

Bowdoin College Children's Center

FAMILY HANDBOOK 2024-2025



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Welcome to the Bowdoin College Children's Center. Our programs provide high quality, developmentally appropriate childcare to the children of Bowdoin College employees as well as the greater community. The Children's Center Family Handbook offers information, policies, and procedures as a resource for parents. The policies and procedures contained in the Family Handbook may be changed or amended at any time and the online version will be the most current version available.

Overview of the Center

The Children's Center has been a department of Bowdoin College since 1988, residing in a building designed specifically for our use in 2003. We receive support through Bowdoin College's administrative office in the way any department does and therefore appreciate a stable and carefully maintained existence while the professional staff provide high-quality and excellent care for children. As staff, we offer families the support they need to build strong partnerships and join with the Center staff to meet their goals.

Our Educator Team

The Children's Center offers the staff an opportunity to engage in intentional and thoughtful work, develop play-based curriculum and create deep secure relationships with children. Our team of staff and administrators work collaboratively to build a beautiful environment where we invite children to engage in rich experiences every day. We believe passionately in the care of our community's very young children and present ourselves as worthy of our families/respect and partnership in our work.

We are thrilled that you have chosen to bring your child to the Center for care. Each of us is committed to offering the highest level of quality, individualized, and intentional care to your child. In the following pages, you will read our articulation of the work we do here as meaningful and professional.

The administrative team invites parents to ask questions and offer reflections when any concerns or situation arises during their time here.

Martha Eshoo, Executive Director (meshoo@bowdoin.edu)

Betsy Myers, Assistant Director (b.myers@bowdoin.edu)

Bowdoin College Children's Center Mission Statement and Strategic Plan

The Children's Center provides an excellent standard of care by establishing a nurturing and inclusive environment for children, families, and staff. At the Center, staff offer a practice recognizing that building a community means intentionally creating an environment where everyone is welcome, and learning occurs when deeply attached relationships with adults and uninterrupted play exist.

Our Community and Vision

The Children's Center places itself in the context of Bowdoin College and its surrounding community. The Children's Center is, first and foremost, an inclusive community where we recognize race, culture, and ethnicity in the context of equity and equality. We strive to deliver practices that bring depth and meaning to the lives of all our children. Therefore, we recognize that unless we are aware of and committed to adjusting our work so that we are not socializing children to be white, we have not created an inclusive environment. For that reason, we examine our identities to recognize the power of our perspective as we teach and nurture children using anti-bias and anti-racist curriculum. Through our professional interactions, mentorship of staff, and partnerships with families, we work to bring consciousness to broader experiences. The diversity of our community, rich with perspectives and insights, offers the staff and families an opportunity to weave our lives together in meaningful ways.

Families are at once individual expressions of who they are as well as representatives of a group culture. Children will see themselves and their family's racial, ethnic, and cultural orientation reflected in photographs, stories, songs, and family participation at the Center.

Goals

- The Children's Center believes that our community is built in the context of recognizing racial and cultural identity and our work caring for children, creating curriculum, and building community.
- The Children's Center embodies a commitment to our children's best care by offering attached relationships with staff (through continuity of care), responding to children's needs to learn through play, building an outdoor environment that supports creative and investigative play, and creating deep partnerships with families.
- The Children's Center staff communicates with families about the practice, curriculum, and understanding of children's development.
- The Children's Center staff actively participate in rich and professional interactions with other early childhood staff in the community (through education, workshops, and trainings), create supportive work environments (breaks, planning time, meetings), and in partnerships with families (conferences, meetings, and daily engagement).
- With the College's support the Children's Center offers a well-managed and financially stable organization to the entire community.
- The Children's Center is a highly visible leader in the early childhood community and an advocate for high-quality caregiving as it meets these goals.

Objectives

We design environments that reflect racial diversity by reading books with exclusively BIPOC characters, offering dolls with black and brown skin tones, and singing music from a variety of cultures.

Additionally, we understand that as a predominantly white community, in a predominantly white state, we

must work in partnership with families to bring an understanding of race, diversity, and ethnicity to our children.

We invest in on-going professional development and training to understand racism, bias, and ethnicity. Staff participate in discussions about racism as they read, attend trainings, and build their work with children and their families to include dynamic conversations about inclusivity.

We provide continuity of care for children from birth – three years old and then in the next two years of their preschool program in an environment that is predictable, consistent, and nurtures learning.

We support young children's free and uninterrupted play in outside play yards that encourage investigations, discovery, and exploration.

Value the work of long-term partnerships between families and staff

We create standards of professionalism and practice at the Center and within the childcare community.

We maintain administrative standards that support a high-quality program through fiscal management and budget planning.

We offer workshops and trainings about care practices and outdoor play-based learning curriculum with outside childcare community members.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Bowdoin College Children's Center is committed to grouping children with their same aged peers. We believe that by building an inclusive environment where children are first recognized as members of their social group and their peers, they will learn to create a community that is rich in diverse abilities, skills, and cultures. A child shall be provided childcare services without regard to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex, or family compositions. In addition, toilet learning is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment in any group.

When languages other than English are spoken by parents and children

The Children's Center can access support to communicate with families verbally and in writing when English isn't their primary language through the College. Families will reach out to the administrative team to signal translation services should be provided. The administrative team is responsive to these requests and will reach out for translations and appropriate guidance. If translation isn't available because the language isn't known on campus, the administrative team will work with the family to find a shared language or a bridge for communication.

Rights of Children

In accordance with our State's Childcare Regulations and Licensing Standards, we will offer all children freedom from emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation as well as freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to their welfare. We offer each child an environment that meets the health and safety standards in the Licensing rules, and provide childcare services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex, or family composition. We treat children with dignity, consideration, and respect in full recognition of their individuality including but not limited to developmentally appropriate practices, materials, and equipment. We offer each child the right to an implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that child by community or State

agencies. In our inclusive environment, we offer children with disabilities the right to reasonable modifications to the Children's Center policies and practices.

Rights of Parents

Parents and Guardians are fully informed of the services which are included in the rate they pay for childcare as stated in their contract. Parents are fully informed when a recent inspection is conducted by the Department and are alerted to the outcome of that inspection either through the Center or direction to the Parent Portal where the Inspection results will be shared. If any action is taken against the Children's Center, this will be shared with in two business days.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Bowdoin College is a small community where trust and strong relationships are the foundation of the social network. The Children's Center is a part of this community and strives to build trusting relationships between families and staff. To follow federal and state regulations and to respect the privacy of everyone, confidentiality of information is of primary importance at our Center.

The child's file is kept in hard copy in a locked cabinet in an office that is kept locked when the Center is closed. Administrators and the child's caregivers had immediate access to the file, the parents and guardians have access as they request it, and once the corresponding forms are signed, therapists and other medical professionals may access the child's file. Our regulatory authorities have access to these files upon their request.

Confidentiality and Research and Educator Training

Center Parents/Guardians sign a release for educational documentation or photos of children's work by Center staff and the use of photographs by Bowdoin and its media. When prior permission is not given, the Children's Center will seek verbal approval when possible. All research projects involving direct collection of data from children/families require prior parent written informed consent, and as needed, oral consent from the child. Bowdoin students/interns will use an alias (rather than the child's first name) and a date of birth when writing for college assignments and course research. All College research projects need to be reviewed and approved by the Bowdoin College Research Oversight Committee.

Administration, Staff, and Programs

Center hours of operation

The Children's Center is open from 7:45 – 5:30 during weekdays through the year. The Center offers care to 46 children aged three months – five years old, in its four programs and offers a nature-based, play-based orientation. Families enrolled in the Center are always welcome to visit any area of the facility any time of the day's operating hours.

Organizational Authority, Licensing and Accreditation

The Senior Vice President of Finance & Administration/ Treasurer of Bowdoin College oversees the Children's Center. The Children's Center maintains a sound financial structure and works with the Finance office at the College receiving monthly financial reports, budgeting guidance, and preparation

and presentation for fiscal reviews. The Children's Center, as a department of Bowdoin College, is fully licensed by the Maine Department of Human Services and has been accredited for over a decade by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a nationally recognized organization of early childhood professionals. Maine Roads to Quality has credited the Center with Level 4 status that offers families a reduction on their income tax because of the high-level quality childcare they receive. This Staff Guidebook has been written in accordance with the Maine State regulations for group care settings and reflects NAEYC accreditation standards.

Records Management

The Children's Center maintains a separate file, accessible and maintained on-site, in the administrative office for each child we care for and each childcare staff member. Only authorized Children's Center staff may access these records. The Department's OCFS staff, parents and legal guardians may access them with 24 hours' notice.

All the files are kept in hard copy in the file cabinet and are scanned and kept in a password protected folder. The files are organized to include face sheet with emergency and contact information, medical and health information including all immunizations, screenings, and health assessments, medication forms, accident reports, and conference reports; as well as records of attendance including the date, year, start and end time of the daily attendance for each child in each program. The Children's Center holds the staff records of hours worked, breaks, vacation, and sick time in the College's workday system. All inactive files are kept for three years.

Additionally, records are maintained for fire drills and housekeeping of the building. If there was a report of child abuse/neglect these records would be maintained by the administration.

Staff Positions

Administrators and Staff

The Children's Center's staff includes the Executive Director, Assistant Director, co-lead staff, and staff. The Executive Director and Assistant Director collaborate with the co-lead staff and staff as they create curriculum, understand each child's development, and build partnerships with families and team members. All staff members are responsible for assuring compliance with the relevant State and federal statutes and regulations.

The Executive Director is the primary connection between the College and the administration of the Center. In this role, the Executive Director manages the fiscal, personnel, and facility management relying on the College departments and offices as resources. The Executive Director is responsible for the overall management of the operations of the Center and the mentorship and supervision of all the staff, hiring, and oversight of each program. The Executive Director holds a master's degree in early childhood education, Administration; and has extensive professional experience in the field.

The Assistant Director assists in overseeing the problem solving in the programs, guides staffing, supports the day-to-day operations of the Center, and collaborates with the co-lead specialists to supervise the subs and interns. The Assistant Director steps in when the Executive Director is not on-site or unavailable. If both administrators are out of the office, a co-lead specialist, who is identified to staff that day, will be the point person. The Assistant Director holds a master's degree in early childhood education and has professional experience working on a team and caring for children in a childcare setting.

Both administrative staff members collaborate to best serve the children, staff, and families. The administrative team is available to families each day either in person, by email, or phone to answer questions or respond to requests.

The co-lead specialists have worked at the Center in co-lead positions on their teams for over five years and are skilled to be mentors and problem solvers when scheduling, staffing, or parent concerns arise in their programs. Co-lead specialists work with the administrative team to advise and support programming, focus on new initiatives, and to offer insights about how the team is best supported. The co-lead specialists may hold a master's degree and will hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. In addition to their experience working in childcare, they will have had at least 5 years of experience at the Children's Center.

The co-lead staff and co-lead specialists are mentors for staff in each room. Their work has proven to meet a standard of excellence both in their professional work and in their academic achievement. The co-lead's philosophy of early care and education as well as their principles of practice are exemplary. Co-lead staff have strong interpersonal skills so that they can successfully mentor and guide staff on their team. Co-lead staff will have an associate or bachelor's degree including nine courses related to early childhood education and development. The co-lead educators are mentors for educators in each room. Their work has proven to meet a standard of excellence both in their professional work and in their academic achievement. Co-lead educators have exemplary practice and strong interpersonal skills so that they can successfully mentor and guide educators on their team.

The educator staff are recent graduates, new to the field, or coming from another program that demonstrate a strong interest in the field, successful completion of academic course work, and an openness to learn from mentors about philosophy and practice. They are trained as staff and hold a strong position in the room working with children, student interns, and substitute staff. The educator position is a mentee position with time for conversations with co-leads, reading, and training inherent in the work.

The co-lead specialists, co-leads, educators, and other part-time staff, and administration work on their own team to care for the children in their respective programs, as well as on a Center team to support all the children in the Center. We believe that collaboration and connection across the Center creates a strong community for young children.

Part time/Casual employees

The Assistant Director manages the interviewing, hiring, and training of casual employees who support the staff in our programs through naptime meetings, planning times, sick days, vacations, and other responsibilities. The administrative team is responsible for staffing each program with the right ratios and with consideration for the teams needs and the employee's strengths.

Once part-time employees are hired, they receive a detailed orientation. Like the orientation for a full-time employee, they complete the on-boarding and training that requires time and understanding of our work (policies, procedures, practices). This orientation includes: a tour of the Center, meeting the program team they will work with, determining their weekly schedule, and observing the program where they will work. The first days in the program will include observations, reading materials, and asking questions. As a part-time person grows in their work, they may assume more responsibility and move into consideration for a full-time position.

Parents are always interested in and happy to get to know the part-time staff, student interns, student employees, and volunteers. We keep photos of our employees on the website and ask student interns and volunteers to wear name cards to delineate who they are. Part-time staff is encouraged to introduce themselves to a child's family and support their dropping off and picking up needs. Part-time staff are not asked to hold responsibility for communicating delicate or sensitive information to parents.

Bowdoin College Students

Student Interns

As part of our mission, we strive to offer Bowdoin College students an opportunity to participate at the Center upon their request. Students from the Psychology Department's course: Infant and Child Development (Psych 210) work as student interns. They are welcomed to the rooms to observe young children's development, participate as support to the educator staff, and consider how their course materials are demonstrated in practice. Students participating through this course at the Center undergo a

brief orientation (offered during class time), which includes adherence to the confidentiality guidelines, sensitivity to young children's experiences at the Children's Center, suggestions for interacting with young children, and appropriate professional behavior in the room. Many interns are interested in becoming student-employees after this course is completed.

Throughout the year we also welcome students from other courses at Bowdoin who might need to complete a naturalistic observation, read to children, or observe their play. If individual research projects are to be conducted there will be formal written requests to parents for their signed and informed permission indicating that the Institutional Review Board approves this research.

Student Employees

During the year, we hire Bowdoin students who are interested and have shown promise to work alongside the educator staff in the room. Student employees assist in preparation of snack, cleaning the room between activities, preparing lunch, supporting the staff during nap time, and interacting with the children. All student applications will be initially reviewed with the office of the Dean of Student Affairs to ensure their "good social standing" in the College community. Additionally, a background check is completed, fingerprinting is done, and an hour-long orientation process occurs.

Only students who have worked with us previously and reached a standard of excellence, have completed first aid and CPR training, and have been oriented to the policies and procedures of the Center will be considered as substitute staff. A typical Bowdoin student employee will not be left alone with children unsupervised at any time. Trained staff will supervise them when they are with children.

Student volunteers

We are fortunate to have students who come to the Center to speak foreign languages, sing, or play musical instruments on a regular basis. In the past, this experience has been offered in connection to course work with faculty collaboration or as a volunteer experience. Volunteers are also vetted through the office of the Dean of Student Affairs. We know that the relationships between the students and our children is meaningful and fulfilling. At no time are volunteers left alone with children outside or inside. Trained staff will supervise them when they are with children.

Other college students

The Children's Center strives to become a model of excellence where staff and student come to learn the best practices in early childhood care and education. In this light, the Center developed strong relationships with the Early Childhood Departments at the University of Maine/Farmington, Southern Maine Community College, Central Maine Community College, and Andover College. We offer these students opportunities to complete semester or year-long practicum and research projects under the supervision of their professor and our administration. We balance the number of students in this type of work with the other demands on the programs so that it isn't a burden to the children or staff.

We are also a member of the Council of Child Development Lab Administrators and participate with the knowledge and experience from our work on the Bowdoin campus.

Personnel Information

Hiring/Screening

Because staff members at the Children's Center are Bowdoin College employees, they are interviewed and hired through Human Resources and the Children's Center. All the hiring policies and practices of the College apply to this process as well. In accordance with Maine State DHHS Licensing and the NAEYC accreditation standards, the Children's Center requires candidates to be at least 18 years of age, have a high school diploma or the equivalent, certificates or degrees in early care and education or related fields, and experience caring for and working with children. Additionally, efforts are made to hire a diverse and experienced staff to contribute to our inclusive community. We will not exclude or subject any candidate to discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, notional origin, age, disability, political beliefs, cultural heritage, or any other protected status.

Candidates who meet these criteria may receive an initial interview. Our hiring procedures begin with an initial interview at the Center with the Assistant or Executive Director. If the candidates return to continue interviewing for the position, they will spend two hours in the program observing, followed by an interview with the teaching team and other staff at the Center, and then a closing conversation with the administrative team.

Based on conversations with the teaching and administrative teams, a recommendation to hire is made and references are checked by phone conversations. With these steps completed, the hiring proposal and subsequent conditional offer of employment is offered to the candidate.

Children's Center Hiring Requirements

Upon receipt of the hiring proposal Human Resources requests that the candidate complete a background check with Sterling Talent Acquisition. When the hiring proposal is completed and all approvals are obtained, an offer of employment may be extended, contingent upon successful completion of a satisfactory background check and pre-placement physical. If the candidate accepts Bowdoin's offer, the pre-placement physical will be scheduled. An employee will not be eligible to start working until the background checks are complete and the pre-placement physical is passed.

Pursuant to Maine's Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities, 10-148 CMR Chapter 34, the personnel record of each employee in the Child Care Facility shall include a Record of SBI (State Bureau of Investigation) criminal history report, which will be applied for prior to or at the time of employment. This will include fingerprinting through Identigo (a state office for background checks), and a Motor Vehicle Records check. Employment offers are contingent upon the return of a satisfactory Record of SBI criminal history report, and the employee will not be permitted to be alone with a child until such time as a satisfactory Record of SBI criminal history report is received by the College.

On-going Trainings:

The Children's Center staff receives over 40 hours of training each year including Adult and Pediatric First Aid and CPR certification (as needed), health and safety training (annual renewal), mandated reporter training (every four years), building an inclusive community and other topics related to the care for young children. Currently our professional development work is focused on building an inclusive community. We are working on learning about how to create curriculum that is focused on equity and belonging. These professional development conversations are extensions of our work with experts over the past two years and the deeper practice we can create. We continue our work to grow and shift our understandings of curriculum and conversation during weekly team meetings, monthly staff meetings, and in professional development trainings.

Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

Abuse and Neglect Protocols

Abuse and neglect are defined as “a threat to a child’s health or welfare by physical, mental, or emotional injury, impairment, sexual abuse or exploitation, lack of protection for any of the above or deprivation of essential needs by a person with the responsibility for the child.” A person responsible for a child is defined as “a person with the responsibility for a child’s health or welfare, whether in the child’s home, another home or a facility which, as part of its function, provides for care of the child.” (Maine Childcare Facility Licensing Regulations).

All the staff at the Children’s Center are considered mandated reporters of abuse and neglect so the failure to report child abuse or neglect is a crime in the State of Maine and is punishable by law. The Executive Director at the Children’s Center is the designated reporter.

The following procedure is to be used to document and report suspicion of child abuse or neglect by any member of the child’s family or Center staff. The designated reporter will reach out to the Department of Health and Human Services, Child Protective Unit (our licensing agency) at 1-800-452-1999.

- If an educator knows or has reason to suspect that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, the staff person must notify the designated reporter and share the suspicions and observations. staff observe or are suspicious of abuse or neglect, they will document suspicious behaviors or incident in clear, precise, concise, dated observations.
- The Executive Director, the Center’s designated reporter will call the Department of Health and Human Services regarding suspected child abuse or neglect and discuss the situation with the case manager. With the case manager’s help, a decision will be made whether to officially report the incident.
- If applicable, the Executive Director will meet with the adult involved in the allegations to inform them of the documented incident or behaviors and to describe the process of the report to the Department of Health and Human Services. Depending on the nature of the abuse, it may be appropriate to discuss the observation with the adults before filing a report. However, the law does not require this.
- The Executive Director will document each interaction with the adults following the filing of the report to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. The Executive Director will keep all observations of the child and of the adults in question confidential. Observations may not be

disclosed to anyone but the parents of the child or the Department. No other individual has a legal right to the materials unless the parent has given written permission to release the observations to a specific individual.

- If the Department of Health and Human Services feels that the evidence is strong enough, based on the staff person's observations, a report of child abuse is filed. If a report of child abuse is filed, a report must be filed within 72 hours to NAEYC if it involves a staff member.
- The Executive Director will send a confidential memo to the Treasurer indicating that a report has been filed: e.g., "A report has been filed on _____ with the Department of Health and Human Services regarding suspected child abuse or neglect".
- In the event there is suspicion of abuse or neglect, the educator will discuss the situation with the Director or Assistant Director. The Director will then call the Department of Health and Human Services and discuss the situation with a case manager. With the case manager's help, a decision will be made whether to officially report the incident.

Mandated Reporter Training for staff

The Children's Center orients, trains, and meets with staff to guide them and inform them of best practices with children. Each staff person is required to complete an hour-long training as a Mandated Reporter through this link: <https://mainemandatedreporter.org/>

The Center is staffed so that there is enough supervision, additional adult presence, and coverage for breaks so that they are supported in difficult moments, have another person present in the event there is an interaction with a child that benefits from another set of eyes, and take breaks to refresh during the day. Through team meetings, mentorship, and discussions with the team in the program, staff have opportunities to ask questions, gather information, and guide their actions to those of the Center's practice.

Enrollment

The Children's Center website offers everyone information about the Center policies and procedures, calendar, programs, rooms, and educators. Parents are welcome to use the website and handbook as resources to answer questions. Parents may call their child's program or the Center's administrative team any time during the hours of operation. Please visit our website: www.bowdoin.edu/childrens-center

The Children's Center values and appreciates a strong relationship with all families. Contracts with families are considered annually. Bowdoin benefit eligible employees are considered "Bowdoin employees". All other families are considered community members for the purposes of enrollment.

Preference for a slot will be given in this order:

- Bowdoin College employee families currently enrolled in the program,
- Bowdoin College students,
- Bowdoin College employees who are enrolling a new sibling and have children who will be enrolled at the Center for the next academic year,
- Bowdoin College employees enrolling for the first time at the Children's Center,
- Community members.

Enrolling Infants

The Children's Center enrolls infants as young as three-months old. There are several considerations for this including the risk of fever, the resulting testing due to a fever, and the exposure to illness in group care. We use information from our pediatric health consultant as a guide for determining this age at entry.

Initial Visit and the Waiting List

We welcome families to contact us with their interest in the Center and questions about

enrollment. All families are guided to complete an application form available on the website. Bowdoin employees and Community members simply submit the application to the administration to hold a space on the waiting list. A family may enroll to place an infant on the waiting list up to 8 months in advance of the child's birth. Throughout the year, we keep the program closed to visits by prospective families who are not immediately in line for a slot to minimize the disruption to the children and staff during their day.

We have an open house in November so that parents can visit the Center on a Saturday to see the space and meet some of the staff. If parents would like a better sense of the Center, the website offers photos, descriptions, and a virtual tour.

The wait list is carefully managed for both Bowdoin families and community families. All families are kept current on our list serve and receive emails from us intermittently through the year. Families may contact us about their place on the waiting list; however, for community families, positions may vary because of Bowdoin College family enrollment. Our enrollment period begins on March 1 with enrollment offered to eight new infant families (first come first served) and returning Bowdoin families. At the end of March, any openings will be offered to Bowdoin families first and then community families.

As a family's name rises on the waiting list, we offer them a visit to the program that may include a tour of the facility and a meeting with the Executive Director.

Enrollment Contracts and Tuition

Bowdoin College families may choose to sign 10-month or 12-month contract. If parents sign a 10-month contract, they will place pay a retainer fee of 25% of their monthly tuition to hold the slot for this period.

- There are no fees outside of the tuition for the Children's Center. There are no additional fees for late pick-up of children.
- Parents may choose to take a vacation at any time during the year and will continue to pay tuition. Our tuition assumes all the holiday closures through the year.
- We will continue to charge tuition when there are weather-related closures.
- When the Center closes for other reasons, parents are not charged tuition and receive a credit to their account.

Enrollment Contract Options

- Contracts for the academic year enrollment: 10-month (mid-August – mid-June) are due by March 31 of that year.
- Full-year contracts (mid-August – mid-August) are due by March 31 of that year.
- Parents may submit their sabbatical plans (in February) for the following year.

Enrollment Deposit

Parents must pay a non-refundable enrollment deposit of \$100 to secure their child's place in the program. The Children's Center retains the original enrollment deposit to be used towards the program. The deposit shall be credited toward tuition obligation for the last month of the Enrollment Period. However, the deposit may be forfeited upon early withdrawal (prior to the completion of the Enrollment Period), or for unmet financial obligations.

Sabbatical Policy

Faculty who are on sabbatical may leave the Center for up to one year and return to their slot. To engage in this benefit, families must:

- Notify the Executive Director by February of the next enrollment year, (This is at least six-months- notice).
- Place a signed sabbatical contract agreeing to its terms in their file. If a parent would like to enroll for the summer program after an academic sabbatical, they may have that opportunity as a slot becomes available.
- Pay 25% of their monthly tuition each month to hold their slot while on sabbatical.

- Return to pay tuition to the Center at the beginning of the next academic calendar year at the latest. If a family has an extended sabbatical (beyond 12 months), they can discuss arrangements with the administrator.
- Each Bowdoin family in the Center can use this benefit regardless of their affiliation to the College. (If a spouse is taking sabbatical from a different institution and the other spouse is a Bowdoin staff employee, this would apply to them as well). Community members are not offered this benefit.

New Family welcome and orientation

New families will tour the facility with the Director, review the Family Handbook and some of the important policies, signed contracts, and determined billing information. During the child's first weeks, parents and child may stay in the new room together until they are ready to be separated for longer periods of time. This offers parent and child an opportunity to find a place to explore the room together, and to develop a "goodbye" ritual to use.

When parents feel comfortable in their child's space and when they share it with their children, everyone begins to see the room as an extension of home life and an experience with their family. When a child can share the room with their family, it can make the experience of separating and spending the day apart more manageable.

During the initial enrollment period, primary staff will provide families with a home visit. This is an opportunity to become more familiar with the routines and expectations of the program, for parents to become acquainted with the primary staff, and to have questions answered about the program. Often the older children enjoy seeing a primary staff at their home so that they can share their things and experiences with them.

Back Yard/Home Visits

Each summer, families who are new to the Center or moving to preschool are offered a home visit with their primary educator. This is a time for the family to get to know their primary, who will bond with the child, write conference reports, and be the connection between home and the Center. At the home visit, staff will spend time with the child to build the basis for a strong relationship. If the child is very young, this time will be used to connect with the families. This can be a time for questions and answers as parents learn about the room. In this conversation, the educator begins to learn about the child in the context of the family.

Child Records

All child/family records are confidential and kept in secure cabinets. All Center staff, interns and volunteers sign a confidentiality policy form. Only fulltime Center staff members have access to children's records on an educational or administrative need to know basis. Parents/guardians can review records of their own child in the Center office upon their request. Under no circumstances are records left out unattended.

Individual Emergency care plans will be completed for children with known medical or developmental problems that might require special care in an emergency. All these plans will be accompanied by a doctor's note prescribing the outline of care. We will make sure that all emergency information, the child's immunization forms, and health insurance information are kept updated by asking parents to review them in January and August.

Each child will have a file that includes:

- Emergency contact and release form – updated annually in September and checked in January.
- Permissions and informed consents
- Contracts for enrollment
- Current information about health insurance coverage
- Physical examination (updated and kept current within 6 weeks of enrollment and then annually)
- Dental, hearing, and eye exam records when offered by the family.
- Developmental history forms
- Up to date immunization records and supporting documentation for cases in which a child is under-immunized.
- Copies of referrals and reports from referrals
- Injury reports
- Transportation
- Medication consent forms
- Medical condition action plans
- Copies of reports and assessments of the child
- Copies of custody agreements when provided by the family.
- Any other relevant information regarding the child

Parents have the right to add any information or comments to their child's record. Parents also have the right to amend or delete any information in the child's record. Parents are entitled to access their child's record at reasonable times on request. If pertinent information changes such as new cell numbers, new work numbers, new address, and/or new emergency contact information, parents should let us know. We update the files annually in order to maintain current records about your family and your contact information.

Current Health Records are kept for each child. Parents are responsible for keeping health services current. The administration will help families complete these files by reminding them on an annual basis to update all health information for their child to attend the program.

Emergency Information

The emergency information parents complete on the pink card is filed in the administrative office, in the child's own room, and in the field trip packet that all staff take with them when they are away from the building. To help parents fill out the Emergency Information, we have included guidelines with the enrollment packet.

Re-enrollment materials

If a child is currently enrolled at the Center, the following forms must be completed at the beginning of each year:

- Enrollment contract
- Personal Information Form (only if your child is changing programs)
- Emergency Contact Information Card
- Updated Child Health Assessment Form or Updated Immunization Form
- Permission to Participate Form

Transition Plans and Orientation

The Children's Center practices a continuity of care model. This model supports the growth of the child in the Center with their primary staff over the period of years rather than months. These deep relationships in the first three years of life are found to reduce stress, support learning, and build creative and imaginative play. Parents and children appreciate the opportunity to move from one room to the next with their familiar adults and continue their relationships into the next year. As children leave the older toddler room for preschool, they are ready for new relationships, branching out to other adults, and the beginning experiences of making friends. At the end of August, when the older preschool children have moved on to kindergarten, the older toddler children make their transition to the preschool program, younger toddlers move to the older toddler program, and infants move to the younger toddler program. Our new infants begin at the "beginning" of the year with their group.

The transition from older toddlers to preschool recognizes important aspects of children's relational development. The children in the older toddler room will spend time with their new primary educator in their current room, outside in the play yard, and at a home visit. Children in preschool are grouped together in groups of six children with their primary. This relationship builds bonding and attachment relationships as they transition into their activities of the day as well as share meals and snacks together. During the summer, we invite returning pre-school families to meet with the older toddler families in a "welcome to preschool" conversation to answer questions and offer reassurance.

Parents are offered opportunities to visit the room at their convenience, see how the children experience the program, and understand how their child might experience the day. This is a foundational experience in strengthening this new relationship.

With infants, our focus is on the primary relationships developing not only between the staff and the infants but also between the staff and the parents. During July, there is an initial meeting with all the new families to meet each other and offer answers to questions. Over the next weeks, parents and infants will have a home visit and plan to spend time in the infant room acclimating themselves to group care, the nap room, and the staff during the first weeks of the year.

As new families experience the first weeks of the program, we offer extensive guidance and suggestions about how to help the infants manage the stress of attaching to a new set of adults. From our work with these very young children, we understand that under the age of 5 months, infants are much more able to attach to new adults as they have not begun discerning who they recognize as secure attachments. After this point, infants will need to connect to the staff through their secure attachments. Staff make themselves available for these relationships with families and their infants through the summer months to

prepare for full time care in September.

If a child is leaving our inclusive community for a special education program, therapeutic staff, IEP meetings, and parents/educator meetings will occur allowing for time to transition and say good-bye.

Terminating a contract

We are committed to trying all solutions before asking a parent to terminate their contract with us. The educators and administration work intensely with the parents if it seems that the Center is unable to meet the child's needs without further support from professionals and none are made available to the staff. Parents will be consulted and when appropriate, their request for referrals will be made to further support the child in the program. Every effort will be made to help the parents and staff support the child by accessing therapy services, consultative services, and in-service support. Administrators support the difficult situations by meeting with educators and parents to discuss the concerns and create positive plans to address significant challenges.

Families and staff can discuss a variety of accommodations to avoid terminating the contract. When these accommodations are made the tuition and contract are not renegotiated. If a contract is terminated, the Children's Center will support the family to identify and assess an alternative placement.

This policy complies with Federal and State non-discrimination and civil rights laws.

When suspension or termination of a contract is necessitated

The Children's Center makes every effort to ensure each child's and family's needs are well matched with the philosophy of the Center. During the parents' orientation to the Children's Center, we review the suspension and termination of contract policy with parents. The policy is part of the Family Handbook which is accessible on the Center's website and in a binder in each program and in the reception area.

We strive to partner with each family for their child's participation in our programs to the extent that we limit a need for any adjustment to a full-time contract. We do not use suspension, expulsion or other exclusionary measures as part of our on-going practice or consideration in a shared partnership with families for their child's care. Rather we build an inclusive environment that relies on the healthy and transparent partnership between families and the Children's Center team.

These are the steps we take to build an inclusive environment:

Develop on-going staff training focused on inclusivity, culture, abilities, and developmental milestones.

Observe, assess, and evaluate a child's behavior as part of their development and their parent conferences. If a concern arises, we will recommend the next steps.

Request parents to reach out to their pediatrician or Child Find for access to a Child Development Services assessment and/or evaluation. Based on the results of the evaluation and the Individualized Family Service Plan or the Individualized Education Plan, the Center staff will design a care program for the child.

Work in consultation with therapists as the IFSP and IEP plans are written. Often the Center will hire support for the child (typically reimbursed by the State) so that the child's continued participation in the program is both educational and functional.

Invite parents to meet with the team during consultative sessions as they are scheduled.

These are some rare reasons for termination:

Non-payment of tuition,

Non-compliance with the health care policies including vaccination protocol dictated by the State Licensing office, attending to the guidelines for exclusion due set by our health consultant team, or not following the direction or recommendations of the pediatrician working with the family. All needed forms (allergy plans as well as other medical plans) must be up to date and consistent with the pediatrician's current recommendations.

Inability of the program to meet the child's needs after consultation with therapists, counselors, and Child Development Services and considering a recommendation by the therapy/CDS team and understanding by the family.

Consistent and unpredictable behavior threatening the safety of other children or staff,

A lack of partnership between families and the Children's Center where assessments, evaluations, and access to resources is not forthcoming from the family when the child's behaviors challenge staff skills and abilities.

When a child's ongoing challenging behavior must be addressed

We meet with families in a conference or consultative setting to discuss the initial observations and concerns. We work carefully with families to build an on-going conversation about concerns, questions, and observations so that they are aware of our perspective as soon as one becomes apparent.

We initially assess the function of the behavior and often recommend a screening, evaluation, or an assessment by the child's pediatrician or someone recommended by them.

We may work with our mental health consultant to support our team as concerns arise however, we count on bringing in professionals through CDS to create an individualized plan suited for the child.

We recognize that focusing on the positive aspects of a child's development and behavior is critical to the child's healthy development and self-esteem. Therefore, strategies that emphasize the positive are most often used.

Negotiating Differences

We recognize that differences in opinion, miscommunications and conflicts can arise between parents and staff when working within such an intimate setting caring for children. The Center's primary goal is to maintain partnership with every parent at our center. When these problems occur, we have several goals in mind. First is to protect the children and the classroom as well as the integrity of the parent/staff relationship. For this reason, we ask that conversations about conflict, miscommunications, etc. are not

discussed within the classroom. We encourage parents to approach their primary educator, outside of the room either during drop off or in a scheduled meeting to address any concerns or problems. However, parents should be aware that the Executive Director of the program is a part of each team and can be approached at any time. Regardless of who the concern is brought to first, the program team, parents, and administration will be involved in the solution.

Several strategies may be implemented to solve such differences and resume partnership. Most of the time a meeting between parents and caregivers, sometimes with administration present is all that is needed to work through differences and resume partnership. In some cases, a result of this meeting may be that there is an action plan that will go into place and a follow-up meeting will be scheduled. It may be decided with the parents' permission, to seek support from the Center's mental health consultant. In some extreme cases, when partnership can't be resumed, the parents may be assigned to another primary educator in the room.

Transition to Kindergarten

We collaborate with families as their child transitions from the group to kindergarten. The Center administration has a binder in the office with community schools as resources for families. The administration can provide information regarding local schools and programs to families as they request help in finding the next place for their children. The administration and preschool staff collaborate with parents to consider how the child will transition and what supports might be available.

Tuition and Billing

Tuition

Tuition rates are set each year in February for the March re-enrollment period. Tuition is reflective of the exceptional quality of care, competitive market rates, and high level of professional educators in the program.

Enrollment Contracts and Tuition

Bowdoin College families may choose to sign 10-month or 12-month contract. If parents sign a 10-month contract and wishes to return the follow year, they will place pay a retainer fee of 25% of their monthly tuition to hold the slot for this period.

- There are no fees outside of the tuition for the Children's Center (supply fees, fees for late pick-up of children.
- Parents may choose to take a vacation at any time during the year and will continue to pay tuition. Our tuition assumes all the holiday closures through the year.
- When the Center closes for other reasons, parents are not charged tuition and receive a credit to their account.

Closings

We do close for certain holidays, professional development days and emergency weather closings.

- **Holidays**
 - The three days of the Thanksgiving week,
 - Christmas eve, Christmas, the days between Christmas and New Year's Day, and any additional days the College closes for,
 - Martin Luther King Day,
 - Juneteenth
 - July 4,
 - Memorial Day
- **Professional Development Days**
 - One day during the Fall break in October
 - One during the spring break in March
 - one week of professional development in August (the first week of the contract).
- **Emergency Closings due to weather**
 - When the College closes or closes any of their departments, they dismiss non-essential and/or essential personnel. The Children's Center staff are considered non-essential personnel and so we will remain open until non-essential personnel are dismissed. We have factored weather closings into the tuition rates.

Sibling Tuition Reduction

If a second child is enrolled in any of the programs, a 10% rate reduction will be applied to the lower fee. This reduction is available to participating Bowdoin employees only.

Employee Discount Program

The Bowdoin College Children Center strives to provide childcare for a variety of families in the Bowdoin Community. The tuition cost for the Center, while competitive, can be a barrier to some employees. To allow for employees at all salary levels to utilize the Center a discounted rate will be reviewed annually for a limited number of full-time* child openings (or equivalent), based on need and availability of openings.

**Full-time or equivalent of (e.g., a family with one child five days per week or a family with more than one child, each part-time, equivalent to five days per week)*

Eligibility

This program is available to Benefits eligible employees of the College and allows employees at all salary levels to utilize the Center at a discounted rate that will be reviewed annually for a limited number of full-time child openings, based on need and availability of openings. The discount is available for full-time openings. Employees must have a combined adjusted gross income of \$77,870 (adjusted annually) or less. The deadline for returning families who want to be considered for eligibility will submit their supporting documents no later than April 30 on an annual basis.

If parents are interested in participating in the Employee Discount Program, they will forward requests to be considered, to Human Resources along with prepared tax information any time before April 30 of that enrolling year. These latest federal tax form(s) will show the combined family* adjusted gross income (AGI) and/or parents will provide information regarding any extenuating circumstances that might be considered in the eligibility decision. If parents find they are unable to follow through with their contract after that conversation, they may withdraw their contract from the Center with no penalty by April 30.

**Where there are two parents, and they are filing separately both tax returns must be presented*

Tuition Obligation

Parents agree to pay the Children's Center tuition fees each month during the enrollment period. The tuition payments must be paid via payroll deduction when Bowdoin employees are paid. Payroll deductions will occur on the last day of the month, beginning with the first month-end after the start date of the Enrollment Period.

If an account becomes overdue by more than 30 days without prior approval of the Children's Center's Executive Director, the family's privilege of attending the Children's Center could be suspended until the account is brought current. If the account becomes overdue by more than 90 days, the Children's Center may terminate the contract and pursue collection of any outstanding debts through normal legal channels. Any reasonable collection costs and attorneys' fees necessary for the collection of any amount not paid when due will be added to that account.

Parents also understand that enrolling their child in the Children's Center program obligates them for the term of the Enrollment Period. Payment is required for each of the scheduled days in which the Children's Center is open, whether the child is in attendance. Credits are not available for holidays, staff in-service days, snow days, vacation days, or when the child is absent as these days away from care are factored into the annual rate of tuition.

Billing

The Bowdoin College Controller's Office is responsible for sending out all bills and receiving payment. These bills will be sent to the parent or guardian's home address.

Non-employee parents/guardians are billed by the Controller's Office. Charges are due upon receipt of the bill, but no later than the last day of the month for which services are billed. Checks for tuition payment are sent directly to the Bursar's Office.

Dependent Care Reimbursement

Employees may set up a dependent care reimbursement account by speaking to the Human Resources Department.

Tax Credit

Bowdoin College Children's Center is a Level 4 on the Maine Roads to Quality rating system that offers parents the ability to claim a tax credit. You can find this number on the website in your password protected folder.

Communication with Families

The Children's Center website offers everyone information about the Center policies and procedures, calendar, programs, rooms, and staff. Parents are welcome to use the website and handbook as resources to answer questions. Parents may call their child's program or the Center's administrative team any time during the hours of operation.

Website: www.bowdoin.edu/childrens-center

Open Door Policy

The administration and the staff have an "open door policy" for parents to access the building and their primary caregiver during the day. Parents may use email, phone calls, or in-person conversation scheduled through the administration to speak in depth with a staff member. When it may be that an immediate conversation is not possible, we aim to meet within 24 hours of a request to hear parents' thoughts. Typically, parents and staff meet outside of the classroom to have a focused and confidential conversation.

Parents are welcomed to participate in their child's day

We welcome families to participate in their child's day. In the infant program, parents are invited to feed their child, play in the room or outside with their child, or observe the play that is occurring naturally in the program. In the young toddler program, parents may find that they are outside with their child at drop off, arrive to feed them lunch and put them down for a nap, or have time in a rocking chair reading together. The older toddler and preschool programs have a more predictable schedule and parents may again find time for outside play, circle, or coming for snack or lunch. We invite parents in the OT and preschool groups to bring in their songs, cooking ideas, or other activities for children.

Newsletters from the Executive Director

Each week the Executive Director writes a note to the families about the program, offering logistical information, updates on happenings in the Center, and a transparent explanation of the programming.

Newsletters from the program team

Each team of staff chooses their method of regular, clear communication with parents. The younger classes offer daily sheets and updates on their room's curriculum and interests as well as their observations and responses to children's play. These daily notes primarily focus on supporting and sustaining an intimate partnership with parents. The older toddler and preschool programs offer curriculum posted on the website each week, daily notes home, and weekly emails offering an overview of the week to come.

Parent Portal

Each week the parent portal offers documentation of the children's experiences in each program. This work is designed to bring families closer to their child's engagement at the Center and learn more about the philosophy and practices.

Program meetings for parents

During the year, parents can participate in a variety of meeting opportunities. Each month the director

offers a conversation about a topic of interest or an open dialogue with parents. Past conversations include how children learn, preschool curriculum, behavior management strategies, children's development, sleep concerns, feeding ideas, and shared thoughts about the Center. Parents also can meet with the program team at this gatherings a couple of times a year.

Parent Representatives

The parent representatives will lead in each room by communicating with the families about upcoming events and organizing gatherings. Staff or administrators collaborate with parent representatives to do this work. Any parent may reach out to be a parent rep or co-parent rep.

Advisory Committee

Purpose and Activities:

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to offer a sounding board regarding issues related to the Center, its policies, and its families. The Director reports on the activities at the Center, including annual survey results; outlines proposed initiatives; and seeks input from members regarding Center policies.

Structure:

The Advisory Committee members are parents, former parents, staff, and College liaisons who serve one-year terms on this committee. We seek representation from each room but, given the volunteer nature of this committee, that may not always be the case. The Executive Director, Assistant Director, staff members, and representatives from the Finance Department of the College are also members.

Annual Evaluation and Feedback from Families

Each year, we ask families to complete an annual anonymous survey regarding their experience at the Center. The responses are summarized and discussed with staff and the Advisory Committee. A copy of the summary is presented on the Parent Portal. We appreciate and carefully consider all the feedback and ideas we receive and use this information to guide our professional development and program quality-improvement activities.

The Center Open House

During Professional Development week, we invite all families to attend the Center's Open House and welcome each other to the new year. During the year, we may invite families to join us for an Open House and see the work the children are engaged in outside using science, technology, engineering, and math and experience the artistic experiences in the programs.

English Language Learners

When welcoming an English Language Learner, we establish the most comfortable way for them to receive communication from us: in person, text, email, phone call, and in which language they would like to be communicated in. When parents do not read English, our communication to them will be offered verbally on a regular basis, through summarized information, or adapted for their use. The children's conference reports are offered to each family, so they see examples of their child's experiences during the day at the Center. We create these reports for ELL parents in photos, with bulleted sections to highlight

their child's development, and alongside a full report in English. We will translate the report into a language that they read so they receive a fully translated report.

The child enrollment materials include questions about how staff can best understand their children's race, ethnicity, and culture. Additionally, we ask about language preferences and communication preferences. After these questions and the initial enrollment material is collected, the primary staff person for an ELL family works with them to intentionally communicate with them through their preferred communication method. We are careful to individualize communication with parents so that everyone has access to the staff and administration at the Center.

Communicating about Children's Development

Daily communication and portfolio documentation

In our infant and toddler programs, we keep daily records of their experiences and curiosity. These notes begin with the family's assessment and record of their child's morning and the infant team picks up to record their day. We return these notes at the end of each day and keep a carbon copy. The photo documentation of their development and investigations as well as analysis and notes are collected in a binder for them to bring into their next years at the Center.

In the preschool groups we record pertinent information about the child's day (eating, napping, and toileting as appropriate) and their experience of the environment that day. We also build a portfolio documenting each child's growth and development throughout the year. These portfolios will include photos of the child, recipes they may have used, songs they sang, art they produced, and monthly summaries of a moment in time during the years at the Center. When a child leaves the Center, they will have this portfolio charting their time in each room as they grew.

Assessment

The Children's Center believes, and practices care for children and families that is built on these tenants. All children are creating their own developmental path during these first early years of life. Children and families deserve an opportunity to spend time in each stage of development, examining the challenges, the changes, and the concerns. Often our work with families has shown us that over time there is success and celebration when a child is allowed to determine their path of development. We are also aware that there are times when support from developmental specialists may be needed. Our role in this process is to facilitate the family's understanding of who their child is considering our professional observations. For this reason, we look for a solid partnership with families from the time they enter the Center.

Teaching Team meetings as part of assessment

Program staff meet weekly to discuss and analyze their ongoing documentation of children's learning and plan future curriculum. During these meetings, they consider which areas of development or which children will be the focus of observation and documentation for the coming week. Co-lead staff also work on their own for two hours a week to manage the documentation and collection of materials for each of their primary children.

Observations and Note Keeping

Initially the staff use a child information form at the beginning of each enrollment year. Parent insights and information are reviewed at the Home Visit in an intimate setting so that parents feel comfortable providing staff with important and pertinent information in this initial conversation. The questions in the child information form focuses on family care practices, information about health history and routines, as well as prior care experiences, family culture, primary language use, and parents' goals for their young children.

In the day-to-day care with children in the program, staff observe children's play, investigations, and interactions with others. The notes are taken in a systematic way as children engage in curriculum and relational activities throughout the year. These observations are used to inform our curriculum development, skill support, and individual accommodations. Staff also use the anecdotal observations as

the basis for the quarterly/semi-annual conference reports.

Developmental Checklists and Documentation

Developmental checklists and documentation of children's individual growth are two pieces of information that we work from to substantiate the conference reports we write during each year. These conference reports are based on developmental checklists as a first step in drawing up formal notes on a child's development. These checklists help us formulate our thoughts and observations according to typical developmental pathways, while offering specific developmental information regarding individual children. We observe children in their play throughout the day to gather information about their individual development.

Developmental Narrative Assessment and Conferences

Based on the various assessments collected during the year, our staff write "developmental" narratives or conference reports regarding each child's overall development on two (older toddler and preschool), three (younger toddler) or four (infant program) occasions during the year. Using these portfolios, developmental checklists, and other assessments as supporting documentation, staff meet with parents at their conference meetings.

When these are written, parents/guardians and staff meet to discuss the child's development and experiences at the Children's Center. This is a time for parents to share their observations and experiences at home with their child while the staff offers a perspective from time in the program. Staff reference the daily notes, journals, portfolios, meetings with parents, and documentation panels to inform these written reports. Parents receive a written document of the educator's observations and thoughts in addition to meeting with the educator. Parents are also welcomed to confer with staff during the year informally or whenever they believe a meeting would be helpful.

We have more information about this process on the Parent Portal on our website.

Documentation as Evidence of Learning

We collect a variety of documentation materials that show evidence of children's learning.

These materials include photos, children's artistic representations, and sometimes transcriptions of key conversations, as well as favorite songs, cooking activities, verses, and preferences. Documentation is both a collection of representations as well as the careful analysis by staff of those expressions to figure out responsive curriculum.

Conferences

Parents/guardians and educators meet (quarterly for infants and semi-annually for older children) to discuss the children's development and experiences at the Children's Center. This is a time for parents to share their observations and experiences at home with their child while the educator offers a perspective from time in the room. Educators reference the daily notes or journals, portfolios, meetings with parents, and documentation to inform these written reports. Parents receive a written document of the educator's

observations and thoughts whether they choose to have a meeting. Parents are also welcome to confer with educators during the year informally or whenever they believe a meeting would be helpful.

Diagnostic Testing

Based on their ongoing informal assessments, the Children's Center staff, in collaboration with families, may identify the need for more formal assessments and testing. Staff never diagnose a developmental delay or concern, but rather are trained to identify indicators of developmental variations from typical development. Appropriate intervention specialists from the school district, county, or other agency conduct an initial screening and, if indicated, proceed with further assessments and standardized testing (most often involving observation of children performing specific tasks). Results are used in conjunction with staff and parent assessments when making decisions on how to move forward.

The Children's Center in relation to External Standards

Currently, efforts are being made to ensure greater accountability in the public schools for children's education. The most notable effort is the No Child Left Behind Act proposing reforms to build the "mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America". This is demonstrated through the articulation of learning expectations for children. However, critics of these frameworks point to the increasing use of formal testing to measure children's learning.

A critical piece to the No Child Left Behind Act is the level of "preparedness" that children should have as they arrive at school. The No Child Left Behind Act is important because it ensures that public schools are teaching students what they need to know to be successful in life. It also draws attention to the need to prepare children before they start school.

President Bush believed that all children must begin school with an equal chance at achievement so that "no child is left behind." In 2002 the Bush Administration proposed a new early childhood initiative Good Start, Grow Smart to help states and local communities strengthen early learning for young children. This required states to develop early learning guidelines for the preschool years. NAEYC advises that early learning standards need to address all areas of a child's development, recognize the importance of individual differences in ability and interests, and be responsive to socio- cultural backgrounds. For more information go to: <http://www.maine.gov/education/fouryearold/guidelines.html>.

Rather than prescribing the content and methods of teaching, the Children's Center staff use external frameworks as a tool for informing our choices about curriculum direction and to support our assessment of children's learning. For instance, staff might observe a group of young toddlers curious about how to step over a puddle. Staff would consider the questions they observe children exploring in those moments. During team and planning meetings the staff would make connections to developmentally appropriate learning goals for the children in their interest, skill, and ability areas. This work might easily bridge from kinesthetic experimentation to science investigations through discussions of the whole child's development.

We know that research and experience show that learning and development varies greatly during the early years of life among individual children. For this reason, our work reflects a strong developmental foundation as we focus on the intimate knowledge we have of each child in our care.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Bowdoin College is a small community where trust and strong relationships are the foundation of the social network. The Children's Center is a part of this community and strives to build trusting relationships between families and staff. To follow federal and state regulations and to respect the privacy of everyone, confidentiality of information is of primary importance at our center.

The status of children and families is discussed in an appropriately private space only by Center staff or therapists who are working with or have a legitimate educational need to discuss a concern about a child or family. For the safety of the child, staff and administration may need limited information regarding a child's medical condition (ex: allergy information) and so it is provided as needed to personnel working directly with children.

Personal information regarding children and families is only shared as needed or requested by the family/staff, keeping in mind the privacy of everyone. When information is collected, it cannot be released to other agencies or individuals without written permission from the parent/guardian.

Program Philosophy

Our Early Care and Education Overarching Philosophy

Our philosophy is both grounded in play and relationship which are themes that we see cross-culturally.

From the images that are recalled with “it takes a village to raise a child” to our Center’s work with families to build strong and trusting partnerships, we work to draw on cultural practices for child rearing. While we aren’t committed to one cultural motif, we do find a resonating impulse in the European model of having children play outside in nature-based curriculum and sorting through what was learned from “other care” and attachment at the turn of the 19th century. Much of the work on attachment crosses cultures as we see other adults caring for and raising children from infancy happening as a daily occurrence or as a cultural practice.

At the foundation of this conversation of philosophy and practice is our work of recognizing cultural differences and striving to build an inclusive community where we find ourselves understanding multiple perspectives, recognizing variations in parenting, and listening carefully to parents’ hopes for their children. We know that the commitment to a partnership is often built on a path of wonderful and difficult experiences. We invite trust and transparency as we talk about our work and family visions. We hope to answer questions and invite new perspectives as we learn and grow from our relationships.

The staff provide children with developmentally appropriate responsive care and curriculum throughout their day. While this manifests differently in each age group, the tenets of this philosophy include a commitment to deeply respect each child. Through research, we know that children’s experiences of group care impact their relationships so secure primary relationships with the educator staff are paramount. Through these secure and caring relationships, trust is built between the young child and the staff. We focus on creating these trusting relationships to lead children to deep, rich play unfolding in the social, cognitive, and physical worlds.

The staff also recognizes the critical partnership with families that offer the basis for a secure relationship with children in each program. Based on the information collected in our intake forms, through home visits, and in daily conversations, the educator staff and administrators build program environments to be responsive to family culture and diversity. It is through these interactions that curriculum planning can be informed, teaching methods can be modified, and young children can be understood. Families are invited to monthly gatherings with the Executive Director to discuss topics that interest them and to share information about child rearing practices. Throughout the year, families from each program gather to meet with their program team and hear about the curriculum as well as share their ideas and thoughts. Often there are all-Center gatherings (clothing swaps, end of year dinners, and other parent rep organized functions) that bring the community together to share experiences.

Play is the curriculum

The Children’s Center is committed to and provides a warm and caring setting which stimulates young children in the discovery of themselves, others, and the world around them. Of vital importance at the Center is the nurturing of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as they discover themselves as problem solvers, communicators, and peers. We support them as they try out new skills and reach those important milestones across all domains.

We also understand that the young child’s brain is developing to become a fully functioning adult brain. In these early years, each hemisphere of the brain is not integrated with the other and so we see the right hemisphere collecting experiences through play to build “understanding” of the world while the left hemisphere of the brain is building to learn didactic information. As children play and build their experiences, they create a foundation of understanding from which to learn. Additionally, the separation of hemispheres means that the brain is “untempered”. There is not the ability to think about more than one thing at a time, there is a lack of perspective taking, a lack of ability to respond to another’s needs or

wants, and a lack of understanding for navigating the adult world. Because of this, play is raw, creative, egocentric, and imaginative.

The staff ensures that play is filled with rich investigations and invitations to explore, extend, create, and imagine. Program materials reflect objects that the child needs to imitate what they see and experience, use in a variety of ways, and freely chose to employ without direction or waiting. The materials that children use in multiple ways are “loose parts”. These are typically stones, stumps, blocks, sticks, sand, dirt, water, and leaves. These are also seen in the open-ended nature of the indoor space with cloths, bowls, pegs, and knitted or felted objects. These materials along with tools to use in the program to care for the room are presented as well.

Along with this open-ended play invitation come open-ended conversations where differences, similarities, and social identity are considered. Children are read to, told stories to, and offered conversation about life outside of their program and the Center. By having conversations and engagement in considering gender, race, and identity with children, we are beginning the understanding that there are different ways of being from what is experienced in our Center.

Our program responds thoughtfully and directly to contemporary concerns about childhood. The increasing levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in young children, the lack of opportunity for movement, and other learning challenges plague our youngest children. Therefore, we work to curate an environment that addresses the sensory overstimulation that many of the youngest children experience. It is through the educator staff’s team meetings that curriculum is articulated to address these issues. We share our planning and execution of these moments with families on our website in the Parent Portal.

Behavior Guidance

In the first years of life, children are developing in many ways. Their brains are forming and have natural limits protecting them from too much information that could flood their understanding of the world. This means that their behaviors may appear single-minded, hyper-focused, or unwavering. Often these behaviors are due to physiological as well as cognitive, social, and communicative development. At the Children’s Center, we strive to understand development at a deep and meaningful level to meet the children where they are and offer them guidance as they grow and appreciate the world. To this end we do not use time out, exclusion, shaming, teasing, humiliation, or denial of food, rest, or access to care. We will not use corporal punishment (hitting or shaking) coercion, or psychological abuse to encourage an understanding of expected behaviors. We use songs, directions, clear communication, loving gestures, choices, and reflection to support children as they meet frustration, disappointment, sadness, or a differing perspective.

The staff collaborate with each other, parents, and the children to develop a caring community where there is respect for each other and the environment. The process may include developing community celebrations, rituals, and routines in the programs: attention to the relational qualities of our program and communication. We understand that children imitate the behaviors and actions that adult’s model for them. The staff strive to act in ways that are worthy of the child’s respect and imitation.

The educator staff will use their actions as models for children to imitate rather than verbal directions or cues. Singing to children as part of a routine or during a time of stress will support their understanding of what is expected. The staff will use specific songs with discrete routines so that children focus on the connections between what is happening and the cue for their participation. Often a child becomes frustrated or anxious when they are not sure of what is expected. We understand that by standing by a child with a quiet voice reassuring them will offer the support they need to work through a difficult

moment. If a child needs individual attention and a break from the activity in the program, staff will receive additional support for the short term.

At times children will meet with frustration. These frustrations are expected and honored by the staff.

Rather than solve the program for the child, staff may state what seems to be frustration or lend a hand to resolve a physical conflict. Using an approach that orients the children to trust the staff helps them navigate these difficult moments successfully. Because of the staff's secure-based relationship nearby for support these experiences will be informative and part of their social world.

Including all children

The Children's Center welcomes all children to our inclusive environment. Our program's philosophy embraces our work with children with disabilities as well as children who are typically developing. We recognize the parents as the first point of contact with the therapy team when working with a child with a disability. Our work with the child comes from the therapist, through the parents, and most often is best delivered in a consultative model. Parents are partners in offering skill development, support, and consistent and predictable care. Therapists work with the educator staff to share information, but their primary point of contact is the family.

We have skills in working in transdisciplinary relationships with therapists and can support staff who work with children when there are concerns. The Children's Center, in conjunction with the parents' input and the child's IEP or IFSP team, will strive to offer specific accommodations to support the child's participation at the Center. This may include making accommodations to daily activities or furnishing and materials to enhance the child's experience.

Co-lead staff who have the primary relationship with the family will be the contact people for the therapists' delivering services in the room. The contact will consist of emails from therapists to parents and co-leads about scheduling visits, sharing information to continue strategies and skill development for the child after therapies, or preparations for an IFSP or IEP meeting. Co-leads will follow the suggestions and the direction of the therapist team with the parents' approval. No recommended therapies are offered to the child until the parent is aware of them and agrees to their implementation. Recommendations for inclusive education rest on the therapies being offered through consultation and time spent with the child. Our work focuses on managing the child's needs as well as the nature and cost of accommodations, impact of the accommodations on the program, financial resource of the program, and the availability of funding or services. Should the necessary accommodations create an undue burden to the Center, the administration would work with the parents to make an alternative recommendation.

Language Learning

Young children learn language in a developmental sequence beginning with the experience of being understood. During these very early months and years, the staff's deep relationship and bond with the children offers them the rich experience of being understood. Their signals are decoded, their intentions are recognized, and their attempts to communicate with gestures and words are received. When young children see themselves as communicators, their experience informs their actions, leading them to experiment and communicate more fully.

We also know that a language-rich environment is critical to language learning. Staff create environments that send signals to children through song, gesture, storytelling, and book reading. Each room offers children frequent exposure to these experiences daily. Staff speak to them during care routines particularly so that the one-on-one relationship that is part of a care routine is marked with language, song, and emotional connection. Because children learn first through emotional connections, we integrate

our most important teaching through relationships in the most secure and attached moments. This occurs throughout the Center.

The curriculum is also intentionally designed to include language-learning opportunities. Staff consider where children are in their development and how to support their emerging skills through the materials and invitations in the programs. There are story-telling opportunities daily to small groups of children as well as story reading in the cozy areas. Children are offered books to look at in the reading areas so that they begin an independent relationship with books and print as well as illustrated materials.

As toddlers grow, they recognize the symbols that are present in their play can be extended to their language and they begin to “use their words”. These moments are reinforced with labeling, actions, and response to requests. Through their intimate relationship with staff and their growing sense of independence, they communicate verbally and intensely.

Older children also will recognize print and language as directive and instructive, so they search their environments for how we gather information about the world. Directions on packages, labels on containers, and words on daily sheets become interesting artifacts to them. We offer them their own photo albums, stories about their lives, and signals around the room for their information. In this way, they begin their journey toward literacy and language use.

In the early years, proximity to caregivers, consistent and predictable practices, and anticipation of having their needs met, allows infants to play throughout their day calmly and independently. We offer infants opportunities to play without interruption and direction as we recognize that infants are creative, self-motivated, and curious learners from their first months. In the first years, physical development is a paramount skill to master so infants are offered maximum freedom to move in their indoor and outdoor play spaces as they can and follow their trajectory for development.

Infusing our Center with diversity for what children learn

Children are observers by nature and learn through the role models in their world. Each day at the Children’s Center, young children notice fathers and mothers talking with each other as they enter the building, meet the staff, and converse about their child’s care. They can see men and women care for them in their program as they communicate about tasks and roles. On-site men and women work to care for the building, the property, and the rooms. There are abundant opportunities to see men and women mowing the lawn, shoveling, cleaning, and fixing things that have broken. Students from the College come to the Center to observe for classes, work, and volunteer in our music and foreign language programs.

In these ways the richness of authentic collaboration is modeled for children in each room so that they can build an understanding of roles and interaction styles. We draw on research from Janet Gonzalez-Mena (2007) to inform how we address diversity in our programs for young children. Rather than create event-specific lessons for didactic teaching, we infuse our curriculum with the diversity of cultural values and practices in caring for children. We create an individualized and responsive curriculum that recognizes some cultures’ wish to promote placid styles of interaction and temperament. We offer fewer stimulating environments than may traditionally be seen in our typical dominant-culture centers.

The Children’s Center also understands that there are some overviews of cultural values that would

capture these images. Cultures that value stillness and calm influence our work as we notice the active cultures' value of exploration and movement. Where infants develop problem-solving skills independently, we adopt a child-directed approach related to the calm, quiet tones. It is also clear that standard early childhood practice emphasizes the importance of the physical environment and its heavily stocked shelves of materials. For example, in our programs we also include some the Japanese and Chinese cultural values where the focus on an abundance of toys, materials, and equipment not as present as interpersonal interaction is. Additionally, we model how many African American families often focus their children to personal cues and emphasize the importance of focusing on people for their learning rather than objects.

Program Philosophies

At the Children's Center, we understand that there are two interwoven paths that lead to children's learning through play. One path is the creation of a rich landscape that fosters a nurturing world where the healthy development of attachment and emotion can thrive. We strive to create a haven where children can trust, predict, and experience security. With this solid emotional foundation, they play and so they learn. We protect their play and learning from the circumstances and obstacles of group care that can be distracting; and thus, minimize the impact of group care on children's learning.

The other path is the engaging environment where substantive and deep play offers cognitive growth and social development. When young children play, they refine motor skills, explore the physical properties of objects, learn cause, and effect, and engage in means-end problem solving. We intentionally offer materials that deserve children's attention, investigation, and exploration while we protect children's play from interruption by offering a quiet adult-presence.

Ratios for care

Maine Childcare Facility Licensing Regulations assigns these ratios to these age groups (our actual ratios for fulltime staff are in parentheses). We have additional support staff in each program to cover breaks, administrative and planning time, team meetings, and conference writing and training times.

Infants: 1:4 or 2:8 (4:8)

Younger toddlers: 1:4/2:8 (4:9)

Older toddlers 1:8/2:12 (3:9)

Preschool: 1:8/2:12 (3:19)

We do not leave staff alone in a room with children outside of the first and last 15 minutes of the day. Each program has a staff member present in the building during those times and an administrator is also present during the hours of operation.

Our Programs

Infant Program

Philosophy

The Bowdoin College Children's Center Infant Room provides a warm, rich environment where we offer continuity of care, where one-on-one interaction between the primary educator and the child extends through the first three years. It is in these one-on-one interactions, that children have the emotional support they need to thrive with someone who knows and understands them. The goal of the infant team in this model of care, is that they and the cohort of children travel through the first three years of life together.

Coupled with this care model is our partnership with families where we learn through conversations with parents about their culture, their values, their practices, and their hopes for their child's care. Building a strong communicative relationship that is built on trust is the foundation of their child's world at the Center.

Meeting the infant where they are respects their growth and interests as well as the freedom to develop at their own pace. While infants in their first year are focused on managing their bodies, we build a program with floor-time as a central focus. With a caregiver nearby, infants learn to move and stretch building self-confidence and physical control. In a room designed to be calming to the young child's senses, our environment prepares the conditions for deep, concentrated play, to reduce stress for the babies. Through predictable forms, routines, and rhythms we focus on caregiving relationships, believing that the tasks of daily life for an infant provide a natural time for the child to engage in what directly involves them. Our practice focuses on the child's engagement with the process of being fed, diapered, dressed, and napped rather than just the completion of the task. We use songs to mark our transitions so that the children learn to anticipate what is coming next.

Toys are selected carefully, and we use natural materials, when possible, that are based on their interest, safety, and flexibility. Outside, infants find new physical challenges (e.g., uneven ground, places to climb) and tactile sensory experiences (e.g., sand, grass, trees, bark, mud, water, rocks, snow). This integrated approach to caring for the young child, builds upon the latest research in brain development, attachment, and best practices for infant care.

Daily Schedule

Arrival and Drop Off

The arrival and drop off in the infant room is an interactive moment between the parent, caregiver, and child in the room. Parents arrive to settle their child in the room, changing a diaper if necessary, placing them in the play space, and preparing to leave for the day. If a parent wants to feed their child or help them to a nap, they are welcome to do that as well. Please fill out daily notes about their child's night and morning prior to arriving so the caregivers use that information to proceed into the day.

Morning/Afternoon Play

Depending on each child's schedule, in the morning the infants may be freely exploring the room moving their bodies and exploring the natural materials and toys that have been selected. The play space consists

of many objects to pull up on, reach and grasp, and manipulate. Throughout this time infants are being fed, diapered, interacting with an adult, being cuddled, held, rocked for a nap, or exploring the outdoors. These experiences may occur between an infant and an adult or alone in the presence of an adult.

Eating Small Meals

Infants are fed on their own schedules (however they are offered food every two hours per NAEYC standards). Bottle-fed or nursing infants are offered feedings by caregivers or parents on their individual schedules. As they grow older, three or four small meals are brought from home and offered by their primary caregivers. Infants are held for bottles or lap fed when they eat solids. As they grow older, they transition to a small chair and table to create a mealtime experience.

Morning/Afternoon Naps

Typically, infants take a morning nap at some point during the first half of the day although the times vary. The process of going down for a nap is individualized and continually discussed between staff and parents. Infants may be rocked, read to, and sung to in a darkened quiet setting until they are ready to sleep in individual cribs or on mats.

Outdoor Time

Outdoor opportunities are offered throughout the day. In the summer we have a grassy yard, blankets, and a sand and water area for all the infants to explore. When the weather is warmer than 25 degrees, we will bring mobile infants outside for play. We have sleds, snow piles, and paths for crawling and early walking. We strive to invite them to meet challenges, opportunities, and enticements through interaction with their world.

Departure & Pick Up

As the day ends for each infant, we prepare them for their departure. This may include a bottle, meal, nap, and/or diaper change. We offer quiet activities like finger plays, stories, songs, and small chores like folding laundry or putting toys away. Once we connect with their parents, we offer a daily note filled with information about the child's day to complete their transition to home.

Young Toddler program

Philosophy

Young toddlers are moving in their environments and celebrating their new skills of climbing, walking, running, and standing. In this program, we design their play opportunities to build from those in the infant program so there are beautiful handmade climbing boxes, structures, and ramps to challenge and develop these blossoming skills. As young toddlers meet their physical successes, they become adept at carrying and lifting, pushing, and pulling objects through space. In these cases, we have weighted and heavy objects to offer resistance and heft to their movements as they build strength, endurance, and interest. Outside play occurs daily for upward of three hours in all kinds of weather. This affords the young child opportunities to experience their world as it changes in weather.

The intentional and deliberate relationships in the young toddler program help them enter a graceful dance with their primary educator adult as they look for proximity, predictable rhythmic routines, and consistent expectations. Our children are offered individual schedules, responsive care, and attention to their needs for dependence in the context of the group. The purposeful and simple environment we create avoids flooding the children with an overabundance of decisions and stimuli. Instead, we rely on the outside environment for hours of daily play in all weather and the inside space to extend the close and intimate investigations.

Daily Schedule

Arrival

Children arrive to the YT program ready to wash their hands, have a diaper change if needed, and head out to the play yard. Parents offer notes on the night and morning and caregivers use this information to offer seamless care into the day.

Early Outdoor Play

This morning time outdoors is spent getting our yard ready for the day as a group. Children participate by helping with the setting-up chores (taking buckets and shovels out of the shed, removing the tarps, preparing the rain barrels, finding materials needed for the day) alongside their caregivers and moving into play as they feel ready. There is a quiet area with blankets for children who need to have some quiet time with a caregiver before joining the group and rigorous play.

Morning and Afternoon Snack

Children have snack either in laps or at a table in a small group. Their eating schedules are reflective of when they last ate. Those with earlier breakfasts or lunches eat before those with the latest feedings.

Diapering/Toileting

Children are diapered throughout the day in two-hour intervals or as needed. They may choose to try the toilet toward the end of their year in YT once they have begun to experience the beginning steps of toileting.

Outdoor Play & Exploration on the Play Yard

The major portions of the day when children aren't involved in routine care are spent outside playing in our natural play space. Children play in the sand, use mud and water, build with loose parts, or climb on the stumps, boulders, and ramps. The materials are familiar and the changes to the space occur primarily because of the weather. Puddles collect in the rain, snowbanks are formed into slides, warm days bring rain barrels filled with water for streams that run through the sand and over the rocks. Staff sculpt the space so that there are hills of sand, trenches with rocks, ramps and pallets balancing on stumps and logs, or tents set up over stick homes. The familiarity of the environment gives way to creativity and imaginative play.

Lunch

Children transition inside from their play to have their lunch from home. During this time, we intentionally focus on meeting needs that will offer them comfort during their meal and transition to nap. We change their clothes, offer a fresh diaper or the toilet, hand wash, and take time to reconnect. When all children are settled inside, they sit together with their group for their lunch that has been unpacked from their lunchbox and offered to them on a plate at their place.

Story, Diapering and Rest

As children prepare for their nap, they have a diaper change, and their rest begins with a small group gathering for a story. As they drift to sleep, staff sits with them singing a familiar song and rubbing their back as desired.

Wake Up Routine

As children wake, they have time to sit with staff and slowly move into their afternoon activities. Typically, they transition to a diaper change, then to their “second lunch” snack, and finally to outside play.

Room Chores & Departures

By 4:00 staff and children start to close the play yard participating together in caring for the environment and tucking things away for another day. These chores and closing of areas signal to children that the end of the day is coming and that they will transition to inside play. The last hour of the day is marked with final routine care moments, child-led activities in the room, and stories with their staff.

Older Toddler Program

Philosophy

The deep connection between emotional development and learning through play is foundational as children build their skills for academics and social relationships. Our practice with three-year-olds is to offer adult presence throughout the day as a backdrop in the landscape of their interactions with peers and their investigations with materials. The richness of these relationships with adults allows for an authentic focus on them, relationships with other children, and understanding of who they are in the world. Their staff afford them time, space, and invitations to pursue play outside and inside to consider problems, dilemmas, and solutions.

Daily Schedule

Arrival

Children arrive at the Center and wash their hands, use the bathroom, or are diapered and then head outdoors for early morning outdoor play. Parents offer notes on the night and morning and staff use this information to offer seamless care into the day.

Early Outdoor Play

This morning time outdoors is spent getting our yard ready for the day as a group. Children participate by helping with the setting-up chores (taking buckets and shovels out of the shed, removing the tarps, preparing the rain barrels, finding materials needed for the day) alongside staff and moving into play as they feel ready. There is a quiet area with blankets and books for children who need to have some quiet time with staff before joining the group and rigorous play.

Morning and Afternoon Snack

Children participate in preparing snack for the group in the morning cutting up fruit or vegetables. We have put this practice on hold during the pandemic, but it is a vibrant part of our early morning activity. Children eat with their primary educator in their small group at the table to maintain their connection to their adult, have conversations and experience the joy of sharing a meal together.

Diapering/Toileting

Children are diapered or try the toilet throughout the day in two-hour intervals. The OT program is supportive of children who are toilet learning and so we work in partnership with families through this process. While young children find the diapering experience to be individual and intimate, the bathroom toileting scene in the older toddler program is a vibrant social moment.

Outdoor Play & Exploration on the Play Yard

The major portions of the day when children aren't involved in routine care are spent outside playing in our natural play space. Children play in the sand, use mud and water, build with loose parts, or climb on the stumps, boulders, and ramps. There is a shed which allows for an 'indoor' feel for children to engage in imaginative play as well as a deck space where more specific explorations and activities occur. The materials are familiar and the changes to the space occur primarily because of the weather. Puddles collect in the rain, snowbanks are formed into slides, and warm days bring rain barrels filled with water for streams that run through the sand and over the rocks. Staff sculpt the space so that there are hills of sand, trenches with rocks, ramps and pallets balancing on stumps and logs, or tents set up over stick homes. The familiarity of the environment gives way to creativity and imaginative play.

Lunch

Children transition inside from their play to have their lunch from home. During this time, we intentionally focus on meeting needs that will offer them comfort during their meal and transition to nap. We change their clothes, offer a fresh diaper or the toilet, hand wash, and take time to reconnect. When all children are settled inside, they sit together with their group for their lunch that has been unpacked from their lunchbox and offered to them on a plate at their place.

Story, Diapering and Rest

As children prepare for their nap, they have a diaper change or use the toilet. Their rest begins with a small group gathering for a short puppet story and then their educator sits with them while they fall asleep singing a familiar song and rubbing their back as desired.

Wake Up Routine

As children wake, they have time to sit with an educator and slowly move into their afternoon activities. Typically, they transition to a diaper change or toileting, then to snack, and finally to outside play.

Room Chores & Departures

By 4:00 the caregivers and children start to close the play yard participating together in caring for the environment and tucking things away for another day. These chores and closing of areas signal to children that the end of the day is coming and that they will transition to inside play. The last hour of the day is marked with final routine care moments, child-led activities in the room, and stories with their staff.

Preschool Program

Philosophy

We believe that children learn through their play and after their first three years at the Center, steeped in primary relationships and emotional connection, we know that they are prepared for the preschool experience. We continue to focus the child on their relationship to their preschool primary educator so that there is a solid foundation from which they can grow socially and cognitively. We design their academic preparation through their play, where it occurs naturally and organically as they interact with each other and materials. We know that STEM (science, engineering, technology, and math) learning is present inside and outside when children spontaneously investigate, use observations to inform their questions, and develop models to understand their world. We create opportunities for child-led learning and recognize literacy embedded in their daily life through our songs, rhymes, puppet stories, books, and conversations as curricular. Throughout the day the focus on participating in the support and care of the community is evident as they make snack, tidy up their play spaces, share in the chores, and help each other.

Daily Rhythm

Arrival & Drop Off Outdoors

Parents bring their child to the Center and enter the PS room to use the bathroom, wash their hands, and head out to the play yard for early morning play.

Early Outdoor Play

Early morning play in the yard offers children a chance to prepare our yard and themselves for the day. There are many chores and community building activities that the children find settling in with staff before finding free play with their peers.

Morning Seasonal Circle

Our day begins with a seasonal circle with the whole group. This circle marks the beginning of the day, recognizes everyone who is there and is held out on our yard. Caregivers create these circles choosing songs, verses, movement activities and finger plays to reflect the seasons, mark the change of seasons, and bring to light some features of each season.

Morning and Afternoon Snack Time

Children eat these small meal snacks at the table with their primary educator and their group everyday so that the rhythm of the routine is predictable and comfortable. Children move through the handwashing, toileting, and cleaning up activities that surround mealtime consistently so that they can predict what happens in the sequence of their day.

Morning/Afternoon Outdoor Play

Outdoor time is spent on our play yard exploring the various outdoor activities and materials for the week. The weekly curriculum plan intentionally reflects observations, insights, and extensions of projects, investigations, play areas, yard work and art during this time. These times of day are designed to offer large amounts of uninterrupted time so that children feel the abundance of space and time to create, build, and investigate.

In the afternoon the art room is opened at the Yellow House for a small group (4-6 children) to engage in a more in-depth art project. Each group visits the Yellow House weekly to paint, felt, and work with different mediums.

Lunch

Children will come in from their outdoor play ready for lunch and nap. They move through the necessary care routines and make their way to their primary educator and their small group of children. We unpack lunches for the children and place the food on plates with napkins so they can enjoy a relaxed meal. After lunch children handwash, toilet, and place their shoes in their cubbies. Their nap mats are prepared for them so they can see where they will rest and predict what is coming next in their day. They make their way to their nap mats which are set up distanced, but in proximity to their primary educator where they will prepare for a puppet story and rest time.

Group Storytelling

Storytelling happens in the quiet of the room after the lunch and transition is complete. As children are fed and tired, they are happily resting on the rug for a “puppet story”. Each story is memorized and told by their primary educator to their small group. In the first week it is introduced in the narrative form without any props. As the children learn the story, the educator will add props and tell the story over the following weeks.

Nap

All children are offered at least one hour of rest time on their mats. They sleep in the same spot each day near their small group of children and their primary educator so that they are familiar with this routine. When they wake around 2:00/2:30pm they are offered books to look at on their mats to soften the waking up transition to the afternoon. Once they are prepared for the afternoon they get up from their

mats, begin packing up their things, using the toilets, and readying themselves for snack at their own pace.

Tidy Up Jobs & Departure

After they come in from outside play around 4:30, many children begin to depart. This time of day can feel disruptive. We start this inside time with a group story and then move to activities for children to choose as they wish. Some of these activities include playing independently, with others, doing chores or sitting with an educator reading a story. Staff walk children to the door for departure at the end of their day.

Curriculum

Curriculum Goals, Objectives, and Activities

(Consistent with Maine Early Learning Developmental Standards/MELDS)

The curriculum goals that are embedded in the curriculum plans are:

Social Emotional:

- Self-concept, self-awareness, relationships with adults and children; and individual interests and experiencing and understanding emotions.

Health and Safety:

- Health, safety, balance and strength, mobility, climbing

Social Studies:

- Social skills, community awareness, understanding of diversity, differing abilities, and interest in others

Creative Expression

- Art, gardening, wood construction, singing, movement, and dance

Cognitive: Math and Science:

- Matching, sorting, naming, observing, testing, experimenting, exploring, predicting, ordering, and recognizing patterns

Cognitive: Language and Literacy:

- Storytelling, explanation, and naming events, objects, people, and actions

Objectives:

The daily schedule is designed to cluster the care routines: toileting/diapering, feeding, and napping, leaving blocks of time to play. These uninterrupted play periods offer children opportunities to explore, engage, and learn.

Activities:

Because the Children's Center's philosophy is built on play-based and emergent curriculum, staff work to embed the activities in the invitations to play each day. For example, a cooking project would meet the social studies criteria as a gesture of community building; and address science and math through the transformation of ingredients; and measuring, sequencing, and predicting. The curriculum plans articulate these activities weekly to build an integrated curriculum that is responsive to the children's needs and interests and that honors the depth and rich investigation that is relevant to young children's development.

Materials:

Children have access to materials throughout the day to engage in the goal, objectives, and activities listed above. Each program has the resources to offer children opportunities to engage in meaningful experiences through play to learn. The materials are intentionally open-ended, non-directive, and neutral in tone. Children are offered materials that are made from natural “live” products: stumps, rocks, cotton, felt, and wood. These materials meet the children’s need for nature to be a part of their lives and offer them the excitement of creating something spectacular with them.

Second Language Resources

The Center’s mission guides us toward inclusivity with families to maintain their language traditions. Because language is an integral element of family culture and identity, we are committed to the family’s goals regarding maintaining the home language as well as learning English and recognizing best practices, so all families can participate in our Center.

During the initial enrollment, educators will identify the family’s goals and values about primary and secondary language use. We will also offer a translator for meetings or translation of important written materials when parents have a primary language other than English.

Because Bowdoin College has strong language departments, the Center will use those students and faculty as resources for providing translation to families and their children in the Center. Educators are also encouraged to use materials (books, songs, tapes) to support a diverse curriculum. We consider ASL as a language for children who use this as their primary language.

Play Outdoors

The Children’s Center is nestled in a beautiful, wooded area that offers a lovely play yard divided into four separate yards for each program. The children use the outdoors daily (even in the rain, snow, and chilly weather) for at least one hour daily and usually for up to three hours. We are careful to follow the weather temperatures and wind chill precautions for our children. We respect the children’s need for play with each other and work to offer them the opportunity to explore the environment and each other as independently as possible. Because the play yards are specific for their program there is no mingling of groups and ratios are maintained as they were inside. Staff are asked to “do teacher work” which may include digging, gardening, sculpting the play yard, folding clothes, knitting, crocheting, etc. This teacher work should occur in places where children can easily see staff and staff can see them. Staff are asked to maintain proximity to children who may need additional support outside: infants lying on blankets, toddlers climbing on to a stump or preschoolers sorting out a social situation. In all cases, outside time is designed as a curricular opportunity for children with the same intentionality as inside play.

Barefoot Play Outside

Children are invited to play outside while barefoot so that they can experience the outdoors most fully. Children can choose to remove their shoes to splash in the water, run in the yard, or put them on to play after they have enjoyed barefoot play. If it seems cool or unlikely weather for barefoot play, then staff guide children’s choice to keep their shoes on. Staff are responsible for knowing about the weather, how chilly a child can become in the wet cool play yard and understanding how to keep a child comfortable and warm.

Staff is asked to work to maintain an area that is safe for this type of play. This will include raking the spaces where children may jump down (by rocks, stumps) to aerate the soil, cleaning up the materials after use, and making sure that the space is maintained to be free of debris.

During the summer months

In summer, children bring a sunhat, light cotton shirt and shorts (rather than having to change in and out of bathing suits), a towel, and sunscreen and insect repellent. Based on parent authorization, staff will apply both as necessary. When the air quality is considered dangerous for children (high levels of air pollution, smog alerts, etc....) we will stay in our air-conditioned building. However, because we have access to sprinklers and hoses, the warm summer days are manageable outside.

In the rain

Children find that splashing in puddles, walking in a drenching warm rain, or playing in the mist is a welcome change from the dry weather that we typically are drawn to. For this reason, we ask parents for rainboots, rain jackets, rain pants, and extra sets of clothing during the rainy days and the spring months. We will go out in rainy weather if it is safe for children to be wet and outside. We are inside for thunder and lightning storms as well as high winds.

We expect all staff to dress for weather as well including boots, warm clothes, snow pants, rain gear, and hats. This ensures a comfortable time for extended outside play.

During the winter months

Temperature and wind chill are two factors that determine the safety for children being outdoors. The temperature can be quite cold and still be conducive to outdoor play, while wind chill tends to make outdoor play dangerous. The cold, blowing air quickly gets into children's apparel, regardless of their level of activity and puts them at risk for hypothermia. Therefore, we plan on staying inside on any day when the wind chill is below zero degrees (even though the registered temperature might be a lot warmer).

To determine our plans for the day outside, we refer to www.wunderground.com Brunswick weather station as well as the State Child Care Weather watch:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/documents/ocfs/childrens-licensing-and-investigation/documents/WeatherWatch.pdf>

We have created this chart to guide staff for dressing children and spending time outside.

Weather conditions: /dressing and Outdoor play guidelines
We do not play outside when winds are above 18 mph, there is a threat of lightning, or an unpredictable storm is approaching

When it is:	What to wear:	How long to be outside:	What to consider:
above 70 degrees and sunny	sun hats, light shirts/pants or SPF of 30+	the usual timing for play	hydration: water offered routinely throughout the day, sunscreen reapplication, water play and coverage from the sun
between 50 - 70 degrees and sunny	sun hats, light shirts/pants or SPF of 30+ (sweaters for children who are infant/VT as needed)	the usual timing for play	hydration: water offered routinely throughout the day, sunscreen reapplication, water play and coverage from the sun
32 - 40 degrees and sunny /not wet	base layers, sweaters, thick socks, outdoor shoes, hats, mittens, jackets (rain gear doesn't count as a second layer)	up to an hour unless the children are playing comfortably (then extend the time)	If children are warm, they can take off mittens and jackets depending on the layering (hats stay on as they are a solid way to keep warm)
above 70 degrees and rainy	rain gear/for clothing that can be changed out of easily	as long as children are comfortable (up to an hour)	make sure that children are moving, playing, and comfortable. If a child is still, not happy, and asking to go inside then check in with them to return them to a comfortable state
between 50 - 70 degrees and rainy	Assess each child for rain gear/an extra shirt and socks worn with rain boots as a layer of warmth/for clothing that can be changed out of easily	as long as children are comfortable (up to an hour)	make sure that children are moving, playing, and comfortable. If a child is still, not happy, and asking to go inside then check in with them to return them to a comfortable state. Make sure to change their socks and pants as you return inside so they are dry.
32 - 40 degrees and rainy	Assess each child for rain gear with a base layer, sweater or jacket under the rain gear. Thick socks in rain boots as a layer of warmth/hats and mittens that can be kept dry with rain gear or can be changed as needed.	Children under 15 months: 15 - 20 min; 15 - 24 months: 30 min; 24 months - PS up to 60 min use the shed, make tea of the water bottles for outside time, make sure that children are moving around.	extra mittens that are windproof are a must, children may need to have hoods over hats, scarves can be worn inside their jackets
25 - 32 degrees and sunny (with wind chill included)	Assess each child for cold weather gear: base layers, shirt, sweater, pants and thick socks with boot, snow suit, hat, mittens, and neck covering, offer vaseline for faces	Children under 15 months: 15 - 20 min; 15 - 24 months: 30 min; 24 months - PS up to 60 min use the shed, make tea of the water bottles for outside time, make sure that children are moving around.	extra mittens that are windproof are a must, children may need to have hoods over hats, scarves can be worn inside their jackets
10 - 25 degrees (with wind chill included)	Assess each child for cold weather gear: base layers, shirt, sweater, pants and thick socks with boot, snow suit, hat, mittens, and neck covering, offer vaseline for faces	Not children under 15 months; 15 - 24 months: up to 30 min; 24 months - PS up to 30 min use the shed, make tea of the water bottles for outside time, make sure that children are moving around.	extra mittens that are windproof are a must, children may need to have hoods over hats, scarves can be worn inside their jackets
5 - 10 degrees (with wind chill included)	Assess each child for cold weather gear: base layers, shirt, sweater, pants and thick socks with boot, snow suit, hat, mittens, and neck covering, offer vaseline for faces	Not children under 15 months; 15 - 24 months: up to 15 min; 24 months - PS up to 30 min use the shed, make tea for the water bottles for outside time, make sure that children are moving around.	

The administration places a daily posting in the reception area to inform staff and parents of the plans for outside play.

In the winter children will be most comfortable with a full undershirt, long underwear layer, long sleeve shirt, and sweater/sweatshirt in addition to warm pants. For the outdoors, children will need boots with warm socks, jacket with a hood, snow pants (overall style keeps their torso the warmest), mittens, and a hat. We ask parents to bring an extra-long sleeve shirt, sweater, and socks each day (or keep a set at the Center) to meet a need for warmer clothes in the afternoon. We check children's temperature by feeling the back of their neck and their hands. If these are cool to the touch, we head inside. At the first sign of chilling or shivering, a child will go indoors. When children are not mobile or not moving quickly to generate heat, we guide them inside after a shortened period. Staff must be very careful to watch for these signs and provide support for the children's warmth.

Field Trips

The Children's Center is fortunate to have the entire Bowdoin campus as well as the Brunswick community and beyond at our fingertips. We take walks with the preschool children to the campus quad and gardens, to the Farmer's Market in Brunswick, and down the street to the Organic Gardens.

Eco-Friendly Practices

Our eco-friendly curriculum begins with our recognition and understanding of our place in the outdoor world sharing the play yard with hawks, crows, squirrels, chipmunks, and sometimes possums and skunks. We have gardens and growing bushes in our play yards and in PS our curriculum centers on our vegetable garden in the spring, summer, and fall. We compost our leftovers and recycle our materials in each one of our programs. In the older programs, children are active participants in this practice.

We communicate with families about our eco-friendly practices through our weekly portal documentation, the recycle and "chicken bucket" practices in the programs, and the on-going support of sharing gently used clothing in our bi-annual Center-wide clothing swaps.

The Center's Program Information

Building Access

Building Access

The Children's Center is secured 24 hours a day and has surveillance by security. Parents have access to the Center during our operating hours (7:45 – 5:30) by using a four-digit code while staff have 24/7 access to the Center and #4 South Street through their one card. Subs and student employees have access to the front door and the laundry room Monday – Friday from 7:30 – 6:00. We ask parents and staff not to share access code information with anyone to maintain a high level of security.

Arrival and Departures

Daily transitions into and out of the room can be difficult for some children and parents. This is a time when families are settling their child in for the day and want to share information with their primary as well as spend a bit of time with their child. Our Center's culture is to encourage families to either write on/read their child's daily sheet (infant/toddler programs) to share communication about the initial important information about their day or thought preschool daily notes. In each room staff welcome the family/parent, speak with the parent, and briefly share information about their child's day. We recognize that this is a time that should be for welcoming/rejoining and so we offer the children an opportunity to engage as they choose.

Morning Drop-off

Parents arrive at the Center when it best suits their family's schedule. Parents are welcomed to come into their child's room, unpack their bags and prepare them for the day. In the infant and toddler rooms this may mean a diaper change after a car ride, toileting in preschool, and handwashing for everyone. Parents can dress their child for outside play and meet the staff on the play yards. This is a wonderful time to offer children a chance to be with their parents in the same space and have a few moments together.

There is no deadline for dropping a child off; however, if parents are at the Center after 9:00 the typical "beginning of the day" the daily routines: snack, circle, outside times will have begun. For this reason, we welcome a call or check in about the timing of the drop-off and the transition into the morning. We require that parents or guardians accompany their child into the Center at drop-off times and deliver them to a staff member in the child's program. The staff member must be aware of a child's arrival to the program.

Late Pick-up/Departure Policy

At the end of the day each child is anticipating the arrival of their parent. When parents begin to arrive at 4:15 and continue to arrive until 5:30, it makes for a distracting afternoon especially for children who leave at the later end of the day. Children are also exhausted at the end of the day. We work hard to meet their energy levels with outside play until 4:00 and then quieter inside moments however, the shifting energy of children leaving and parents entering the space impacts their play. Therefore, we ask parents to wait outside the room as we prepare your child to meet you in the hall. We can assemble their things to go home in a bag and hand you the bag and your child with a quick check in conversation. This allows

the room to operate more smoothly, lessens the disruption to children's play, and offers the child who is leaving a chance to begin that transition.

If parents are running later than our closing time (5:30) we ask that they call the Center and let staff know of their arrival time. Notifying staff allows them to better prepare for a delayed arrival and smooth any of your child's concern. If there is a delay that is greater than a few minutes, we ask parents to reach out to an emergency contact and arrange for the child's timely pick up.

When a someone other than the child's guardian will pick them up at the end of the day, we require them to be listed in the child's file as an authorized person, we require an ID to be presented when they arrive at the Center, and we bring them to the child's room. If a parent hasn't offered this information for this person, then the child is not allowed to leave with them.

Parking and traffic safety at drop off and pick up

Parking is available next door to the Center and in front of the Center for a short drop-off exclusively. When cars are parked in these areas, even for short periods of time, they must not idle but be turned off. Exceptions to this can be made when extreme cold temperatures are present. There is a fair amount of traffic that travels down South Street because of parking available in both the lot by Maine Street and the lot by Coffin Street. Parents pay close attention to their children as they leave the building and until they are in their cars. We believe that the street and the cars are too close for young children to be free from a parent's handhold, a practice that we model with the children whenever they leave the building.

Car Seat Policy

As of January 1, 2003, Maine State law requires all children up to age 8 and 80 pounds to use an approved child safety seat. All children riding with us on a field trip must use a CRS that fits the child's height and weight and fits the vehicle. If a child is using a booster seat without a back, the child will need to be placed in a Bowdoin van where there is a head/neck rest.

For safety reasons, the Children's Center reminds parents that no child under 12 years of age should be left in a car unattended. We understand that this can be inconvenient, but because cars are parked on the street or in a lot there isn't direct supervision.

Care Routines

Hand Washing

Staff, student employees, parents, visitors, and children who are developmentally able to learn hygiene practices need to wash hands when entering the Center, a program room, going outside, before preparing food or feeding, toileting and diapering, encountering bodily fluids, after cleaning or handling garbage; before and after administering medication.

Meals and Feedings

Daily Nutrition

Our guidance for meals and feeding comes from the Maine State Department of Health and Human Services, NAEYC, and the United States Department of Agriculture. We have tailored their regulations and standards with our thoughts on meals and feedings.

We offer food to children every two hours (and three times a day in preschool) to keep them feeling comfortable and satiated. This means that we calculate what time they last ate at home (breakfast/feeding) and we begin there. In the infant program we create individual schedules and by preschool we are making a broader plan. The two snacks that we make for younger toddlers, older toddlers, and preschoolers everyday are hearty and filling. The lunches parents bring from home are important to the child's nutrition and connection to home. These lunches are unpacked and presented on plates to the child so that they experience the care and love from home as well as from how we offer it to them. Because we recognize mealtime as an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with children, staff will offer children time to develop conversations, eat at a relaxed pace, and hear stories about their day or other experiences. We provide daily sheets capturing information about their snack intake.

Infants are fed bottles and solid food in the laps of staff as a way of supporting them while they eat. We understand that in a group care setting it is often stressful for infants to be seated alone in a chair while fed. To address secure based relationships, we hold children in our laps to eat for the first year to support their time eating with a social relationship. Whenever possible primary staff hold and feed the infants in their care to reinforce the secure relationship. At one year old, and as they join others in more social relationships, they will form a small group will gather for a meal.

We offer whole milk to young children and 2% milk to preschool children for lunch and snacks along with water. If a child has a dairy sensitivity, we can offer soy, rice, or oat milk. The snacks are chosen to be the same daily offering so that children are familiar with what they are fed and can anticipate the small meal. Often in preschool children will help prepare afternoon snack daily and contribute to the community meal.

Feeding Infants Breastmilk and Formula

We take good care to provide each infant their formula or milk on their own schedule, in our arms, and as they need it. Staff and parents will feed infants in rocking chairs in the room or hall throughout the day.

We encourage infant parents to come to the Center to feed when they can and welcome their phone calls to plan for coming to feeding times. Parents arrange this with the primary staff person.

Feeding infants who take breast milk

We ensure that:

- All bottle and breastmilk/formula are labeled with the child's name on it,
- All bottles must be either unbreakable or have a sheath on them to protect them from breaking,
- Staff will warm breast milk in warm water (not to exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit for 5 minutes) without shaking it unnecessarily and offering it to the child immediately. After the infant is fed, the remaining contents of the bottle will be disposed of if the bottle has been unrefrigerated for an hour.
- No food is heated in a microwave oven.
- We store fresh breast milk in the refrigerator for no longer than 48 hours or no longer than 24 hours for breast milk that was previously frozen. We will also store breast milk in our freezer in labeled and dated freezer bags for up to 2 weeks at 0 degrees. We will not refreeze thawed breast milk.
- Feeding schedules and amounts of milk must meet the infant's needs,
- Infants are held for bottle-feedings and lap fed until they can sit unaided on small stools at their tables,
- If a child was fed another child's breastmilk or formula, the parent would be contacted immediately, and they would reach out to their pediatricians. All information received from the pediatrician for follow up testing and the results would be shared with the parents,
- Children younger than 12 months will not be offered cow's milk.

Feeding infants who take formula

Parents are welcome to bring their child's formula to the Center. Parents are requested to bring formula in factory-sealed containers so that staff can follow the manufacturer's directions for preparation. We are not able to offer homemade formula to infants. We ask parents to bring in several bottles to keep at the Center so that preparation is easy. Staff can prepare and offer formula throughout the day according to the child's individual schedule. We will use prepared formula within 2 hours of preparation and within 1 hour from when feeding begins. If that formula isn't used in that 2-hour period, it will be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.

We are not able to add food to bottles for feeding unless there are written instructions from a health care provider suggesting that there is a medical reason.

Solid Food:

Parents are welcome to bring in food that they prepare for their infants, and we will serve it to them throughout the day. We ask that parents of children younger than 6 months provide us with written instruction from the health care provider indicating that solid food should be offered. We also request that parents offer their child new foods at home five days prior to them having the staff feed it to the infant. This way any allergies or concerns about reactions will have been addressed.

Typically, when parents pack the food in lunch boxes with ice packs, the food stays cool and fresh. We can make warm cereals and add warm formula and breast milk to foods as requested.

All jars of purchased baby foods must be unopened. Once opened, baby food jars will be labeled with the date it was offered to the child. All unused food will be discarded no more than two days following the date of opening or the receipt of homemade food. Any frozen homemade food will be disposed of after one month if not used.

Allergies

Nut-restricted environment

We proactively restrict the potential for specific allergic reactions at the Children's Center hoping to support children with allergies. Tree nuts, peanuts, and nut products are the most serious and prevalent allergen at our Center. Foods with nuts are not allowed at the center.

We recognize that this policy is an inconvenience for parents and children but ask for your help since for exposure to nuts poses a serious health risk for some children. In some cases, the allergy is so severe that simply smelling nut products can lead to a dangerous reaction. We also encounter other allergies (e.g., dairy, soy, shellfish) and program staff will always work with the families of children concerned to create as safe an environment as possible.

We cannot guarantee that the Center is a nut-free environment. Staff will inform parents if they see food from home that includes visible nuts, or they already know the product contains nuts products. We will remove that food from the room to go home. We depend on your assistance in monitoring foods from home. We have not excluded the many commercial products that include a warning about trace elements of nuts and the possibility of contact with nut-contaminated machinery. If there is a known allergy in the room, individual rooms may ask families to adhere to additional safety practices as needed.

The Children's Center Policy on serving food:

Bowdoin College Children's Center will ensure that children less than 4 years are not served any foods that are not recommended for children under the age of 4 years. Staff will do this by asking that all children in the program do not have access to chokable food when they are here. A list provided by the USDA of examples of chokable food is provided on our website and upon enrollment. If food is in children's lunch boxes from the USDA list, staff will not serve this food to them but will find a substitute from the kitchen. Staff will always let parents know if there is a way to change the shape of the food to make it safer and served here.

Parents can help reduce the risks of choking on some foods by changing their shape, size, or texture, and by serving certain foods in small, manageable bites. We offer 2- to 4-year-olds the same variety of foods as the rest of the children but prepared in forms that are easy for them to chew and swallow. We recommend these simple tips (from the USDA guidelines) to make these foods safe options for 2- to 4-year-old children.

- Cut soft food into thin slices of small pieces – no larger than one half inch ($\frac{1}{2}$ "). Cut soft, round foods, like hot dogs or string cheese, into short strips rather than round pieces.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking.

- Grind up meat, chicken, and other tough foods.
- Remove seeds and hard pits from fruit.
- Encourage children to eat slowly and to chew completely before swallowing. Teach children to eat one bite at a time, and chew and swallow food before talking or laughing.
- Cook foods, such as carrots and celery, until slightly soft. Then, cut into sticks.
- Cut grapes, cherries, berries, or melon balls in half lengthwise, and then cut into smaller pieces.
- Mash or purée food until it is soft.
- Sit with children and always actively supervise them while they are eating.

We will not serve:

Hot dogs (unless cut lengthwise in small pieces),

Seeds,

Raw carrots and celery (unless steamed and cut into sticks)

Raisings, yogurt covered raisins, other dried fruit or fruit roll ups,

Chunks of meat,

Whole grapes (unless cut length wise in small pieces),

Marshmallows,

Round or hard candy,

Chips,

Popcorn,

Pretzels,

Cherries with pits (unless pits are removed)

Large pieces of fruit with skin,

Olives (unless cut length wise in small pieces)

Diapering

Diapering young children is one of the most important times for staff to deepen their relationship with children. We talk to the children, build routines that allow them to anticipate what will happen next, and take time to enjoy these moments. Our goal is to have the primary staff diaper their children to engage in secure relationships. Staff check diapers frequently during the day and change each child at two-hour intervals as well as when they awaken from a nap.

Toilet Learning

Toilet Facilities:

There is hot (not exceeding 120 degrees Fahrenheit) and cold running water in each bathroom and changing area. There is a toilet for every 10 children in each room. A low step or stool is placed at each sink and toilet to facilitate children to reach them. There are disposable paper towels in the older rooms and some cloth for the youngest infants to use one time before laundering.

When toilet learning, all children are welcome in the program whether they are diapered, learning to toilet, or have learned to toilet. During the toddler and preschool years, it is common to find children in a variety of stages of toilet learning.

The staff works with parents to plan a toilet learning plan as the parents perceive their child's readiness. The staff may meet with parents to initially make a collaborative plan that integrates parent goals, children's skills, and staff knowledge. These plans may include:

- Parent introduction to toileting at home over a period (this is individual as some children may take to the idea quickly and others may be more methodical).
- Identification of toilet use for bowel movements as well as urination at home with repeated interest by child.
- Regular and consistent encouragement for the use of the toilet by parent on weekends, evenings, mornings, as well as the program's support for the child at intervals during the day.
- Initial support of using the toilet with the parent when the child arrives and departs from the program to "imprint" on this space, the secure and safe feelings they have with the parent currently.
- Staff will work with the family to use pull-ups*, underwear, or diapers as needed to support the child's ability to toilet in the program.

Additional Thoughts

When toilet learning, pull-ups must have with Velcro tabs as they can be put on and taken off most easily for group care. Please bring in pull-ups that are the most user friendly so that the toileting process is the least stressful for your child. The child must be consistently able to use the toilet/potty for bowel movements for two weeks prior to wearing underwear at the Center. It is important for staff to regularly communicate with parents about how each day "went" in the bathroom. This may be in the form of a note home, a phone call, or a quick check in at the end of the day. Be careful to communicate clearly about your thoughts or concerns in person as email or writing can often be difficult to understand.

- While toileting at home can be successful quickly and easily it is understood that the room environment with shared bathrooms, different adults, and lots of activity can be distracting, uncomfortable, and the last step in completing the toileting process. Staff can be sure to understand the parents' hope for an easy and expedient learning experience yet offer reasonable responses to the child's pace at the program.
- When it appears that parents and staff are not communicating clearly about the toileting plan setting an additional meeting (with administration if helpful) will further support the process. Children will not be excluded from the program for any reason in this process.

Toothbrushing

The children are offered the opportunity to brush their teeth at lunchtime each day. We have toothbrushes to offer them. Their toothbrushes are kept individually separate and are replaced every 3 months. In the infant room, we wipe their gums with a wet washcloth until they have teeth to brush. If a parent chooses not to have their children's teeth brushed, they may indicate that on the release form.

Napping

Children are offered the opportunity to nap daily according to their needs. In the infant and young toddler groups, children are offered naps on individual schedules so that their days are organized according to their needs. During their second year, they typically move to one nap a day after lunch.

This move toward a group nap experience is important for them, as they can rest and prepare themselves for the afternoon. The older toddler and preschool children are offered a quiet time on their mat in a darkened room. A child can choose not to sleep by simply staying awake. After one hour of quiet rest or sleep on their mat they are invited to engage in another quiet nap mat activity.

We will help children prepare for rest by reading stories, singing songs, and rubbing their backs.

Often this is all the support a child needs to fall asleep unless they determine that they would rather stay awake. We have flexible schedules that will accommodate different sleep needs. When parents ask to have their sleeping-child woken at a certain time, we will transition them from their nap to a lap, from a dark room to lighter room, and from a quieter room to music so that they wake slowly and on their own. Staffing ratios remain the same during nap as when children are awaking. Children will always be cared for by staff that can hear, see, and respond to their needs. Infants will always have a staff person in the nap room with them.

Infants Napping

The infant room provides each child with a crib or mat for their individual rest. The infants have "assigned" spots in the nap room so that they become accustomed to the space and their surroundings. We follow the guidelines for infant sleeping listed below:

- Each child will have a crib or nap mat.
- Infants will have sheets provided but parents are encouraged to bring a sleep sack for sleeping. We will not swaddle infants with their arms enclosed.
- Infants will be placed on their backs to go to sleep until they are able to roll over on their own unless there is a note from the pediatrician specifically instructing another plan. There are no sleep positioners used.
- Their cribs will not have quilted bumpers, stuffed animals, etc.
- Children will not wear bibs or garments with ties or hoods when sleeping.
- When an infant arrives to the program and is asleep in a device that is not specifically designed for sleep (car seat, stroller, etc.), the infant will be transferred to a crib or mat.

Children in the younger toddler, older toddler, and preschool rooms will be provided nap bags for sheets, blankets, and transition objects. Parents may provide a transition object if they choose to (small stuffed animal or a special blanket home). Parents are asked to bring these bags home each week and wash the items for the next week.

Dressing and care of our young children

Opportunities for routine care deepen our connection and relationship with our children. When we dress children, we are conscious that this is a wonderful intimate moment with one child to chat, sing laugh, and care for. During the times we dress children we assess their comfort and adjust to ensure their ease during the day. We change their clothes when they are wet, too dirty to be comfortable, cold, warm, or looking for a favorite item (in preschool especially). We will look for extra clothes in their bags from home, their cubbies, and finally in our collection at the Center to make sure that they are warm enough for outside play, comfortable to sleep or play, and dry and clean after a meal or outside time. This time of care and attention serves the relationship between the staff and the children as well as keeps them cared for as their parent would.

We ask for parent support as we dress children as they pack clothes for their child's time at the Center. Labeling each item means that we can quickly and easily sort out clothes and return them to their owners. Parents can refer to a checklist we send home at the end of the week to indicate what needs to be brought in from home. Making sure that there is always enough for a few changes of clothing daily satisfies the demand that active, outdoor play and group care require.

Health Practices and Guidelines

The Center's wellness policy is designed for parents and staff to partner in keeping children healthy. As young children grow and build up their immune systems, they are susceptible to germs and illness. The staff practice hand washing throughout the day, glove for diaper/toileting changes, and glove when preparing foods. Staff wash their hands after wiping noses and ask children to do the same. By conscientiously washing hands, providing a barrier to germs, and washing young children's hands, they understand that they are doing everything they can reasonably do to keep children and themselves healthy.

The Center also keeps children and staff healthy by protecting them from environmental hazards by monitoring air quality and pollution warnings through the weather channel and by maintaining an asbestos and lead-free environment according to the public health requirements. As part of this healthy environment, parents and children are asked to wash their hands when they enter the room in the morning and throughout the day as a way of controlling what is introduced to the environment.

All children are immunized, and each child's immunization records are kept in their individual files and updated annually during our enrollment and reenrollment period (electronic and hard copies available). In the event of unimmunized staff or children, the Center will keep a list and exclude children from the Center until they receive the immunization or proof of immunity. All immunization records are part of the child/staff files and accessible to the DHHS, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Center has two paid health consultants from Mid Coast Hospital in Brunswick and Inter med in Portland who have annual contracts to provide professional training and consultation to us as needed. They come to the Center to review and confer about policies, hear concerns or questions, meet with parents or staff, and provide brief trainings, particularly for children's individual medical plans. A mental health consultant contracts with the Children's Center for 30 hours to provide services each calendar year. She meets with the program teams and Center staff.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff follow the handwashing guidelines so that they may prevent the spread of infectious diseases and take time away from work when they are not well.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents wash hands upon entering the room with their child, wash hands after diapering and toileting their child, and keeping their child home when they are ill.

Hand Washing Guidelines

Staff, student employees, parents, visitors, and children who are developmentally able to learn hygiene practices need to wash hands when entering the Center, a program room, going outside, before preparing food or feeding, toileting and diapering, encountering bodily fluids, after cleaning or handling garbage; before and after administering medication.

When washing hands:

- Use liquid hand soap and warm running water

- Rub hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry and under fingernails.
- Rinse well
- Dry all parts of hands with a single-use towel and avoid touching faucet with freshly washed hands when turning it off.

We wear gloves when

- Preparing food or feeding a child
- Diapering a child
- Helping a child with toileting
- Handling bodily fluids
- Tooth brushing for a child

*Use of alcohol-based hand rubs in lieu of hand washing is not recommended for early education settings because the alcohol is not good for young children's hands.

*Staff do not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or for removing fecal material.

What the Center Staff do

The Center administration will be the focal point for all communication and information sharing about illness and the resultant care. All staff are asked to speak to the administration prior to placing a call to the family of an ill child. All families are asked to speak to the administration with questions or concerns about their child's illness or potential exclusion. Staff are encouraged to direct parents' questions to the administration as well. By keeping the administration as the central point of communication, we believe that we can create better policies, have more informed discussions, and provide better care for children.

The administration will always address individual situations with care and thoughtful discussion with families. The administration and staff are committed both to partnering with parents to care for their child and to supporting their work responsibilities. Parents are welcome to arrive at the Center any time of day with their child. This may be so that a child who is recovering from an illness and is well enough to participate for half a day can arrive after nap. If a child needs to arrive during rest time, parents and staff will discuss how best to plan for this transition.

When a child becomes ill at the Center and needs to go home, parents (or emergency contacts) will come for their child within an hour after receiving a phone call.

The administration and staff understand that children's illnesses can upset a fragile work schedule, so they pay close attention to the balance between keeping children at the Center to care for them while they are mildly ill and managing infection and contamination to other children. Staff will always notify parents when their child is not acting as they typically do or when they have a symptom that may indicate they are ill. Staff will not exclude children from the Center unless their behavior and symptoms require it. Staff may take a mildly ill child to a quiet area, keeping them within sight and hearing range. If children must be removed from the room immediately or kept from other children, they will have an educator with them until they are released to their parent.

What parents do

Parents always have the right to determine the course of care for their child considering the information shared with them by the staff. If parents have any changes in contact information during the year, we ask them to notify the Center to keep the files current. When a child needs to be excluded from the program, staff will offer the best course of action to the parents supporting the child as well as the health and safety of other children. This will be covered in the following section.

Health Guidelines

The following Health Guidelines have been updated based on the new CDC guidance for childcare and consultation with our health consultant team. The following considerations summarize the Maine CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for guidance of how to manage illness in group care.

Guidance for illness:

- If a child has a fever (over 100.4) please reach out to your pediatrician/family medicine physician. Children must be fever-free and off fever-reducing medication for 24 hours prior to returning to the Center.
- Children who vomit or have diarrhea are excluded from care while those symptoms are present and for 24 hours after the last occurrence. In the event the child's diarrhea is related to antibiotics, the AAP still recommends exclusion like any diarrhea.
- Children with an unexplained or spreading rash (not eczema), or a rash with crusty or weeping lesions will be excluded until a physician determines a timetable for their return. Children may return to care when a rash is examined by the pediatrician/family medicine physician and offers no contagion to others in group care. For example: lesions or scabs have dried and are no longer weeping or crusty.
- Children with discharge from the eyes or ears that is not clear but is a thick mucus-like substance will be excluded until a physician determines a timetable for their return. Children with suspected conjunctivitis (fluid discharge from the eyes) should be seen by a pediatrician/family medicine physician. Further direction from them will indicate when the child can return for care. Children may return to care when the discharge from the eyes or ears has either been assessed and treated by a pediatrician/family medicine physician or is no longer an issue. Bacterial conjunctivitis must be treated with antibiotics for 24 hours before returning. We encourage you to keep your child at home prior to a sick child visit so that we can be sure to keep the children in our care healthy.
- Children with scabies or other infestation (e.g., lice and nits that have not been treated) should receive treatment and remove all nits prior to returning to the Center. Children may return to the Center when head lice have been treated with a medicated shampoo and complete nit removal has taken place. Nit removal must be managed by the parent until there is no sign of nits or lice. Children will be excluded immediately if nits are found on them while at the Center so that parents can remove the nits. When nits are removed, children can return to the Center.
- The Center will not cite antibiotic use as single criteria for exclusion. However, the child must be able to participate in the Center's programming while they are recovering on antibiotics. If a child has diarrhea because of an antibiotic, they must be excluded from the program.
- Children may use Tylenol or other pain relievers to soothe teething symptoms. Please make sure to hand the medication to your caregiver and sign a release for medication form for it to be dispensed.

- Anesthesia Policy: When a child has anesthesia, parents will keep the child home for the remainder of the day of anesthesia and the following day.
- If a child has a febrile seizure or any other medical situation that may arise, they are welcome to return to our care once they have been assessed by a pediatrician/family medicine physician and a written plan for their care or a note for their return is submitted to the office.
- The Department of Health and Human Services regulations state that we must “Promptly exclude under immunized children if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program”. We will follow these regulations.

Children:

- We recommend that all children over 6-months old are vaccinated against the COVID virus. Copies of their completed vaccine forms will be kept on file.
- We will communicate with families when a child has COVID in their program.
- We recommend that if a child has cold symptoms (runny nose, cough, sore throat, congestion) they test for COVID. If they test positive, they will remain home until their symptoms resolve.
- If a child is asymptomatic after being exposed to COVID we request that they test on days 1,3,5 before arriving at the center. If they test positive on one of these tests they will remain home until their symptoms resolve.
- If a child develops COVID, they will remain home until they are fever-free for 24-hours without medication and their other symptoms have improved.

Staff:

- Staff who are infected but asymptomatic or staff with mild COVID-19 should isolate to be sure that they don't have symptoms. If no symptoms occur, they will return to work masked. Should symptoms occur, they will remain excluded from the program until there is no fever and their symptoms are improving. They should wear a mask through day 5.
- We will communicate with families when a staff person tests positive for COVID in their program if they have been in the program during the past 48 hours.
- Staff who have cold symptoms or have been exposed to COVID will wear masks until they are well or for 10 days if they had COVID.

Parents:

- Parents must wash their hands when they enter their child's room. Parents may wash their hands in the staff bathroom or use sanitizer beside the main door or room doors if only picking their child up in the hall. Once a parent is in the room, they must wash their hands.
- For families with more than one sibling, drop off the older sibling to their program first and then bring the younger sibling to their program. At pick up, the please gather the younger sibling first and we will have the older sibling meet you in the hall.
- Parents are welcome to visit during the day to have lunch with their child, feed their child, or visit when they have time available.
- If a parent has tested positive for COVID they will remain outside of the Center until they test negative on day 5 and return masked to deliver their child to us.

Center Practices:

- The Center will continue to use air purifiers, clean with Oxiver cleaning spray, and bleach and wash toys daily.

Immunizations

Parents are responsible for providing BCCC with current immunization records at the beginning of each year and through the year as appropriate. BCCC in collaboration with their health care consultant deems any child who is under 15 months, not under the care of a pediatrician or whose family has opted out of immunizations for religious beliefs as ‘under immunized’ and their file will be noted accordingly.

The Children’s Center will promptly exclude under immunized children if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program. Parents will be alerted immediately.

Medication Release Information

Medication is considered seriously at the Center and for this reason must be handed to one of the child’s program’s staff who will store it in a locked box, either in the refrigerator or cupboard. Parents must be very careful to keep all medicines out of the reach of children by giving it to the staff daily. If special medical procedures are necessary, written guidance from the prescribing health care provider is required and a treatment plan as identified by the pediatrician is also required.

If children require any medication (including sunscreen and bug repellent) while at the Center, parents sign an “Authorization to Dispense Medication Form.” If the parent can’t offer written permission in the moment and it is an emergency, text, phone, and email are acceptable ways to offer permission. The parent must sign the form as soon as possible after that point.

According to Maine State regulations for group care settings, staff will dispense medication according to the instructions on the prescription. For this reason, medication must come in the original container and prescription bottles must have the child’s first and last name, prescription date, expiration date, physician’s name, original prescription label that details the name and strength of medication as well as directions on administering and storing, dosage amount, and times the medication is to be given.

Staff and administration should be informed of any medications a child may be on no matter what they are. Parents need not explain more about the medication or the side effects as this is between the pediatrician and the family; however, it is critical that staff are aware of the child’s status when they arrive at the Center. Children may use Tylenol or other pain relievers to soothe teething symptoms. Please make sure to hand the medication to your caregiver and sign a release for medication form for it to be dispensed.

Non-prescription drugs must be accompanied with written permission from the parent and must include the above information. A standing order from a licensed health care provider may guide the use of over-the counter medications with children in the program when the order details the specific circumstances and provides specific instructions for individual dosing of the medication.

Medication Storage

All non-refrigerated medication is stored in a locked box in the program where the child is cared for. Refrigerated medication is stored in the kitchen for that program. All medication is returned to the parent once the expiration date is passed.

Allergy Plan

It may be the case for some allergies that medications are required: EpiPens, nebulizers, or oral medications. Allergy plans that outline how to manage an allergic reaction will be written by the pediatrician and kept in the child's file upon review by the caregiving team. Caregiving teams will post food allergens by all the food prep stations to maintain safety for the child. Additionally, all cooking projects will reflect recognition of a food allergy in the group.

In cases where medications are stored at the Center over the course of the year, we alert parents when they reach an expiration date, so that non-expired medications are always available. We require 2 active, usable epi pens for each child if one is required and indicated on the allergy plan. If the Allergy Plan is activated, the parents will be notified immediately to work in partnership with the team.

If a special medical or dental procedure is required for a child, the Center will determine the scope of training, provide the training or make available a trained person for those procedures.

Parents can come to the Center to medicate their child if forms haven't been completed. Parents and the administration can discuss plans for using a pain reliever during the day at the Center.

Insect Repellent Policy

At Bowdoin College Children's Center, we are fortunate to have cool, dry conditions most of the time on our play yard. However, in the humidity of the summer weather and in a typical environment there are insects that may cause reactions or bring disease to the children. This policy addresses both instances.

Public Health Authority:

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents due to a high risk of insect-borne disease:

- Only repellents containing DEET are used
- Are applied only on children over 2 months of age and
- Will be applied no more than once a day and only with written parental permission.

Protection from Allergic Reactions to Bee Stings

The Children's Center will seek both parental permission and a health professional's recommendation before using repellents in the absence of a public health official's recommendation.

Alternatives to DEET are acceptable when:

- Written approval is provided by an individual's child physician or
- A public health authority recommends the use of an alternative insect repellent registered with the Environmental Protection Agency

Documentation from the public health authority will be filed in the administrative files while the approval by the child's physician would be maintained in your child's file.

Fragrance-Free Facility

We do use only fragrance-free and least-toxic cleaning products when children are present in our facility.

First Aid

All first aid kits are checked and replenished monthly. These first aid kits include: gloves, Band-Aids, ice packs, alcohol wipes, gauze pads, roller bandages, tape, scissors, pins, tweezers, wash cloth, pen and paper, eye patch, and eye wash. There are first aid kits available in each program. In each room, there is a backpack that staff carry outside to the play yard or on any field or walking trip, and fire drill.

Accident Reports

When an accident occurs where the child receives any type of first aid, including iced chew toy, the staff will complete an injury report. This report will be offered to the parents at the end of the day to sign or will be offered to the person picking up the child to be returned the next morning. All accident reports are filed in the administrative office. When an accident report is written, the co-lead staff try to call or email the parents to inform them of the injury prior to pick-up.

Safety and the Facility

Safety and Emergency Responses

Administrators and staff design the room environment and outside play yards with safety in mind. We adhere to both the Maine Childcare Facility Licensing Regulations and the NAEYC accreditation standards. At any time, a safety hazard is observed, the administration must be alerted so that the situation can be resolved. All staff are responsible for the safety of their group whether it is during play inside or outside or for an evacuation in an emergency. If an emergency occurs that requires the evacuation of the building, the staff will make sure to have the program's emergency bag and attendance sheets as they leave the premises with the children.

If another type of emergency occurs Bowdoin Security will inform the Children's Center staff whether to lock down at the Center or evacuate. Staff members will carry a copy of each child's emergency contact form and will notify parents by phone where to pick up their child.

Emergency Responses

All these procedures are reviewed annually with the staff by the Bowdoin College Security Department.

Lockout

1. When a lockout is declared by the Security Office the announcement comes through Cisco phone and EBS
2. Administration will walk building and give personal notice to all staff.
3. All exterior doors will be automatically locked but staff keycards will work to open doors.
4. All children and staff are to come inside the building, ensure exterior doors are locked and conduct business as usual within the classroom.
5. Take attendance once everyone is in the classroom.

Lock out

1. Lockdown declared by administration: admin walks the building to give personal notice, ensures everyone is in their place and then contacts security.
1. Lockdown declared by security: announcement comes through Cisco phones and EBS, administration walks the building to give personal notice to all staff including those outside
2. All exterior doors will be automatically locked and will not work with staff keycards.
3. Staff indoors will manually lock interior doors, turn out lights, and gather children in a safe space out of sight of windows. If deemed safe, group moves to bulkhead door. Staff who are outdoors will receive verbal word of lockdown. Staff gather children, go to the bulkhead, and proceed to the basement with their emergency packs and portable phones.
4. Take attendance once in place and waits in their place until further instructions are given. Each program should have access to a landline or cell phone from their hiding place

Evacuation

1. Upon receipt/declaration of an evacuation notice, admin will walk building and give personal notice to staff.
2. Senior person present will move everyone to Chamberlain Hall and take up station at the main doors to supervise the exiting staff and children.
3. Staff will collect their emergency backpacks which include parent contact information.

4. We evacuate using fire drill procedures: children in line or cribs, evacuating through main entrance to street, staff and children walk together to Chamberlain to meet in the first-floor room.
5. Designated staff will care for children while others contact parents based on the discretion of Administration.

Fire Drill Evacuation

The Children's Center practices fire drills monthly to afford the children an opportunity to become accustomed to the sound of the alarm. Staff are notified prior to the drill so that they are prepared to support the children.

Program and Center maintenance

The physical environment is important for both the children and staff who spend most of the day at the Children's Center. It can affect how we feel and how we behave. Therefore, it is important that the Center is not only clean and well organized but also attractive. Aesthetics should be considered when planning organization of space, choice and storage of materials, placement of children's art, etc. When materials are worn or broken, they should be removed from the space until they are repaired or replaced.

Toys and room materials should be organized throughout the day to offer children an attractive room. Children should be encouraged to assist in this cleaning if it is age appropriate. Children's toys will be washed weekly in the preschool room unless there is a reason to wash more frequently (illness, soiled toys); toddler toys will be washed daily and sometimes immediately after their play. Infants' toys will be rotated throughout the day so that they are clean for each intent as they play. Toys will be placed in a bleach or soapy water solution and then bleach and either air-dried or washed in the dishwasher or washing machine as needed. Please see each program's schedule for daily staff chores for information.

Other Information

Sibling visits

The Children's Center recognizes the importance of family bonds and strives to strengthen sibling relationships while children are here at the center. We have several families with two children at the Center and staff are intentional about providing time for children to visit siblings. Visiting a sibling in the middle of one's day can provide a reminder of the family unit, a feeling of safety and belonging and a welcome break from peer interactions. Often siblings will see each other passing on a walk or across the play yard or they may share a primary educator over the years. Staff will also work together to build in more intentional visiting times where deeper interactions can occur between siblings. These visits may feed curriculum plans and learning opportunities across mixed ages. Parents are encouraged to talk with their primary educator about how sibling relationships can be strengthened while at the center.

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated in the preschool rooms with us. We prepare a birthday snack made specifically for that occasion and invite parents to participate in making the snack with us. This experience builds a ritual for the children in the room to expect and look forward to and becomes part of our room culture. Birthday snacks will occur when it is convenient for the parents' schedule. Parents are welcome to bring in a small collection of photos of their child's first years or favorite people. This will be our way of celebrating the child's special day together.

Holidays and Celebrations

The Children's Center recognizes and values the diversity of culture, heritage, and ethnicity present in our community and sees holidays as a part of our society's rich cultural life. Learning about holidays at the Center can broaden children's awareness of their own and others' cultural experiences. Learning about how different families celebrate holidays relates directly to the similarities and differences among people. We welcome our families to participate in our programs by offering the rituals, songs, or stories that reflect their heritage and their holiday celebrations. This may occur in a season or as a moment to share when families prepare traditional holiday food, share music or a dance with the programs, or read a story about the holiday.

We are building our own culture of celebration and creating Center-community celebrations that feel authentic and appropriate for our children. In the fall as the year begins, families gather with other families to meet, reconnect, and enjoy the beginning of the year. This marks our gathering as a new community. In October we have a Center-wide gathering for a "lantern walk" where the preschoolers lead us in song and a walk through the woods by the Center. They make flower crowns for the other children to wear and contribute to our community. During the winter season's holidays, we look to families to come to the Center and share their favorite holiday traditions with us either with food, song, or music. In the spring we have a "May pole" celebration of sorts with the preschool again leading us in song and offering muffins to the community. It is a time for all the children to see the preschoolers lead everyone with their work and energy. Closing the year, the parents gather for a community picnic on the College's quad to close out a year together.

The Parent Reps from each program help us join for different celebrations through the year: open house gatherings to Center community meals. In this way, we will learn about each other; offer children a model of inclusion, respect, and generosity; and create our own culture filled with positive values. Staff welcome

parents' daily contributions when they share moments that are built into the day-to-day exchanges.

Photography

During the year, the room educators will photograph children for documentation purposes. At no time will photos of children's faces be posted on the public website, on Facebook, or be used for any purpose other than to share with families. If families take photos of their child at the Center, we ask that they make sure no other child is in the photo. This protects the privacy of the other children if the parent shares the photos. Parents are asked to refrain from sharing photos either from the portal or their own cameras on the Internet if other children are in the photo.

Visitors and researchers to the Children's Center are not permitted to take photographs that include children's faces, except with parent permission. The Children's Center has been fortunate to have contracts with a professional photographer to take photos that families purchase. She typically takes time each spring to photograph the children. While this is not necessarily part of the program, parents and the photographer manage this transaction on site.

Emergency Closings due to weather

When the College closes or closes any of their departments, they dismiss non-essential and/or essential personnel. The Children's Center staff are considered non-essential personnel and so we will remain open until non-essential personnel are dismissed.

When the College dismisses non-essential personnel during workday hours, administrators will alert the families at the Children's Center through email. We typically close 15 minutes prior to the closing time announced by the College for staff to close the rooms and leave on time as well. If families can't pick their child up in the event of an early closure, they should contact their emergency contacts or the Center staff.

When the Children's Center is closed for the day due to weather, the closing is announced through email, on the Center's voice mail, and through the College system. We typically are aware of the closure by 7:00 AM however, at times there is a delayed opening, and we open 15 minutes after the College's opening time for staff to arrive on time and prepare the rooms.

Sources of Information for Weather Emergencies

The quickest and most direct source of information is to follow the emails from the College and the Children's Center. If this isn't possible, the Children's Center voice mail (choose option 6) will have information.

Closing Thoughts

If you have a question or a concern, please feel free to approach any member of your team. Staff members understand children's development, their individual needs, and how to address stages of development. In cases when talking directly to your team/team member is impractical, uncomfortable, or unsuccessful,

you are invited to bring your concerns to the Executive Director, an invitation that is good any time, for any issue. The Executive Director is charged with maintaining an organizational climate that fosters trust, collaboration, and inclusion. We all look forward to our work together.