

## **Mission Statement**

*The mission of the Harpswell Community Nursery School is to provide a high quality early childhood education program that emphasizes developmental learning, social relationships, family involvement, and love of and care for the environment. Guided by the values of inclusion and equity, the school aims to serve a diverse population in terms of socioeconomic status, cultural background, and ability levels.*

Welcome to Harpswell Community Nursery School. We strive to provide a rich and engaging environment for children, and a warm place for family gathering. The following handbook has been created to help answer questions you may have about our school, its philosophy and policies, and the practical matters of your child's attendance.

HCNS is licensed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, and we are enrolled in the DHHS Quality for ME Quality Child Care Rating System.

## **THE ELIJAH KELLOGG CHURCH**

The Elijah Kellogg Church, Congregational, is our sponsoring institution. The present building was dedicated in 1843 and stands in Harpswell Center as a familiar landmark and spiritual home to many. In 2002 the congregation completed and dedicated a new addition, which is used and appreciated by a variety of community service groups. We welcome families of all faiths in our Nursery School, and encourage awareness and respect of various traditions.

## **STAFF INFORMATION**

***Tahnthawan Coffin, Director 207-607-0544***      [\*hcnsdirector@gmail.com\*](mailto:hcnsdirector@gmail.com)

***Denise Perry, Teacher (MWF/TTH)***

***Debra Norton, Teacher (MWF)***

***Jennifer Nadeau, Teacher (TTH)***

***Jomay Barron, Teacher (Fridays)***

***Emily Butters, Teacher (Time for Twos)***

The school's director is available to answer any questions or address any concerns you may have regarding the school in general or your child in particular. When in school, parents are encouraged to bring their concerns about any classroom matters to the attention of the teachers, or to the attention of the director, and we will do our best to resolve the issue. If parents and staff cannot resolve the issue at this level, the matter will be referred to the advisory committee chairperson, Heather Merriman [\*heather.merriman@gmail.com\*](mailto:heather.merriman@gmail.com).

***Classroom Telephone: 833-5102***

Teachers will answer this phone during school hours. The director checks messages daily. Please call each morning your child will not be attending or use it to inform them if you are running late for pick up.

**Church Office: 833-6026**

This number can be used if you are unable to get through on the classroom phone and need to reach the teachers in an emergency during school hours. Darla Richter, church administrative assistant, is in the office Monday-Thursday mornings until noon.

## **DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION**

The nursery school is in session Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 12:00 noon, with optional extended days to 2:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, except when holidays and school closures occur. Use the double doors by the ramp to enter, except when the Fellowship Hall is occupied. On those occasions you can enter by the office door on the north side of the Parish Hall.

The nursery school is closely aligned to the SAD#75 school calendar, which governs the Harpswell elementary schools. Parents will receive a yearly calendar which indicates days in session and days not in session, including holidays, vacation days and professional development days.

## **HCNS PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENT**

Respect for children as well as for other staff and parents guides our practice.

We believe that young children are capable of self-initiative and deep engagement with materials and ideas.

We believe in the Social Constructivist view that children learn by doing, and through relationships with other children and adults.

We believe in the integration of learning and play.

We believe that the environment is the “third teacher.” (The other two are the teacher and the parent.)

We believe that children learn through a variety of different modalities---Howard Gardner’s “multiple intelligences”---and represent their knowledge through many different “languages,” such as drawing, sculpture, writing, painting, construction, drama, and music.

We believe that the teacher’s main roles are those of listener, observer, researcher, and guide. We believe that teachers must be committed to reflection about their own teaching and learning.

We believe that team teaching is a cornerstone of quality early childhood education.

We believe that children who play and work with the same teachers and classmates for multiple years take their learning to greater heights and depths.

We believe that a strong family and school partnership is essential for children’s optimal growth and development.

We believe that diversity among people leads to richness of experience, and that people from different cultures and backgrounds should be treated equally and fairly.

We believe that school should be a place where everyone---children and adults alike-- feels welcomed, safe and nurtured.

## **CURRICULUM**

Our curriculum is based on the understanding that children learn through interactions with their peers and adults, through independent play, and through hands-on experiences prepared by adults. We are inspired by the approach developed in the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. We emphasize a strong focus on exploration of the world around us and representation of our discoveries through art, writing, storytelling, music, dramatic play, and

other media.

The teaching staff strives for a balance between planned projects and the spontaneous exploration of topics or materials based on the children's interests. Planned activities are designed to foster skills in all areas of development: social, emotional, fine motor, gross motor, language, and cognitive, including literacy and number knowledge.

During daily outdoor time, children have the opportunity to explore the woods and fields near the nursery school, and to develop a respect for and deeper connection with the natural world. Such activities as tending the nursery school gardens and practicing recycling and composting help children become careful observers and caretakers of the earth.

Family and community involvement play a key role in our curriculum. Every year we invite community members in to share their expertise and talents, and we visit places in the community that connect with our current areas of study. We especially invite parents and grandparents to become involved in whatever capacity they wish.

Since a well-prepared environment is essential to children's engagement in learning activities, the teachers take care in setting up the classroom each day. It is therefore important that children not be dropped off early unless prior arrangement is made with the staff. Families can gather in the Fellowship Hall before school starts.

In order to assess what children already know and are able to do, the teachers observe their work and play, and take notes on a regular basis. They also take photographs and collect work samples. The information gained is then used to help determine the types of materials we set out for the children, and the activities we plan; they are also used as indicators of the child's developmental progress, which is shared at the parent-teacher conferences.

## **DAILY SCHEDULE**

**9:00 – 10:30** Free Choice Time and Snack Time

**10:30- 11:00** Group Activities

**11:00-12:00** Outdoor Time

**12:00-12:30** Lunch and Parent Pick Up (TTH Parents enter via the Office doors and meet students outside of double doors to Fellowship Hall)

**12:30- 1:15** Bathroom Break, Independent Reading and Rest Time

**1:15- 2:00** Project Time

**2:00-2:45** Outdoor Time

**2:45-3:00** Closing Circle and Parent Pick Up (MWF parents enter via the office doors and meet students outside of double doors to Fellowship Hall)

Please note that the schedule is dependent upon the needs of the children in any given class, and we will adapt the order and content of the schedule as needed throughout the year.

## **DROPPING OFF/PICKING UP CHILDREN**

### **MORNING DROP OFF**

School opens at 9:00am and we ask that parents not enter the coatroom before then. Although staff arrives earlier, our teachers need the time to prepare the classroom for the day before we officially open. Please call the school by 9:00 am if your child is sick or away and cannot attend.

### **NOON PICK UP**

Please arrive at school no later than 12:00 in order to ensure that there is time to pick up your child's belongings. On most days children can be picked up at the playground area behind the classrooms.

We understand that occasionally there are emergency situations which prevent parents from arriving at the school on time. When such situations occur, please call the school as soon as possible to let us know you are going to be late picking your child up. Notifying the teachers allows them to better prepare your child and themselves for your delayed arrival. In order to compensate the school for this unexpected delay there is a fee for any late pick-up after the first occurrence. Please call ahead if you are running late.

### **LATE FEE** (after the first late pick-up):

\$10.00 for the first ten minutes, or portion thereof

\$5.00 for each additional five minutes

NO unauthorized adult will be allowed to pick up the child. The following are approved authorizations:

- Persons whom parents have included on their child's application as "Alternate Pick-up person"
- Persons for whom the parents have provided written permission.

## **WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL**

Please bring the following items clearly marked for easy identification:

- Jacket/coat/sweater (seasonal), hat and mittens and boots for rain or snow. Please take all outer garments home at the end of the day.
- Extra clothing: underpants, socks, a complete change of outer clothing, kept in their labeled canvas bag.
- Water bottle: labeled and easy to use
- Lunch: Easy to open containers packed with nutritious, low-sugar foods and drinks. Pack thermoses for foods which need to be eaten warm.
- Those staying for extended days can bring a pillowcase, crib sheet, blanket or towel to use to cover their mat at rest time. Any stuffed toys from home are welcome (please ensure they are able to fit inside a small backpack).

### **Toys and Personal Possessions from Home**

Children may need to bring a "transitional object"---blanket, stuffed animal or other comforting object---from home. Generally, the teachers encourage children to leave these possessions in the coatroom once they begin to play. These transitional objects should be able to fit inside a child's backpack.

Nature items, books, tapes, CD's and the like are welcome additions to the classroom. Toys should be left at home. We ask particularly that children do not bring in guns, swords and other toys that encourage rough or violent play.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The nursery school will alert families via email and on Facebook in case of cancellations or delays. [Please call or email the director if you have questions about whether or not the school is closed. It is always best to check in cases of inclement weather.](#)

Our storm day make-up policy is as follows: The number of days made up each year will be determined by the Advisory Committee and Director after careful review.

## FIRE EVACUATION PLAN

The classrooms are equipped with smoke detectors and fire alarms. Fire drills will be held on a monthly basis to familiarize the children with the evacuation plan for the building.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- In order to keep children safe and to determine the extent of any threat, as well as our response to threats such as natural disasters, building problems or intruders, the following procedures are in place:
- The staff will inform parents when any unfamiliar adults may be visiting or working in our program. As teachers and the director, we will ascertain the identity of any adult unfamiliar to us who comes into the school.
- All doors will be kept locked during classroom hours. Teachers have an internal drill which is practiced as a staff, but not with students, in case of a threat within the building.
- Our monthly fire drills, ending up in the parking lot, will serve as practice for evacuation in the case of any emergency, except when it may be dangerous to leave the classroom or building.
- Our emergency shelter will be at the Parsonage, the white house across the parking lot.
- We will make every effort to be in prompt communication with families in the event of any emergency.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are welcome in the classroom at any time. We encourage parents to share special skills and knowledge with the children, to accompany us on field trips, and to offer their time and talents in whatever way seems most comfortable.

Twice per year, during winter and at the end of the year, the children prepare a simple, brief show for their families. This is accompanied by a potluck lunch. Extended family members and friends are warmly invited to these events. At these events, we ask that families bring a dish or supplies to help make our event a success. We also ask for help in any set-up or break-down of events and will advise families of our needs.

## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising events help support the school's scholarship fund, operating expenses, and enrichment activities. This year's event includes, but may not be limited to:

- Run by the Bay- a 5K Run/Walk at Mitchell Field held in May

**\*We do expect that each parent will commit to involvement in at least one fundraiser. Please contact the director if you have concerns, questions, or limitations.** If you have other fundraising ideas, please do not hesitate to let us know.

## **PARENT COMMUNICATION**

### **Parent Communication Table**

On a table in Fellowship Hall you will find our monthly newsletter, monthly menu, and other notices throughout the school year. We will also place articles of interest, information about community and educational events, and occasional sign-up sheets. Please make every effort to check the table regularly.

### **Parent Bulletin Board**

Located outside the classroom, the bulletin board provides a space where teachers post the current focus planning sheet, information about health, safety and other topics, news items about the school, photographs of events, and other items of interest throughout the year.

### **Classroom Parents**

We encourage 2 parents from each class to take on the role of “Classroom Parent” to help facilitate communication between school and families. Classroom Parents may be called to organize volunteers or relay information to the community for special events such as Potluck lunches and celebrations, Teacher Appreciation Week, Fall Festival, or Run by the Bay 5k.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Twice a year, usually in November and early spring, the teachers meet individually with parents to discuss the progress of their child. This will be an opportunity to schedule a 20 minute check-in to discuss your child in their school setting. In the spring, for graduating students, teachers will prepare a written developmental narrative to share with parents ahead of the meeting. Appointment sign-up sheets will be placed on the Parent Table for families to sign up at pick up and drop off times. If the listed times are not convenient for your family, we are happy to make other arrangements. Parents are also welcome to ask for additional meetings about their child at any time during the year.

### **Director’s Hours**

The role of the director is a part-time position. Office hours will be posted on the door of the director. You are welcome to arrange a time to meet outside of these hours and should contact the director to do so.

### **E-Mail Communication**

Via email, parents receive frequent newsletters, along with reminders about upcoming events, necessary paperwork, and other matters. Please email the director for any issues within the classroom or questions about the school. If there is a question you would like directed to teachers specifically, the Director will be happy to forward your email to the teacher.

### **Other Communication**

We ask that you communicate with teachers in person, or through the Director. We strive for our core-teaching staff to have access to all information regarding the students. Please do not send teachers personal email or text messages regarding school-related issues. This method helps us keep all staff aware of student issues and ensures parents receive a well-considered response from our staff.

### **Publicity Permissions and Privacy**

Each year, parents are asked to fill out a form either giving or denying permission to use their child’s image on the nursery school’s website and Facebook, as well as in other venues, such as newspaper articles and the HCNS recruitment poster, annual appeal letter and brochure. These photos are very helpful in bringing our program to life for potential families and the community at large. Our practice is not to name any individual child; if an occasion arises (such as a newspaper story) when names are requested, we will seek parent permission

before giving anyone that information.

**\*We ask that parents who accompany us on field trips and take photos with their own devices DO NOT share photos of other children through social networks or any other shared networks. Please ensure that you take this seriously.**

### **Issues or Concerns**

Should an issue or concern arise with respect to your child or the program, the first step is addressing the matter with the teachers and director. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, the next step is to contact the chairperson of the advisory committee. The chairperson and the committee will make every effort to help resolve the issue.

### **TUITION POLICIES**

Tuition will be set annually by the Nursery School Committee, based on the number of students enrolled, the number of class sessions per week, and the financial needs of the school.

For new and returning students, a \$100 tuition deposit is required to hold your child's space for the coming year. This deposit will be returned once a full school year has been completed. The deposit will not be refunded if the child is withdrawn after the parents sign the enrollment contract.

### **Tuition Payment**

We encourage parents to pay in two installments, one each semester, to simplify our billing process. These semester payments are due August 1<sup>st</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>. Two other options exist for tuition payment:

- Full year payment, due August 1st
- Monthly payments, due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month

Checks should be made payable to "Harpwell Community Nursery School," with the tuition month or period for which you are paying in the memo line. Checks may be placed in the drop box in the director's office, *or given to the Director*. Alternatively, you may arrange with your bank and have the institution send a scheduled check as payment.

Failure to pay tuition as scheduled may result in a student losing his/her place at the school.

### **Tuition Assistance**

HCNS will work with a family who is having trouble paying full tuition due to extenuating circumstances. A limited amount of scholarship aid may be available to qualifying families experiencing severe financial difficulties. This is discussed in greater detail in the section of the parent handbook entitled "Scholarship Fund."

**\*\*Please note:** Tuition assistance applies only to the 3-day and 2-day preschool program options. Tuition assistance is not available for a 5-day option.

### **Tuition Refund Policy**

For the benefit of the child's development, and for the financial health of the school, the school expects families to honor the commitment of a full year's attendance at HCNS. We understand, however, that situations may arise which necessitate a child's leaving before the end of the school year. We require written notice of a student's withdrawal at least four weeks in advance of the child's last day. This allows the Director to arrange for a replacement student in the class.

If a child is withdrawn on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>, the school will refund or cancel any tuition paid or due, except for the \$100 tuition deposit. If a child is withdrawn between September 1<sup>st</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup>, the school will refund prepaid tuition or cancel payment due minus the current month for a child who is withdrawn from the program, and except for the \$100 tuition deposit.

If the child leaves the program at the school's request, the school will refund prepaid tuition minus the current month in which the child is withdrawn, and except for the \$100 tuition deposit.

Requests for exceptions to this policy may be presented in writing to the Director for consideration.

### **Sibling Discount Policy**

HCNS offers a 10% discount for the second child (or additional children) from one family.

### **CHILD GUIDANCE**

The staff uses positive methods of child management which encourage self-control, self-direction, and cooperation. Occasionally we will encourage a child to "stop and think" after repeated reminders. This pause will be in close proximity to teachers and closely monitored. Rules and limits are clearly explained and consistently applied. No child will be expected to perform behavior which is beyond his/her comprehension or ability.

### **Injurious Behavior Policy**

*We believe that children should:*

- treat other children and adults with respect
- speak politely
- solve problems using words rather than with physical responses

*To encourage kind behavior, the staff will:*

- treat all children and adults with respect
- speak politely
- praise children's efforts and achievements consistently
- help children understand and internalize what they should have done or said as they develop social skills
- avoid the use of critical or sarcastic language
- share with parents their children's efforts and achievements

*We will not accept the following behavior:*

- use of rude or unkind language
- hitting, kicking, biting or other physical responses that hurt others

*If such behavior occurs:*

- We will discuss with the child alternative behaviors and model appropriate behavior
- If the behavior is repeated, the child will be reminded once more
- If the behavior continues, the child will not be allowed to participate in the activity and we will speak to the parent at pick-up time.
- With parents' permission, we may call Child Development Services and ask a specialist to act as a resource in the situation.
- If other children are in danger because of a child's aggressive behavior, the Director may choose to exclude the child from the classroom, at least on a temporary basis, while we work with the parents and

professionals on strategies to mitigate the behavior.

- If a child engages in threatening behavior, teachers will call parents and the child will be sent home at the teachers' discretion.

## **POLICY OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Harpwell Community Nursery School is mandated by the State of Maine to report to the Department of Human Services any reasonable concern of child abuse or neglect. Parents will always be notified of these concerns and the need to make a report.

## **INCLUSION POLICY**

Inclusion is a philosophy that has as its central idea "all children belong." Harpswell Community Nursery School seeks to practice responsible inclusion. We provide, within available resources and using reasonable modifications, the highest possible quality support and inclusive education for all children. Through inclusive practice we develop patience, acceptance, helpfulness, diversity and compassion.

HCNS recognizes that to provide a fully inclusive and supportive environment we must work closely with the full range of support services and external agencies when support is required for a child's specific need. The school also works closely with agencies when information is requested to support a child.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES**

### **Hand washing**

When children first arrive, they will wash their hands before entering the classroom. We ask that parents help their children do this after hanging up coats, etc. Hand washing upon arrival is strongly recommended by both the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the American Academy of Pediatrics as a way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Staff, of course, will practice the same technique. We will discuss this with the children on the first day, and appreciate your cooperation in helping make it a routine part of each day.

During the school day, hand washing occurs before meals or participation in cooking projects, after toileting and at other times as necessary to prevent the spread of germs.

### **Toileting**

It is expected that children who attend the nursery school will be toilet trained. We do not have the necessary sanitary facilities to change diapers. If your child still has occasional accidents, we will work to help the child know when to use the toilet and to feel comfortable doing so at school. We ask that you send your child wearing underwear, rather than Pull-Ups, as this speeds the transition to independent toileting.

### **Accidents and Injuries**

In the event of a minor injury, the teacher will administer simple first aid using the classroom first aid kit. For serious emergencies, parents will be notified and rescue personnel will be summoned; an accident/incident report will be filled out by staff and filed at the school.

## **Medications**

Except under unusual circumstances, or with instructions from a medical provider, the staff do not administer medications at school. We expect parents will administer necessary medications at home. If your child has an allergy-action plan, please provide this with all medications at the start of the year.

## **Contagious Disease Policies**

Please keep your child home from school if he or she shows any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
- Severe pain or discomfort
- Acute diarrhea in a 24-hour period
- Two or more episodes of vomiting in the past 24 hours
- Sore throat or severe coughing
- Red eyes with discharge
- Skin lesions that are weeping or bleeding
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Fatigue or irritability that prevents participation in regular activities
- Skin rashes lasting longer than 24 hours
- Swollen joints
- Visibly enlarged lymph nodes

Once your child is symptom free for 24 hours, or has a physician's note stating that he/she no longer poses a serious health risk, he/she may return to school.

By law, we must inform the Maine CDC of certain disease outbreaks. The most likely diseases are listed below. If your child contracts any of the following, please notify the director immediately:

- |                                  |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Chicken Pox                    | • Pertussis              |
| • Diphtheria                     | • Poliomyelitis          |
| • E.coli                         | • Rubella                |
| • Hepatitis                      | • Staphylococcal Disease |
| • Influenza                      | • Streptococcal Disease  |
| • Measles                        | • Tetanus                |
| • Meningococcal Invasive Disease | • Tuberculosis           |
| • Mumps                          |                          |

A complete list of CDC reportable conditions is available to parents upon request.

Please also inform the director immediately if your child contracts any of these contagious conditions:

- |                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| • Lice           | • Impetigo |
| • Conjunctivitis | • Scabies  |

Your child may not return to school without a doctor's note stating that the child presents no risk to himself/herself or others.

Children who are not well enough to go outside for playtime are not well enough to come to school. If your child becomes sick during the day, the teacher will inform the parents by telephone. Parents are responsible for arranging for or picking up the child from school soon after notification.

## **Tick Information and Policy**

In Harpswell, we have seen an increase in the number of ticks. Ticks can carry diseases, including Lyme disease and anaplasmosis, which can cause serious illness and sometimes long-term neurological conditions. Since we have a strong emphasis on outdoor exploration and experiences at the nursery school, we believe it is important to be vigilant about protecting against ticks.

Important facts about ticks (source: <http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/>):

- Ticks live in moist and humid environments, particularly in or near wooded or grassy areas.
- Ticks transmit pathogens that cause disease through the process of feeding. Ticks can secrete small amounts of saliva with anesthetic properties so that the animal or person can't feel that the tick has attached itself. If the tick is in a sheltered spot, it can go unnoticed.
- A tick will suck the blood slowly for several days. If the host animal has a bloodborne infection, the tick will ingest the pathogens with the blood. Small amounts of saliva from the tick may also enter the skin of the host animal during the feeding process. If the tick contains a pathogen, the organism may be transmitted to the host animal in this way.
- If removal of attached ticks occurs within 36 hours, the risk of tick-borne infection is minimal.

*The HCNS policy on avoiding ticks is as follows:*

- *We have an organic tick treatment applied 3 times per year to prevent ticks within our playarea.*
- *When outside for daily play, we will avoid tall grassy places in the spring and fall, when ticks are most prevalent. On special occasions when we plan to explore or walk through fields, we will ask that children wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts. We will use paths in the woods that are bare and/or have had brush cut down on either side.*
- *Teachers will apply insect/tick repellent if instructed by parents*
- *Teachers will conduct tick checks, as feasible, toward the end of outdoor time. This will involve checking clothing, arms, legs, belly, neck and head.*
- *If a tick is found attached to a student, teachers will remove the tick with tweezers and store the tick in a ziploc bag. This bag will be labeled and given to parents/caregivers at the end of the day.*
- *Parents are asked to conduct daily tick checks on their children on school days in spring and fall. The recommended procedure is as follows:*

**Check your child's clothing.** Ticks may be carried into the house on clothing. Any ticks that are found should be removed. Placing clothes into a dryer on high heat for at least an hour effectively kills ticks.

**Check your child's body.**

- Under the arms
- In and around the ears
- Inside belly button
- Back of the knees
- In and around the hair
- Between the legs, toes, fingers
- Around the waist

Daily baths and showers offer an opportunity to dislodge ticks before they have become firmly attached.

If you find a tick, the recommended action is to remove the attached tick as soon as you notice it by grasping with

tweezers, as close to the skin as possible, and pulling it straight out.

Watch for signs of illness such as rash or fever in the days and weeks following the bite, and see a health care provider if these develop. Your child's risk of acquiring a tick-borne illness depends on many factors, including where you live, what type of tick bit you, and how long the tick was attached. If your child becomes ill after a tick bite, see a health care provider.

## **FOOD**

A simple and nutritious snack is served mid-morning every day. We attempt to use local and minimally-processed foods whenever financially feasible, and have consulted with a licensed nutritionist on our menu. Teachers plan occasional cooking projects with the children and may use these opportunities to prepare snacks. **Please let us know if your child has any food allergies or sensitivities.** This information should be in writing on the medical form. **If bringing in a snack, please consult with your child's teachers first. They will provide you with a snack form for you to sign and return.**

## **BIRTHDAY POLICY**

We recognize that birthdays are very important to young children. At school, we mark the event by recognizing the event at arrival; offering the child the opportunity to do a job he/she enjoys, allowing the child to choose a favorite song at circle, and/or share a special snack; and singing "Happy Birthday" at snack. We do not have birthday parties as such; these are best left to families. If parents do have a party, we ask that invitations to that party be mailed to the other children's homes, even if all children at the nursery school are invited. We will provide a list of names and addresses for mailing invitations.

If parents wish to bring in a special snack on their child's birthday, we appreciate this contribution. Because we teach good nutrition and how to make healthy eating choices, we encourage parents to bring healthier alternatives to traditional birthday cake. We offer the following ideas for alternative treats:

- ❖ Fruit and/or berries – pineapple, watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries, fruit salad, etc. (No grapes, please.) Colorful toothpicks or skewers are always festive additions to any plate of fruit
- ❖ Fruit crisp- a low sugar recipe is always appreciated
- ❖ Cake without frosting, such as banana, carrot or applesauce cake or bread
- ❖ Muffins
- ❖ Frozen real fruit bars

\*We recommend opting for foods without nuts; always check with teachers for food sensitivities/allergies.