

**Charlestown Early Learning Center**

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**Charlestown Early Learning Center has been rated a 5 \*\*\*\*\* Program by the Rhode Island Quality Improvement Initiative, BrightStars**

Board of Directors

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Program Director: Margaret Kelley

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**Mission Statement**

Charlestown Early Learning Center, Incorporated, was established in 1981, as a Non-Profit Organization, to provide a high quality, affordable educational program for 3,4, and 5, year old children, in the South County community. Charlestown Early Learning Center, (CELC) is licensed by Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families, and meets, or exceeds standards for Early Childhood, as set forth by RIDE, and The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. CELC has an "Open Door" policy. Parent involvement is welcome and encouraged and is integral to our mission. At Charlestown Early Learning Center we strive to maintain the highest quality educational standards and continue to be involved in local and state initiatives whose focus is quality services for all children.

CELC welcomes families of all religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and includes children of all abilities and disabilities in all programs offered by the school.

Founding Families of Charlestown Early Learning Center:

Ken and Bernice Simmons  
Charles and Kathleen Olivier  
John and Margaret Kelley

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At Charlestown Early Learning Center, we look forward to growing and learning with your family and your child. Each child is unique and treasured, as is each family. It is our goal to offer the highest quality, family centered program to our community of learners.

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## PHILOSOPHY

Charlestown Early Learning Center was founded on the belief that young children learn by "doing". Research has shown that children learn through peer interactions, adult interactions, and interactions with objects and materials. We believe that **PLAY** is the vehicle for these interactions, and provides the highest quality learning experiences.

Children are active observers and learners. Through becoming involved with their environment, they learn to make sense of the world. By spontaneously engaging in activities appropriate to their age and development, children add information to what they already know, develop new understandings, and construct new knowledge.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children has had significant influence on the philosophy of CELC. We agree with the position statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice, which emphasizes age appropriate curriculum, based upon research into child growth and development, and individual appropriateness of what is taught, (all children develop at their own rate), as well as cultural and social influences.

At CELC, the staff will provide developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that reflect the nine domains of the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards. We will give each child the opportunity to interact with caring, qualified teachers who will support their unique learning style and individuality. We will respect each child for their abilities and/or disabilities, and make adaptations to the curriculum to insure that each receives the most positive educational experience. We believe in educating the "whole child"; as a social, emotional, cognitive, and physical learner.

We believe in a partnership between school and home, and encourage family participation at every level of our program. We consider all families to be members of the Parent Advisory Group and look to the parents for input into programs that will affect positive outcomes for our children.

We expect the highest standards of our teaching staff, and respect each individual for the strengths that they bring to our program, and to the

families that we serve. We encourage professional development and support staff improvement.

At Charlestown Early Learning Center, we believe in supporting a feeling of self worth for our staff and for the children and families that we serve. Our goal is to foster this development in our daily interactions with each child and adult, individually, and as a member of our school family. If an individual is happy with him or herself, he or she is able to meet each new life challenge with self confidence and a desire to learn. We encourage the quest for knowledge in every child and adult in our program.

### **STATEMENT ON GUIDANCE:**

Our goal at CELC is to help children to become self-disciplined, to be independent; and to begin to learn to make appropriate choices. This is a long, process, practiced daily. Children need guidance in using materials, and interacting with others. They need time to try new things, and to experience and understand consequences to their behavior. They need opportunities to try, and to fail, to try again, and to ultimately meet with success.

Children will be under the supervision of the classroom teacher and/or teaching assistants at all times; (during activity times, outdoor play, when using the bathroom, and during snack time).

At Charlestown Early Learning Center, we strive to facilitate the development of self-control in children, by using positive guidance techniques such as; modeling appropriate behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity, and by setting clear limits. We do not believe in the use of punitive measures in dealing with the behaviors of young children. Food and outdoor play will not be used as a reward or a consequence of behavior; (unless specifically stated in a child's IEP). We rely on working cooperatively with families to help the children develop this self-control. **Our expectations of children respect their age and developing abilities.** We provide children with many opportunities to develop skills of cooperation, negotiation, and problem solving.

### **When Dealing with challenging behavior the staff will:**

\* Respond to the behavior in a way that provides for the safety of the child and all children/adults in the classroom.

- \* Remain calm and respectful to the child
- \* Focus on pro-social behavior and strategies that encourage positive outcomes, including peer modeling and support, changing of activity, as opposed to simply trying to eliminate the challenging behavior.
- \* Children will learn logical consequences to behavior, (i.e. if a child continues the inappropriate behavior after an initial reminder, he/she will have to choose another activity)
- \* If two or more children are having a conflict, they will be encouraged to negotiate and to talk about the conflict, and with teacher guidance, find a peaceful solution to the problem.

## **CURRICULUM**

The Curriculum of Charlestown Early Learning Center is founded on the beliefs of Developmentally Appropriate Practices and The Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards, (RIELDS). We believe that children are active learners, and play is the mechanism to support growth and development in all learning domains.

At CELC our classroom is divided into centers, which are carefully planned, to provide opportunity for the children to play and learn in a variety of areas. (Block building, Dramatic Play, Music and Movement, Manipulative games, Science/Math, Water and Texture Play, Creative Arts, Reading and Listening Center, Outdoor Play). Teachers set up each Learning area to encourage independent growth and discovery. Teaching is done with intention, and knowledge of child growth and development, and focuses on all developmental areas; social/emotional, cognitive, and physical. Focus is on the "whole child". With this purpose in mind, we have established the following goals for each child in our program.

### **Socio-emotional Development:**

- To experience a sense of positive self esteem
- To develop a positive attitude toward life
- To develop and demonstrate cooperative, pro-social behavior

### **Cognitive Development:**

- To develop learning and problem solving skills
- To develop logical thinking skills
- To demonstrate and learn skills through make-believe play
- To expand expressive and receptive communication

- To encourage and develop emergent literacy skills

**Physical Development**

- To develop and enhance gross motor skills
- To develop and enhance fine motor skills
- To develop use of all senses in learning

The curriculum and goals at CELC are in alignment with the **Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards**, adopted by RIDE. There are nine Learning Domains found in a typical preschool program. These are: Physical and Motor Development, Social/Emotional Development, Language Development and Communication, Literacy, Cognitive Development, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Creative Arts. Each Learning Domain has Standards, which are guided by the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice, and are derived from current research in child development. (A copy of the Standards is posted at school).

CELC was a participant in 2003 when the original, RIELS, (Rhode Island Early Learning Standards) were written and adopted. During the Process, we also participated in re-writing the Chariho Preschool Curriculum, which is aligned with our Standards as well as the new State Standards.

**School Policies**

**1. Enrollment:**

Hours of Operation: Monday through Thursday 8:30-3:00  
Friday, 8:30-Noon.

We understand that families need many diverse options when registering their children for preschool. Financial limitations, work options, and wanting or needing few (or more), hours of preschool, all need to be considered. The following options can all be considered when choosing a schedule for your child:

- 2 mornings: T/Fri                      8:30-12
- 3 mornings: M/W/TH                8:30-12

4 mornings: M-Th

8:30-12:00

5 mornings:

8:30-12:00

We also offer extended hours Monday-Thursday from 12-3pm

CELC enrolls children between the ages of 3-5. We are open to all families regardless of race, creed ethnicity, or cultural background.

A child must be 3 years of age by September 1, of the year of enrollment, or is able to enroll thereafter on the day of his or her third birthday. We accept DHS payments from families who qualify.

## 2. **Enrollment Forms and Procedures:**

The following forms are required of all registered children before entrance into the Preschool Program at Charlestown Early Learning Center:

1. Enrollment Application
2. DCYF Approved Health Form (A pre-admission physical examination is required before entrance to preschool. **The completed medical Health Form must be signed by a physician, and is required by state law.** It must include a record of all immunizations. (Please note: If a family has medical or religious issues regarding immunization practices, a letter, signed by the child's physician and parent must be kept on file at the school, a copy of which, will be sent to the Department of Health.)
3. **Emergency Contacts:** phone numbers in the event parents cannot be reached.
4. **Consent to Release Form**
5. **Emergency Medical Treatment Form**

Additional forms will be required for children with allergies, and/or other medical needs.

**Medical Emergency:** In the event of a medical emergency, staff will call 911, after which every effort will be made to contact the parent. In the event that a parent cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contact person named on the Child's Application.

**Sick Children:** If a child becomes ill while at school, he or she will be separated from the group, (a staff person will remain with the child), the

family will be contacted and requested to come for their child as soon as possible. We ask families to call CELC and leave a message when a child will be absent due to an illness.

While regular attendance is important to your child's development, parents are asked to keep children home if there is

- a. A temperature above normal, (98.6)
- b. An unusual or unexplained rash
- c. Discharge from eyes or ears
- d. Fresh cold symptoms, excessive coughing, runny nose, vomiting or upset stomach.
- e. Symptoms or presence of head lice
- f. Any untreated infection

### **3. Child Release Policy:**

A **Parent Authorization Form** will be required, and will be updated annually. It will be kept on file at the school. The form will authorize those individuals who have permission to pick up a child from school. **Only those individuals who have been named on the list will be allowed to sign out a child from our program.** Individuals unfamiliar to the staff, who will be picking up children, will be required to show picture identification before being allowed to sign a child out for dismissal.

**In an emergency, when a parent calls in authorization, a question will be asked of the caller, (i.e., the child's birthday), in order to verify the caller's identity.** A picture i.d. will also be required at pick up. When there are custody and/or restraining orders in place, a copy of the orders will be kept in the child's file and in the sign out book. If these orders are in violation, the Teacher/Director will not release the child, and will contact the local police department.

**Children will not be released to anyone suspected of, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.**

### **4. Child Abuse and Neglect Policy:**

Rhode Island State Law mandates that we report all suspected cases of child abuse, and/or neglect to: **RI DCYF (1-800-RI CHILD)**. The staff member witnessing the suspected abuse/neglect shall make the call. Any suspicion of child neglect will be reported to the Head Teacher, and then to the Director who will then notify the Board of Directors.

## **5. School Opening/Closing Policy:**

In August, each family will receive a school calendar and notification of the first day of school. An Open House is held prior to the first day of school, at which time children can visit the school and meet their teacher. In addition there is a Parent Orientation Meeting prior to the first day.

When school is closed in the Chariho system due to weather conditions, there will be no preschool. If only preschool programs are cancelled in the public school due to weather conditions, CELC will be as well. If there is a one hour delay, CELC will also have a one hour delay (morning classes only). Make-up days cannot be guaranteed.

## **6. TUITION AND FEES:**

**Tuition Policy:** Any family falling behind in tuition payments should contact the school treasurer, (Paul Kelley at 364-6908), to discuss an alternative payment schedule. Failure to do so will result in having to withdraw your child until payment is made. A child may re-enroll only if an opening still exists in the program.

Tuition payments may be brought to school or mailed to the school address. Personal checks or money orders will be accepted. Beginning in September, credit card payments will be accepted. Cash payments are discouraged. Make all checks payable to Charlestown Early Learning Center, (CELC), and mail to CELC, P.O. Box 220, Charlestown, RI 02813. (A \$15 fee will be charged for returned checks.)

**A Registration fee** is required of all families upon registration. This fee is non-refundable.

**Tuition is a yearly sum.** A tuition bill is mailed to all families in May, with a first payment due on June 1st. Tuition payments follow a monthly

schedule, with some payment flexibility given to families. Payment options are written on the tuition bill. **Refunds for tuition paid are not usually granted, however, if you withdraw your child before the end of the year and have pre-paid tuition, the pre-paid amount will be refunded.**

### **FINANCIAL AID:**

**Scholarship aid:** In 1982 the **Kent Gardiner Memorial Scholarship Fund** was established to aid families of CELC who may need financial help. (Kent was a member of our first class at preschool). Each year financial aid is awarded in his name to qualified children enrolled, to help defray tuition costs. (Applications are available at school).

**DHS payments:** CELC participates in the RI Department of Human Services Tuition Reimbursement program, for families who fall within the required income guidelines. If you feel that your family qualifies, please contact the Department of Human Services to begin the application process.

### **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:**

We believe that parents are the first and primary teachers of their children. They are the "experts" and can provide valuable information to others who work with their children, thus helping to provide the most optimum educational program. We make every attempt to invite families to become part of our program. Family/Teacher interaction can occur in a variety of ways; (phone calls, class visits, e-mail, participation in school events).

### **PARENT CONFERENCES:**

Parent conferences are offered in the fall, and again in the spring as a time for teacher and parent to sit down together and discuss their child's progress. Parents can request a conference at any time during the year if a need arises.

### **PARENT ADVISORY GROUP:**

Families are the "Life" of our program at Charlestown Early Learning Center. A parent group has been established to act as a liaison between

families and the governing body of CELC. The Parent Advisory Group, (PAG), also established and maintains the Kent Gardiner Scholarship, and assists in fund raising activities.

All parents are considered members of the Parent Advisory and are welcome at all meetings, and to become involved. A parent of one of the children, or a staff member serves as the PAG Coordinator. The Coordinator will announce meetings and agendas through notices at the school, or by e-mail. The Coordinator will help organize sharing of information through the Parent Contacts. We encourage all families to make their needs known to these parents and our Staff. An open line of communication helps us to provide the highest quality programming for your children. The PAG will meet occasionally to plan activities, fund raising events and address parental concerns that may arise.

(Parents interested in being a Parent Contact should contact Mrs. Kelley. We look forward to your input).

### **VOLUNTEERING:**

We welcome parents into our classroom to help out, observe, cook, read, share talents, or just to play with the children. We ask all parents who would like to volunteer time in the classroom to attend an Orientation Meeting prior to volunteering, in order to familiarize themselves with the classroom routines. If you are interested please talk to your child's teacher. In addition, CELC has an "open door" policy...parents are welcome to stop in at any time to see how things are going.

### **Program Evaluation:**

Parent involvement is critical to our programming at CELC. From time to time during the year we may ask for your input, criticisms, and suggestions. In addition, each spring we undergo a Comprehensive Program Evaluation. At that time we will ask parents to fill out a program quality questionnaire, the results of which will aid us in setting long term goals for our Program, making necessary changes and strive for quality improvement.

### **FUND RAISING:**

Our programs are supported by Fund Raising Activities that are offered at intervals throughout the school year. We rely on parents' help in planning and supporting these endeavors, but **all activities are voluntary**.

We make an attempt to combine fund raising activities with family fun. In the past we have had a Winter Olympics, Spring Breakfast/Art Show, and a Basket Raffle and Bake Sale, to name a few.

The proceeds of our Fund Raising efforts are used to enhance our Program, purchase equipment and materials, and to support the Kent Gardiner Scholarship. Some of the items purchased with these funds have been our Outdoor Center Tree House, the tricycle track, tricycles, the Loft, floors in our classroom area, new carpeting and classroom furniture. We also use these funds to offer "In School Field Trips", Professional Development, and other Cultural Programs to our children.

## **SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

### **Arrival and Dismissal:**

For the safety of all of our children, we ask for your cooperation during the hectic arrival and dismissal portions of our day. During these times there are many adults and children entering and leaving the building. We need to be aware of each child and know that they are leaving with the appropriate adult. **Because of our proximity to RT. 1-A, it is imperative that no child leave the fenced area of the Play Yard, or the classroom, without a designated adult.**

**NOTE: When dropping off and picking up your child: Always be sure the door latches and locks behind you.**

Each day a teacher will welcome the children into the classroom. We ask you to please wait for a staff member to open the door before entering. Please bring your child to their cubby to leave his or her belongings, and then sign him or her in on the daily log. **(Do not leave your child in the classroom or out in the play area unattended.)** You are welcome to stay for a few minutes to help your child settle in.

At dismissal we may be outdoors. Please wait for us to bring the children into the classroom for dismissal unless a teacher directs you to come outside for pick up. **Before taking your child, first sign him/her out, and pick up his/her things from their mailbox and cubby hook.**

During the day the school doors are locked from the outside. If you come to school while in session, please come to the front door, knock, and wait for a teacher to welcome you in. (A phone call would also be appreciated so that we know you will be coming). **When entering or leaving the building or playground at any time, please be sure to close the door/gate securely, and be sure that you are not followed by an inquisitive child!**

**YOU MUST SIGN YOUR CHILD OUT EACH DAY BEFORE LEAVING THE BUILDING. Only designated individuals will be allowed to sign for and take your child from the building. When leaving the building, keep your child with you in the parking lot and be watchful of the other vehicles;(holding hands is the best approach).**

### **Clothing:**

Your child will be a member of an "active" group of children, involved in many activities. Please dress him or her accordingly; (washable play clothing please). We will be going outdoors each day, weather permitting. Please remember to send a hat and mittens with your child and proper leg and feet protection as we will go out even on the coldest days. We ask you to keep in mind sandals, open toe shoes, and clogs can make it difficult for children when playing on apparatus in the Outdoor Center, on the trike track, climber, or tree house. **Please label all items from home.**

Our goal for all children is Independence, and self sufficiency. We ask you to keep this in mind when choosing clothing, lunch boxes, etc. **We ask that an extra set of clothes, (including socks and underwear), be brought to be kept at school for your child in case the need arises. Please send in a ziploc bag labeled with your child's name and class.**

**Allergies:** CELC will ask permission of families, to post any allergies that exist. With such consent, a list of food allergies will be posted. Without such consent, the program will inform all relevant staff, of all allergies, in order to assure that all food will be safe for all children.

**CELC is a "Nut Free" School. When sending in birthday treats for your child to share with the class, and baking for our school parties, we ask you to keep this policy in mind. A list of allowed items will be posted at school. Thank you.**

### **Field Trips:**

Field trips support our curriculum goals and themes, and we offer “in school” field trips as well as an occasional out of school field trip. For field trips that are held away from school grounds we ask for parent volunteer chaperones and drivers. For away field trips, All children must bring an approved car safety seat. State law requires that no preschool child be transported without such a device. In addition; All parents driving to field trips will be asked to show a valid drivers’ license and proof of car insurance. All cars must have a current inspection. **No child will be allowed to travel in a front seat on any field trip.**

### **Child Assessment:**

Teachers are always available to conference with parents should the need arise. If you would like to request a conference please contact your child’s teacher. Conferences are offered in late fall, in the spring, and throughout the year, as requested.

Informal assessment of children is done daily as the teachers work with and observe children in their daily interactions. Assessments are not used to label or limit a child in any way, and should not be considered “Report Cards”.

Assessing children is a means used by teachers to get to know a child fully, and know “where they are” developmentally. Teachers observe children at play, make notes, of how each child is developing, what he or she enjoys, who they play with, etc. This helps in planning for activities that will support your child’s growth and independence, and it gives us valuable information to share with families. Families are part of our Assessment process. From time to time we will ask you to fill out questionnaires or give us other information that will help us get to know your children better.

In addition to informal assessments, CELC collaborates with our local school districts to offer Developmental Screening through the **Child Outreach** Programs. We also use check lists from The Creative Curriculum, as well as other preschool curriculums to assess other information, (e.g. letter and number knowledge). The information is then used in classroom planning, and individualizing needs for every child.

For children who attend who may have an IEP, we work closely with the parent, specialists, and School District in planning for their needs.

A folder is kept for each child, containing work samples, art projects, and photographs of your child during a busy day, teacher observations, etc. These portfolios are used to document and share progress with parents, and are made available to you at anytime throughout the year.

### Daily Schedule

The Daily Schedule is meant to be a guide, to facilitate a seamless and organized flow to the school day. We believe that each day brings its own unique quality to the children and the staff, and the schedule will change, occasionally, to reflect the needs and activities of the group. At the beginning of each year the teacher will post the Daily Schedule for each group of children in the classroom.

### Arrival/Greeting

Children come into the room and place their belongings in their cubbies. They find their name tags and place on the Attendance Chart. They then choose a book, puzzle, listen to music or have quiet conversation with friends until everyone has arrived. (10 min.)

### Friendship Circle

Children and teachers greet one another, and join together for conversation, counting activities, stories, etc. (according to the plan for the day). Children are given opportunity to share with the group. (10-15 min.)

### Center Time

Children choose among a variety of Centers, (art, blocks manipulative games and activities, dramatic play, cozy corner reading, listening center, texture table, science/math center) Centers are planned by teachers to support childrens' growth and development. (approx. 1 hour each day)

### Clean-up and Snack:

Children are expected to help put all materials away and make the room ready for the next group. Before snack each child washes his hands. At the snack table we encourage independence and peer helping.

### Outside Center Time: (30-40 minutes)

Final Circle/Dismissal: Children join teachers at Friendship Circle for songs/movement activities and stories, followed by parent pick-up.

