for child abuse is posted near the teachers' and director's phones. Directors have the names and phone numbers of local resources and referral consultants available for all staff or parents.



Look what else NCNC has to offer!

Mommy, Me & Nature Classes!

Mommy, Me and Nature is our ever popular program where toddlers (ages 18 -36 months) and a parent or caregiver experience together a nature-focused program. Highly experienced teachers combine seasonal themes, daily trail walks and visits with live animals in a curriculum that nurtures each child's social, emotional, creative, physical, and cognitive development and prepares them for preschool.

Contact our Registrar for more information at ext. 20.

Summer Camp

Children ages 3 through 16 sense nature through their eyes, ears, noses and toes as they peek under every log and poke into our ponds. Two trained naturalists lead each group of campers. The Adventurers and Eco-Rangers summer programs transport pre-teens and teens from 200 feet below the earth's surface to the marshes of Maine via canoe or rafts. Contact our Registrar for more information at ext. 20.

Family, Youth, and Group Programs

From birds and butterflies to snakes and turtles, whatever your special interest there's someone here who can help you discover more. Enjoy our free Saturday afternoon naturalist programs, learn to identify birds by sight and sound, or hike nearby trails in search of unusual species.

Contact our Registrar at Ext. 20 for more information.

Programs for Schools, Scouts & Groups

We offer school programs to enrich the science curriculum, from Apple Cider Making and Maple Syruping to Pond Study. In our EPA award-winning LINKS program, students from neighboring districts learn to work together as they delve deeper into the world of nature. Contact our Registrar at Ext. 20 for more information.

Birthday Parties

Exciting and fun parties for all ages that feature your choice of naturalist-led, age-tailored programs such as "Meet the Animals", "Night Hike Adventure" and more are available. Have the party here, or we will bring the party to you! Contact our Registrar for more information

Horticulture Programs

Learn right alongside the experts. Treat yourself to a multi-session course to trips to distinguished gardens led by Horticultural specialists, faculty from the New York Botanical Garden or a Connecticut Master Gardener.

Contact our Registrar for more information

Volunteer!

The Nature Center runs on the energy of volunteers, who have plenty of fun while contributing to the success of each program. From Horticulture to Animal Care to special events, volunteer activities are also opportunities for hands-on learning and camaraderie.

Contact our Volunteer Coordinator at ext 64.

Special Events

The June Secret Gardens Tour, the mid-October Fall Fair, and Winter Wonderland are eagerly anticipated community traditions. Contact our Registrar for more information

NCNC PRESCHOOL STAFF QUOTES

Confucius says... "Do what you love and you'll never work in your life." This is what the Preschool is for me.

Marianne Kay

Cindy Bess captures how I feel about what we do here. "We all have skills that are special to us and are just waiting to be developed and shared. We just need to discover 'the seed', 'nurture the plants' and 'watch it blossom.'"

Christine Dinella

"Positive experiences in natural environments help kids develop environmental values and become stewards of the earth." **Meredith Ahlberg**

"Nobody can discover the world for somebody else. Only when we discover it for ourselves does it become common ground and a common bond and we cease to be alone" - Wendell Berry, *A Place on Earth* **Anna Zielinski**

"The world is mud-luscious and puddle-wonderful." – E.E. Cummings **Emily Kerchoff**

"Look deep in nature and then you will understand everything better." – Albert Einstein **Lisa Socci**

"Children learn best through their everyday experiences with the people they love and trust, and when learning is fun. And the best place for these experiences is outdoors, in the natural world." From *Center for Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning*. **Judy Gilroy**

"Play is how we are made, how we develop and adjust to change. It can foster innovation...But in the end the most significant aspect of play is that it allows us to express our joy and connect most deeply with the best in ourselves and in others." - Stuart Brown's book *Play* **Whitney McCarthy**

"Children have a natural affinity towards nature. Dirt, water, plants, and small animals attract and hold children's attention for hours, days, and even a lifetime."-Robin C. More and Herbert H. Wong **Mary Hayes**

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught." - Baba Diouan **Patrizia Dallemule**

"Every child is a different kind of flower, and all together, they make a beautiful garden." **Claire Jones**

"Each new year is a surprise to us. We find that we had virtually forgotten the note of each bird, and when we hear it again, it is remembered like a dream, reminding us of a previous state of existence...The voice of nature is always encouraging." – Henry David Thoreau **Lindsay Tucker**

"Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events in their lives." - Thomas Berry **Paula Yonkers**

"And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in magic will never find it." Roald Dahl **Aimee Mueller**

"The happiness of the bee and the dolphin is to exist. For man it is to know that and to wonder at it." Jacques Cousteau **Audrey Kallassy**