

NOAH'S ARK PRESCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK

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Noah's Ark Preschool Commitment to Excellence

We at Noah's Ark Preschool (NAP) make a commitment each day to approach our responsibilities as early childhood educators with professionalism and through principled decisions and actions. We strive to develop and maintain strong relationships with our students, their families, our colleagues, and our greater community.

NAP believes in the core values set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children; we will

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

As the Director, the Teachers, and the Staff of NAP, we believe that it is an honor that our families entrust us and partner with us in the education and development of their young children. We support the NAEYC's ethical principles and will

- Ensure that our program for young children is based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education
- Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children
- Respect our colleagues, work cooperatively together, and support one another in our goals
- Serve as advocates for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society
- Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families
- Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others
- Continue to learn, grow, and contribute as professionals
- Never harm a child in any way

We at Noah's Ark Preschool believe in our purpose, our philosophy, and our goals as set forth in our handbook. As the Director, the Teachers, and the Staff, we are committed to structuring and providing a preschool environment that meets the needs of our children, families, colleagues, and community to the best of our abilities.

Welcome to Noah's Ark Preschool!

Mission

Noah's Ark Preschool prepares children with the knowledge and skills necessary to enter their next stage of development and education with confidence and an enthusiasm for life-long learning. Each child's social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth is fostered within the context of a safe, positive, and consistent environment. Children engage in play and exploration of their environment and purposefully selected materials in order to learn about the world around them. The Noah's Ark experience leads to the development of self-confidence, self-respect and a concern for others; additionally children learn the values of friendship, honesty, sharing, responsibility, and cooperation in a nurturing atmosphere.

Philosophy and Goals

Noah's Ark Preschool is founded on the belief that early childhood learning is best promoted through play, exploration and discovery. We ensure children are engaged in developmentally appropriate opportunities in order for them to socialize and learn together. All aspects of a child's development are engaged through a wide variety of experiences such as art and sensory, science, music, movement, stories, circle, writing, and drawing, blocks and manipulatives, and dramatic play. We emphasize the importance of social emotional, physical, intellectual, and creative development in children. Teachers purposefully choose materials and set up the classroom environment to foster curiosity and tailor activities to the interest of the specific group of children. Classrooms are arranged in "centers" and as children play and explore in these areas they learn concepts in language, early literacy, early math, creative expression, and socialization.

History and Administrative Organization

History

Noah's Ark Preschool was founded in 2002 by a small group of church members of the Congregational Church of Needham as an independent, not-for-profit corporation. Frankie Gartner, the Director and a teacher, has been leading the school since it opened; and a strong and involved Board of Directors supports her and the wonderful staff. Noah's Ark began with seven students and grew to capacity within a year. Noah's Ark Preschool is a non-denominational, Christian-based preschool that serves families of all denominations from Needham and the surrounding towns.

Corporate Structure

Noah's Ark Preschool is a not-for-profit corporation. A Board of Directors governs the school. There are seven directors, which include the president, vice-president, clerk and treasurer. The Boards' responsibility to the Preschool is primarily fiduciary, though the Board also establishes school-wide goals and reviews these goals annually.

The Preschool is not required to pay state or federal taxes due to its not-for-profit status, though this does not apply to payroll taxes. Contributions to the school are tax deductible. All revenue raised through tuition or fundraising is used for the betterment of the school.

The Preschool is regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), 10 Austin St., Worcester, MA 01609, 508-798-5180. The preschool is required to adhere to the standards set forth in the state's regulation publication 606 CMR 7.00. Parents may contact the EEC for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history.

Administrative Organization

The management of the preschool begins with the Director. The Director's responsibilities include program and curriculum development, hiring, orientation and ongoing teacher training, supervision and evaluation of teachers, facilitating staff meetings and communication, enrollment and registration, documentation of child and staff files, addressing parent, teacher, and facility issues, and addressing any major issues and concerns. The Director reports monthly to the Preschool Board of Directors. Teachers and staff report to the Director. In the absence of the Director, the Lead Preschool Teacher is in charge. The preschool meets all guidelines and requirements of their licensing authority, The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC).

Program Overview

Our Program

Noah's Ark Preschool believes that early childhood learning is best promoted through play and exploration. All aspects of a child's development are engaged through activities such as art and sensory, science, music, movement, stories, circle, writing and drawing, blocks and manipulatives, and dramatic play. The classrooms are arranged in "centers" and as children play and explore in these areas they learn concepts, language, early literacy, creative expression, and socialization. Outdoor play, or indoor play in the "Big Room" (weather dependent), and snack time are also daily learning activities. Additionally, Noah's Ark offers weekly and/or monthly program enrichment. At Noah's Ark, the teachers focus on the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and creative development; planned activities, the set up of the environment, the daily routine, and the play experiences strengthen these areas of development.

Our Teachers

Noah's Ark Preschool believes that our teachers are one of the features that make us so special. Our staff offers a range of ages and backgrounds, which blend to create an exciting and innovative curriculum. Teachers always take into consideration individual children and their interests. They try to be open to what the children are doing and thinking about and are mindful of this when planning. Teachers facilitate the children's learning by carefully observing, providing guidance, planning activities, and introducing new concepts and ideas. They strive to create a warm, enriching environment for children and a partnership with parents that emphasize trust and collaboration.

Our Classes

Lambs: T & TH, 8:45-11:45, 2.9 yrs. and young 3 yr. olds. Must be 2.9 by September 1st.

Llamas: M, W & F, 8:45-11:45, 3 yr. olds, turning 4. Must be 3 by September 1st.

Lions: 3 days (M, W & TH) or 4 days (M, T, W, & TH) as decided by the parents.

8:45-11:45, 4 yr. olds, turning 5. Must be 4 by Sept 1st. These children are preparing to matriculate to kindergarten the following year.

Lunch Bunch: Offered Monday through Friday from 11:45-1:00. All children are eligible.

Extended Day: Lions ED meets M & W, 1:00-2:00 (11:45-1:00 is Lunch Bunch), Llama ED W, 1:00-2:00 (11:45 to 1:00 is Lunch Bunch).

Camp: A summer camp experience meeting Monday through Thursday, 9:00-12:30, for the first two weeks following the end of school. Currently enrolled students are eligible.

Application

Parents are encouraged to visit the school in October and November (dates set annually). Parents will receive program information, a tour of the school, and an application.

- a. Noah's Ark Preschool gives priority enrollment to current students, siblings of current or previous students, and children of members of the Congregational Church of Needham, respectively. Priority Enrollment is offered until mid-November (date set annually).
- b. New families who wish to apply to Noah's Ark Preschool may submit an application after touring the school. Applications will be processed and families will be notified of enrollment on a date set annually, post priority enrollment.
- c. If classes are full, parents may put their name on a waiting list. Vacancies will be filled as names appear chronologically on the waiting list.
- d. Children with disabilities will be admitted using the guidelines of the EEC's regulation 606 CMR 7.07.

Enrollment

To be admitted to the school, parents must complete forms that are required by the licensing agency EEC (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care). These forms help to assure the health and safety of the children. Forms include the Enrollment Form (which includes authorization and release for pick ups, permission for field trips, permission to photograph, authorization and consent in the event of an emergency, and important phone numbers and addresses), the Medical History Form, and the Developmental History and Background Form.

Fees

- a. *Application:* A non-refundable new family application fee of \$25.00 is required with the application. This fee is per family, thus families applying for more than one child do not incur multiple application fees.
- b. *Enrollment/Deposit:* Upon re-enrollment or initial enrollment to our program, a non-refundable \$50 enrollment fee (per family) and a \$350 deposit is required to enroll a child and hold the spot. This non-refundable fee represents a commitment between the school and the family for enrollment. The deposit is deducted from the tuition.
- c. *Tuition:* Annual tuition is determined by the Noah's Ark Preschool Board of Directors; a tuition schedule is provided to families upon visiting the school. Tuition is due three times a year in thirds: May 1st, November 1st, and February 1st. A late fee of \$50.00 will be assessed if tuition has not been paid within 30 days after the due date. Unpaid tuition will jeopardize a family's enrollment status. The tuition payment is a flat fee regardless of absences, snow days, or holidays. In any

month other than September, if a child is enrolled between the first and the fifteenth, a full month's tuition shall be paid. If a child is enrolled between the sixteenth and the end of the month, half of the monthly tuition shall be paid. In the month of September, a full month's tuition shall be paid upon enrollment, regardless of the date of enrollment. Finally, a 5% discounted tuition is offered to families who are enrolling two or more children simultaneously.

Scholarships

Scholarships are available to families based on financial need. Applications are available through the preschool office. All inquiries are confidential.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Noah's Ark Preschool does not discriminate when admitting or providing services to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, national or ethnic origins, cultural heritage, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, toilet training status, or disability.

Withdrawals

The withdrawal of a child requires two weeks written notice; tuition, once paid, is non-refundable. If a child withdraws and chooses to reenter at a later date, his/her name will be entered at the end of the waiting list.

Policies and Procedures

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Policy

Our school day runs from 8:45-11:45, with additional pick-up times of 1:00 for those staying for Lunch Bunch and 2:00 for those enrolled in Extended Day. There is plenty of parking in the lot behind the church. Parents are responsible for any and all transportation to and from school, from the parents' car into the school, and from the school building to the car at the end of the day. Please be aware that many families will be dropping off and picking up at the same time you are; keep careful watch as you are driving into the parking lot and while you are walking your child into and out of the school. Parents bring their child/children into the school and to their classroom at the start of the day, where the teachers will be waiting to greet the children. At the end of the day, parents wait in the hallway outside of the classrooms until story time is over; at that point, teachers dismiss the children one-by-one to their parent or grown-up. There is a "STOP" sign on the inside of the brown door by the office. The child/children in your care should not go past the stop sign without you when exiting the school as the next door goes directly outside. Pick-up and drop-off times provide opportunities to interact and check-in with teachers, but in-depth discussions should be scheduled for other times. We appreciate your assistance in making the drop-off and pick-up times as safe and smooth as possible for everyone.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with anyone other than the parent(s) who enrolled the child without written permission. If children are carpooling, parents must notify the school, in writing, of their arrangements. In the event of a change in the pick-up person, parents are responsible for notifying the school, in writing, of said change. There is always available paper and pens in the office for a last-minute note. Persons other than parents or the people on the

authorized pick-up list (as documented on the Enrollment Form) will be asked to show identification to make sure parents have authorized the release of their child to this person.

If you are going to be substantially late in the morning, it would be helpful to call the school office so your child's teacher can be made aware. Similarly, if for some unavoidable reason you are going to be a little bit late for pick-up, please call the school as a courtesy to the teachers and your child. Clear communication will make drop off and pick-up smooth for the teachers and the children!

Our building is wheelchair accessible; the ramp entrance is at the opposite end of the building from the Preschool door, on the side by the turn-around. If you or your child requires the use of the ramp entrance, please let us know and plans will be made to assist and ensure a smooth drop-off and pick-up.

Locking Doors

The preschool locks the entrance door for security purposes. The exception to this is at drop off and pick up times. After drop off, the preschool will lock the entrance door at 9:00am and unlock 15 minutes before pick up times (morning session, Lunch Bunch and Extended Day). If parents need access to the school, they should ring the doorbell by the entrance. A staff member will be available to open the door.

Attendance Policy

Parents are asked to notify the school office prior to the start of the school day if their child will be absent. Call 781-449-2439 or e-mail office@noahsarkneedham.org. It's important for parents to be on time so their children can take full advantage of the program.

School Cancellation

Noah's Ark Preschool will be cancelled in the event that the Needham Public Schools are cancelled for snow or a natural disaster. In the event of a delayed start to the Needham Public School day, Noah's Ark Preschool will be cancelled for the day.

Holiday and Vacation Closings

Noah's Ark Preschool provides a calendar for the year, which lists all of the days we have planned closings. During the school year, you can expect that we will be closed on Columbus Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after, a Christmas to New Year's vacation as determined annually, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January Parent-Teacher Conference days as determined annually, February Vacation concurrent with the Needham Public Schools, a March Professional Development Day as determined annually, Good Friday, April vacation concurrent with Needham Public Schools, and Memorial Day. The school remains open on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Nutrition – Snacks and Lunch

Noah's Ark will provide all children with a nutritious snack during the program. Snacks and beverages will be healthy and contribute to meeting a student's daily nutritional needs. A weekly menu may include fruit, crackers, goldfish, cheese, or one of the cooking projects. Water and fruit juice are offered for drinks. Parents should make the teachers aware of any special

circumstances that require special snack arrangements. The school maintains a “nut-free” status. If a parent(s) would like to come in to prepare a nutritious snack with the children, or if a parent(s) wishes to contribute a healthy snack, please speak with the Director. If a child stays for Lunch Bunch, parents provide lunch for their child. Please label your child’s lunchbox. We recommend providing children with lunches that include foods from the major food groups such as fruits, vegetables, breads, and protein. The school keeps on hand non-perishable lunch items such as crackers that can be used when necessary. Parents are asked not to send peanut or nut products in with their child’s lunch as the preschool is “nut free.” Parents are encouraged not to send in dessert items such as cookies and snack foods such as potato chips; additionally, candy or soda is not allowed in school. It is the school’s experience that children quickly become accustomed to lunches that do not include these foods. The preschool staff is dedicated to encouraging healthy meals! Visit MyPyramid.gov for more information about healthy meals and snacks.

“Nut-Free” Policy

The preschool is a nut-free school. All parents are asked not to bring food or materials into the school that contain nut products. Parents are asked to read labels carefully and to be aware that cutting boards, knives, sponges, and other kitchen equipment may contain trace amounts of nut products and are potentially problematic for very sensitive children. (Please see our parent letter for more details).

Clothing

We suggest sending your child to school in comfortable play clothes and shoes that are suitable for an active day! We do get messy and it is ideal to have the children focused on their play and activities and not their clothes. Our art materials are all washable, but not all stains come out as promised. Additionally, open-toed sandals and dressy shoes can make running, climbing, and normal playground play more difficult. Please keep in mind temperature and weather when sending your child to school; we try to go outside whenever we can! Apply sunscreen and insect repellent before sending your child to school. Please send an extra sweater or jacket if you deem it necessary; and, in the winter, please send your child with snowpants, boots, mittens, hats, and a warm jacket. Send your child in with a hat to protect from the sun. Please label clothing!

Backpacks

Children should have a school backpack to store their belongings. A complete change of clothes should be in the backpack (underwear, socks, pants, shirt, etc., the works!) for any unforeseen incident or accident. It is helpful to put the clothing in Ziploc bags, so we have a place to put the wet or dirty clothing.

Toys

We understand that new or special toys, stuffed animals, etc., can be hard for children to leave at home. However, we ask that the children do not bring these things to school. If it cannot be avoided, we will ask that the child keep the toy in his/her backpack or cubby until it is time to go home. Too often a special thing from home can be broken, misplaced, or lost. A special book or piece of music can be brought to the teacher and she will try to incorporate it into the day.

Toileting

We believe that toilet training varies from child to child. We encourage the use of the toilet at certain times during the day (before going outside, before snack, etc.), and a child will be accompanied by a teacher to the bathroom at any time during the day upon request. Hands are always washed after using the toilet. Accidents do happen, particularly with our youngest children, and a teacher will assist the child in changing into the spare clothing provided in his/her backpack. We encourage you to discuss with us any concerns or issues you have, tell us when you are sending a child to school in underwear for the first time, etc. so that we can best assist your child. Diaper changing is done according to the procedures set forth by the school and in compliance with EEC regulations.

Preparing for School

Children have many reactions to starting school; our Lions may bound back in to a familiar place whereas our Lambs and Llamas may have some fear of the unknown. Either way, it is always a good idea to talk with your child and to prepare him/her for going to school. There are also many books at the library or in book stores that deal with the very topic. Share with your child your love of school and discuss how much fun Noah's Ark Preschool will be; however, there is no need to overdo the preparation or excitement as that may cause unnecessary stress and anxiety. A simple, truthful, positive manner is best. If possible, establish a morning routine that is relaxed and unhurried.

Saying Goodbye

Some children may cry, become clingy and shy, or look at you as if to say, 'Why are you leaving me?' It can be heart-wrenching for the parent(s), and typically they carry it with them for the morning while their child recovers and has a wonderful day of exploration and play. A wide range of reactions from preschool children are expected and perfectly normal. Our teachers have experience with this separation, and they will respect and assist each child's needs during an adjustment period. Some ideas for a smooth drop off:

- Keep a positive focus on your child and your goal
- Help hang up your child's coat and backpack
- Greet your child's teacher together
- Remind your child that you will be back at "X" time to pick him/her up
- Help your child get into a favorite activity

It is our recommendation that once you have given your hug and have begun to leave, even if your child is upset, to keep going. A goodbye is actually harder on a child if it is too long. We take our responsibility to your child's happiness and comfort very seriously, and we will do our best to turn an unhappy child into a happy one as soon as we can. If separation continues to be an issue for a child, we want to work with the parents to establish a positive routine.

Holidays

Noah's Ark Preschool believes in a very low-key approach to the holidays. It is our experience that there is enough excitement and celebration provided at home, in the media, and in the community; we like to think of our school as a calm, safe, predictable environment for children during these exciting times. We recognize the holidays through discussions during the school day and through thematic activities that correspond with the "meaning" of a particular holiday. We give the children opportunities to create gifts for their families during certain holidays, and

we always encourage them to share plans, traditions, and special moments during circle time, snack, and when otherwise appropriate. We welcome families to share holiday-related traditions, books, music, or food with their child's class; please speak with your child's teacher if you wish to do so.

Birthdays

Birthdays are an exciting and happy time for us all, but particularly for our children! We like to make each child feel special and recognized on his/her birthday. Birthdays are a nice time for parents to plan a project to do with the child's class or to read a story at the end of the day. You can set up a project or reading time by contacting your child's teachers. NAP cannot have food brought from home for birthday celebrations due to allergies; instead, we honor a child's birthday with a "birthday banner" from classmates that is created during the school day.

The Noah's Ark Birthday Book Program gives an opportunity to celebrate a child's birthday by donating a book to the Noah's Ark library. The Birthday Book can be brought in on or around your child's birthday and read to the class by a parent or special person or the teacher. A special book label with your child's name will be put on the inside cover of the book so it will be remembered for years to come.

Field Trips

As appropriate, children will have the opportunity to participate in various types of field trips. In order for students to participate, parents or guardians must have a signed permission slip on file in their child's folder. Specific information concerning the location, method of transportation, and date and time will be provided to parents once the field trip is planned. For any field trip, parent volunteers are appreciated! We limit field trips for the younger children to "walking" field trips; whereas a local school bus may be hired to transport the older children to their destination.

Child Guidance Policy

Noah's Ark Preschool provides opportunities for students to develop self-control, to solve interpersonal conflicts in an appropriate way, and to demonstrate responsible community behavior. Behavior management strategies are used in a nurturing manner that are consistent, reasonable, and appropriate to each child's understanding and needs. Teachers stress positive reinforcement and recognition, careful listening, and assist students in accepting responsibility for their behavior. Teachers receive training in positive child guidance and work collaboratively with co-teachers to address behavioral issues.

Teachers encourage positive behavior by:

- Providing varied, interesting activities of differing complexity and challenge for children of various ages
- Establishing ground rules which require courtesy and respect for the rights of individuals and the group; children are encouraged to assist in the establishment of these rules when appropriate
- Acting as role models for positive and polite interactions
- Respecting every child
- Listening to every child

- Understanding every child
- Recognizing the positive performance of every child
- Making sure that each day is a “fresh start” for each child

It is the belief of the school that if the ground rules are consistently followed and reinforced, then the necessity for imposing discipline will diminish greatly. When such discipline is deemed necessary, the following strategies will be implemented:

- Teachers use a calm, quiet voice and speak to the child directly at eye level
- Teachers help the child use his/her own words to explain what is happening, why, and how can it be changed
- Teachers redirect the child in a positive manner and help the child choose another activity
- Teachers work with children to help them understand their feelings and communicate these feelings to others
- If a child is in danger of hurting him/herself or another child, or if the behavior is excessively disruptive to the group, a teacher may temporarily remove the child from the group until the child is ready to return to the group in a calm manner. Removal time is in adherence to the developmental level of the child. Removal from the group will be handled one on one with the child. The teacher will make every effort to explain to the child why he/she is being removed from the group and what is the appropriate behavior.
- Teachers work in partnership with families to address behavioral issues at school or home
- Teachers initiate the referral process when a child’s behavior is or continues to be harmful to himself or others

As is stated in the EEC’s regulation 606 CMR 7.00, Noah’s Ark Preschool strictly prohibits:

- Spanking or other corporal punishment of children
- Subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment
- Depriving children of meals or snacks
- Force feeding children
- Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet; or forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or forcing a child to remain on the toilet, or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting
- Confining a child to any piece of equipment for an extended period of time in lieu of supervision
- Exceeding appropriate length for a time-out; a time-out should not exceed one minute for each year of the child’s age and must take place within a teacher’s view

In an instance where a child is acting in a disruptive manner that places him/her or others in imminent danger, a teacher may use a “supportive hold” to remove a child from danger.

Teachers must consider the following before using a supportive hold:

- The child’s safety is at risk
- Other children or adults are at risk
- The child displays highly disruptive and upsetting behavior
- All other possible interventions have been attempted
- A supportive hold should only be sustained long enough to remove the child from the unsafe area or to keep him/her from hurting him/herself or others

In the event that excessive, aggressive behavior is focused toward harming a teacher or another child by hitting, biting, etc. the Director may call the parent and ask that the child be picked up from school. An Incident Report Form would be filled out, shared with the parent(s), signed by the parent(s), and put in the child's file with a copy for the parent(s).

Health Policies

A detailed healthcare policy is available in the office upon request. NAP abides by the Health and Safety Policies set forth by the EEC (606 CMR 7.11).

Medical Forms

Every child must have an annual physical exam, lead screening, and immunizations (appropriate for the age and in accordance with the schedule of immunizations required by the State of Massachusetts) before starting school. The Medical History Form (a physician's health form is also acceptable) with this information must be in the school office before the first day of school. Parents must provide an updated copy of their child's medical history at the time of each successive annual exam during the child's enrollment at the preschool.

Exceptions to this policy are:

- Parents object to immunizations based on religious beliefs.
 - A child's physician states that immunization therapy is contraindicated.
- *In either case, written documentation is required.

Illness Policy

In all cases, we appreciate your good judgment and cooperation when determining whether or not to keep your child home from school due to an illness. We ask that children be kept home from school if they have a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or a "fresh" cold. A cold with persistent coughing, an earache, or a sore throat should be checked with your pediatrician. A child must be fever free or free from vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school. If a child has been prescribed antibiotics by a physician, the child may return to school 24 hours after starting medication. If a child becomes ill during the school day and needs to be picked up, the school will attempt to contact the parent(s) first and then the emergency contact numbers provided if necessary. For a mildly ill child, a teacher will provide a quiet rest area apart from the other children; the teacher will take the child's temperature and take note of the symptoms and use her judgment about contacting the parents.

Communicable Diseases

Parents should notify the school immediately if their child is exposed to or contracts a contagious illness such as strep throat, conjunctivitis, head lice, etc. The Director will notify parents of communicable diseases or illnesses by posting information by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on each classroom's white board. Noah's Ark follows the requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health in dealing with communicable diseases. In some cases the school may ask parents for a note from the physician before their child is allowed to return to school.

Medication Policy

Before any medication can be administered to a child, parents must first complete, sign, and return to the Director a Medication Consent Form. Permission by the physician is required for over the counter medication. Parents must bring in their child's medication in the original container with the drug dosage and expiration date. Prescription medication will be administered as directed on the original container's label. Forms are available in the school office upon request. All medication will be returned to the parents upon expiration or on the last day of school. No "first dose" of a medication will be administered at school, except for emergency medications such as epi-pens.

Allergies

Parents are asked to speak with the Director if their child has allergies to food, insects, or animals. Sharing information about the severity of reactions, what is to be avoided, and what to do if a child is exposed is encouraged. Proper forms must be filled out if medication is kept in the school. All parents are asked to comply with the school's "nut-free" policy when bringing in snacks, lunches, and projects. Pets are not allowed in the preschool areas for allergy and safety reasons.

Medical Conditions

If a child has a known medical condition (asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders, etc.), parents must notify the Director upon enrollment. An Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) will be created for that child, and a plan of action will be established between parents and staff about what to do if a problem should occur during school hours. If necessary, parents will train staff in implementation of the IHCP. Parents must make sure that any required medication is provided to the Director and the appropriate forms for its use have been completed. Please see the "Medication Policy".

Children with Disabilities

In the instance that a child with a disability is enrolled, a plan will be put in place to ensure that the needs and health requirements of the child are met.

Accident or Injury Policy

Each class has a staff member who is certified in First Aid and CPR. A First Aid kit, bandaids, and ice packs are available in the kitchenette area of the school and used as needed for typical falls, bumps, or bruises. If your child experiences an accident or injury at school that is more serious, a teacher will inform you in person or by phone if necessary. An Injury/Illness Report Form will be provided to you for review and signature, and will then be placed in your child's student file.

Tooth Brushing Policy

As required by EEC regulation 606 CMR 7.11(11)(d), "Educators must assist children in brushing their teeth whenever they are in care for more than four hours or whenever they consume a meal while in care." NAP uses pre-pasted, disposable toothbrushes for those children who stay for Lunch Bunch. Parents may choose to not have their child participate and will need to sign a tooth brushing non-participation form.

Emergency Procedures

All Emergency and Evacuation Procedures are posted in the classrooms and in the office. Complete plans are also in the Noah's Ark Preschool Policy and Procedures binder in the office. Noah's Ark Preschool follows emergency procedures as set forth by the Town of Needham and the state of Massachusetts.

Emergency Procedures for Illness/Accident

Each emergency situation will be evaluated and acted upon by what is in the best interest of the child involved in the situation. Staff will always try to reach a child's parent if transportation is necessary due to an emergency. If that is not possible, then those persons listed under Emergency Contacts will be contacted for emergency pick-up from the site. In cases of medical emergencies, 911 will be called and the child will be transported to the nearest hospital for medical treatment. A teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance and will bring the child's records with all medical information and contact information. In such a case, documentation will be completed on an Illness/Injury Report Form.

Contingency Plans for fire, natural disaster, loss of power, heat or water

If the church building closes due to loss of power, heat or, water, Noah's Ark Preschool will also close. If loss of power, heat, or water should occur while Noah's Ark Preschool is in operation, parents and/or guardians and/or the child's emergency contacts will be immediately notified and advised to pick-up their children. In the event of a natural disaster, Noah's Ark Preschool teachers will contact emergency personnel via 911 and follow the directions given. In case of emergency evacuation of the church building, the designated site for the preschool is the Needham Post Office located on the corner of Linden Street and Great Plain Ave. In the case of a town-wide evacuation, children will be moved to the primary shelter at the Pollard Middle School or the secondary shelter at the Needham High School according to the town's Emergency Management's recommendation.

Missing Child

Teacher(s) will inform the Director immediately if a child is missing. The Director or designee will make an initial search of the building and grounds. Attempts will be made to contact parents to confirm if the child was picked-up. If not, the Director or designee will call the police (911) so a perimeter can be established for search. The Director will make all other required notifications.

Shelter-in-Place

A shelter-in-place may be ordered to provide emergency protection in the event of a hazardous materials accident or other airborne threat. The public would be advised to remain indoors. Information from public safety officials at the scene or over the Emergency Alerting System (EAS) will advise the public concerning seeking shelter and for how long. Teachers are to take attendance clipboards and enrollment binder and bring all children to the classrooms located across from the handicapped bathroom, as this is the most interior section of the preschool. Snack food and bottled water are to be stored in the area, and the handicapped bathroom is to be used if needed. Teachers and the Director will stay with the children until instructed otherwise by emergency officials, at which point the school will notify all parents that they can pick up their child/children.

Lockdown Procedure

Noah's Ark Preschool will follow a lockdown procedure in the event of an emergency where it is necessary to prevent the easy movement of persons in a school building. Noah's Ark Preschool will be notified by emergency personnel and will follow procedures and instructions by the Town of Needham. The Director will be the liaison with the police or Town of Needham officials and follow all guidelines. The outer door to the building, the door by the school office, and the door across from Stevenson Hall (the Big Room) would be locked, making the preschool space confined within the church building. All windows in the classrooms will be closed, locked, and covered. All electronics need to be turned off. The Lead Teacher of each particular classroom is responsible for her attendance clipboard and enrollment binder, implementing the Director's instructions, taking attendance, and establishing a calm atmosphere. Teachers will take all children to the classrooms located across from the handicapped bathroom, as this is the most interior section of the preschool. Snack food and bottled water are to be stored in the area, and the handicapped bathroom is to be used if needed. The children will be directed in quiet activities and kept away from doors and windows. Noah's Ark Preschool will remain in lockdown until notified by officials, at which point the school will notify all parents that they can pick up their child/children.

Contacting Us During School Hours

There is typically a staff member available in the office during school hours so that a parent can reach us in case of emergency or an urgent situation. However, if a parent needs to reach the Director or a teacher and there is no one in our office, you can contact the church office at 781-444-2510 and they will get a message to us.

Parent Participation

Visits

Noah's Ark Preschool has an open door policy. Parents are welcome to visit the preschool at any time when their child is in attendance. Parents are welcome to speak with their child's teachers to plan a time to participate in a classroom activity, a project, read a story, etc. Having a parent participate in the classroom is a special experience for the individual child and the group as a whole. Children are encouraged to invite their families and friends to special events during the year to celebrate their accomplishments and to share what they are learning and doing in the program.

Noah's Ark Parent Group

Mission Statement: The Noah's Ark Parent Group's purpose is to build a sense of community and tradition that extends beyond the classroom. The group has various social gatherings throughout the year, helps support its families through life events and additionally aids the school in its goals and fundraising. Every parent at Noah's Ark is automatically a member of the parent group.

The NAP Volunteer Committee is a subset of the Parent Group. Our Volunteer Members are an invaluable asset to our school. They assist the Co-Chairs with school-wide parent gatherings, family gatherings, fundraising, and community outreach. The individual assistance that the Volunteer Committee members provide is what helps to make NAP the special community it is.

The volunteer committee does not require a large time commitment; as a matter of fact it is relatively small considering all the group does for the school!

Co-Chairs NAP Volunteer Committee: Two parents at NAP lead the Volunteer Committee in terms of scheduling, coordinating, establishing sub-committees, etc., as is necessary dependent upon the goals and needs for the year.

NAP Room Parents: There are two room parents per classroom who assist with the communication and organization within each individual class. Some of the duties of the room parents are to facilitate communication between the parents and teachers, to organize meal delivery to families, organize holiday/end-of-the-year gifts, and to help families within each class make connections i.e., Mom's Night Out, Dad's Night Out, cocktail parties, etc.

Parent Communication

Relationships with families are a vital part of our program. Noah's Ark Preschool has placed a heavy emphasis on involving families and ensuring that on-going communication is in place. If a translator is needed to ensure proper communication between the school and the parents regarding general school information and conferences, Noah's Ark Preschool will provide one based upon the resources of the ELL department of the Needham Public Schools.

Parent to Staff Communication

Parents are encouraged to communicate briefly with teachers on a daily basis when they drop off or pick-up their child. Parents are encouraged to call and talk to teachers about scheduling an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns they may have regarding their child and/or the program. You can use e-mail (office@noahsarkneedham.org) to correspond with the Director and/or teachers, and you can always call our office (781-449-2439); in either case, it is our goal to respond to you as quickly as possible.

Parents are strongly encouraged to communicate with the Director and classroom teachers any extenuating circumstances that may be affecting your child so we can best understand and assist behavior and moods. This can range from a difficult night's sleep to an illness or death in the family. The more informed we are, the better we are able to anticipate an issue and assist your child through the day.

The Noah's Ark staff takes its commitment to our students and parents very seriously; as part of that commitment, parents are encouraged to share questions, concerns, and comments. We want to address any questions our parents may have, and we want to hear about anything that is important to our parents and families. Additionally, we try to be responsive to comments about our program and curriculum, and we are pleased to discuss our goals and philosophies with you.

Staff to Parent Communication

There are a number of ways that Noah's Ark will reach out to you. There is a white board outside of each classroom for daily and upcoming announcements and general information. There are also two bulletin boards between the classrooms on which we post information about relevant community events, lectures, and resources. Additionally, on these boards there is

information about our daily schedule and our program. The Parent Group uses this space for announcements, and there is also an area for drop off and pick-up notes. We use school-wide e-mails for reminders, requests, and the sharing of information pertinent to all of our families.

Each week, parents will receive a “What We Did This Week” notice via e-mail by their teachers; it summarizes books read, songs sung, ideas and themes discussed, and special or significant events and visitors. We also use this to make parents aware of what will be ahead the following week. Parents also receive the “Noah’s Ark ‘News’” once a month, which provides general updates from the office, teachers, and Parent group. Finally, there are binders kept in our “foyer” that keep summaries of our enrichment.

Parent Complaint

If a parent concern is raised to a Noah’s Ark Preschool teacher, the teacher must immediately refer the parent to the Director for discussion regarding the concern. The Director will then place a call to parents to follow-up regarding the concern and the resolution. If the concern cannot be resolved at the Director level, the Board of Directors must be contacted for resolution of the concern within 48 hours.

Progress Reports and Conferences

We begin with an initial discussion, “Ten Minutes with the Teacher”, in October to discuss your child’s goals and adjustment to school. Progress reports are given to parents mid-year in conjunction with the parent/teacher conferences in January. Written reports are given to parents and copies are kept in the child’s individual file in the school office. The purpose of the conference is to review the child’s progress and to discuss goals with parents; other information pertinent to your child will be discussed and shared. It is helpful to think about the conference ahead of time and to come prepared with questions or topics to engage in a dialogue with your child’s teachers. We look at the conferences as a wonderful time to both share our observations and to gain insight. If parents have any concerns or want an update about their child at another time during the school year, they are encouraged to schedule a time to talk with their child’s teacher or the Director. There is a portfolio of your child’s work throughout the year and a follow-up written report given at the end of the school year.

Parent Survey

The Board of Directors of Noah’s Ark Preschool will ask our current parents to participate in a parent survey in late winter. It is an opportunity for our parents to comment upon aspects of the program that they value; it is also an opportunity to offer suggestions for change. The surveys will be tallied and a report made available to all parents and staff. The Board of Directors will use the information from the survey when thinking about goals for the following year and the May Board meeting is the appointed time for parents and staff to participate in a dialogue about these goals. Although this is our “formal” survey, we welcome your input at any time throughout the year!

Statement of Confidentiality

Any written information on children attending Noah’s Ark Preschool is privileged and confidential. None of this information will be given to anyone without the parent’s written permission, unless compelled by law. Parents will be notified if records are subpoenaed. Staff

has access to children's records as well as regulatory authorities, on request. Parents are always free to read any written material regarding their child. The school will consider any parent's wish to add or delete any information in the child's record and will discuss this with the parent. Any information that needs to be copied will be done so at the school's expense. Children's records will be transferred at the written request of the parents within 2 business days after the request. The preschool will keep a permanent written log indicating to whom the information was released.

Plan for Referral Services

Whenever a teacher is concerned about a child's development or behavior and feels that further evaluation or additional services may be necessary to ensure growth and development, the teacher will report his/her concern to the Director for further action. The Director will review the information and then take action as appropriate according to the identified needs of the child. These actions may include one or several of the following:

- The teacher and Director will observe the child in the classroom and document significant findings
- The teacher and Director will review information in the child's file
- The teacher and Director will hold a parent conference

Once the concerns are documented in writing, a meeting between the teacher and the Director will be held to compare observations. At this time, a clear statement of the concern will be formulated and a plan for further action will be determined with the Director having final approval of the plan.

Referral Meeting With Parents

Following the Plan for referral, the Director and teacher will schedule a conference with the parents. During the conference, the Director will share the specific concerns, the reason for the referral, and the supporting data. Parents will be provided with a list of possible referral resources. A copy of the Referral Report will be given to the parents at the conference, the Director will retain a copy, and a copy will be placed in the child's file. The Director will offer assistance in making the referral. Parents should be encouraged to call or request, in writing, an evaluation either by the public school system or an outside consultant. If extra support is needed the parents will provide written permission for this to happen; release of information forms will be provided.

Follow-up to the Referral

With parental permission, the agency or service provider evaluating the child may call the Director and/or teacher for consultation and assistance in meeting the needs of the child at the preschool. If it is determined that the child is not in need of services from the agency or is ineligible to receive services, the Director, together with the teacher, will review the child's progress every three months to determine if another referral is necessary.

Record of Referral

The Director will maintain a written record of any referral, including record of the parent conference and the results. A referral checklist will be kept in the child's school file. Any

written consent forms for informational releases, as well as permission to participate in the program, signed by the parents, is required and placed on file.

Suspension and Termination of Student Policy

To avoid suspension or termination of a child due to challenging behavior, the Director and teachers will meet with parents to discuss options, to inform the parents of relevant resources, support services and referral agencies. A plan for behavioral intervention at school and at home will be drawn up with the Director, teachers and parent(s) in agreement. Follow-up to assess the effectiveness of the plan shall occur within a month. The Director will follow the “Plan for Referral Services”, if indicated, as outlined above in this handbook.

If it becomes necessary for a child to be suspended or terminated from the school, the following conditions will be evaluated and considered:

- The health and safety of the other children cannot be assured
- The child’s developmental needs are not being met
- The child is very unhappy
- The child does not adjust to the group
- The child is a continued disturbance to the group
- The child continues to disregard the school policies
- The tuition account is in arrears one month or more
- Required paperwork or medical information is not submitted or updated
- Non-cooperation of parents or guardians
- Excessive late pick-ups

Parents will be notified in writing about the circumstances including the reason for suspension or termination. Parents will be asked if they would like to schedule a face-to-face meeting to discuss the issue. A copy of the letter and, when appropriate, minutes of the meeting, will be kept in the child’s folder.

When any child is terminated from the program, whether initiated by the parent or the school personnel, the teacher will prepare the child for leaving the school in a manner consistent with the child’s ability to understand. When the departure is sudden and the child and school are not given an opportunity to say ‘Good-Bye’, the teacher will write a simple note to the child that may include photos or drawings.

Procedures for Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

Department of Children and Families	1-617-748-2000
Child-at-Risk Hotline	1-800-792-5200

The Noah’s Ark Preschool staff has a responsibility under state law to report incidents of possible neglect or physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. (Massachusetts General Law chapter 119, section 51A).

The complete policy and procedure for reporting child abuse and neglect is kept in the office in our Policy and Procedure binder and can be available to you for review upon request.

Procedure for Allegations of Abuse or Neglect Against a Teacher

In the event that a Noah’s Ark Preschool employee is alleged to have committed an act of abuse or neglect against a child, the Director would follow the set of procedures set forth by the EEC as stated in 606 CMR 7.00. The complete policy and procedure for reporting child abuse and neglect is kept in the office in our Policy and Procedure binder and can be available to you for review upon request.

Parent Resources

Riverside Early Intervention	1-781-449-1884
Rebecca Sparrel, Needham Early Childhood Center Director	1-781-455-0416 x140
Police, Fire, Ambulance, Emergency	911
Poison Control Center	1-617-232-2120
Parental Stress Hotline	1-800-632-8188
Mass Department of Early Education and Care (Worcester)	1-508-798-5180
Needham Health Department	1-781-455-7523
Massachusetts Department of Public Health	1-617-624-5920
Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital--Needham	1-781-453-3000
Newton-Wellesley Hospital	1-617-243-6000
Children’s Hospital-Referral Service	1-617-665-2701
Social Service Referrals	1-781-453-5414
Needham Pediatrics	1-781-444-7186
Dedham Medical Assoc.	1-781-329-1400
South East Mass Legal Assistance	1-508-586-8393
Lawyer Referral Service	1-800-552-7046
Child Care Research & Referral	1-800-345-0131
Division of Public Health - Early Childhood	1-617-727-5089
Federation for Children with Special Needs	1-800-331-0688
Riverside Community Care, Domestic Violence	1-781-329-0909
The Nit-Picker (head lice)	1-781-449-2283
The Lice Aunties (head lice)	1-617-901-0620

Noah’s Ark Preschool has a complete Policy and Procedure binder in the office; parents may view this at any time.