

HCNS Staff Handbook

2016-17

HCNS 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 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.

HCNS Philosophy

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.”

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.

Staff Telephone Numbers

Director/Teacher – Kimberly Sanders	207-712-0862 (cell)
Teacher, TTH, T4T— Lauren Watkinson	207-844-4206 (cell)
Teacher, MWF, TTH— Debra Norton	207-751-0709 (cell)

Teacher Responsibilities and Information

1. Holidays, Vacations, Weather Related Closure

Holidays and Vacations

HCNS follows the SAD#75 schedule of closures for holidays and vacations. The holidays include: Columbus Day, Christmas, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Patriots' Day, and Memorial Day. Please note that Christmas, New Year's Day, Presidents' Day and Patriots' Day occur during vacations. There are one-week vacations in February and April.

Inclement Weather Policy

The nursery school closes if SAD 75 closes. In the case of a 2-hour delayed start in SAD 75, HCNS will be closed for the day. In the case of a 1-hour delay in SAD 75, the director will make the decision whether to keep school open that day.

Storm day make-up policy will follow the guidelines of MSAD 75 calendar.

The director will email parents and staff about school closures, and will post information on the three major network television stations.

2. Record Keeping

Attendance

Attendance sheets should be marked daily. Please keep completed sheets and submit to the Director after the last day of school in May. Parents should telephone the school or write a note explaining a child's absence. Notes received must be kept on file with the attendance records until the school year ends.

Children's Records

Children's records are kept in a binder in the computer cabinet in the nursery school office. The files contain the following:

- Application Form
- Medical Form
- Immunization Record
- Photo and E-mail Release Form

Child Development and Progress

All teachers should regularly record children's interactions, work and skills. These should be in the form of anecdotal records, skills checklists, work samples, and photographs.

Teaching teams meet weekly to discuss individual children. Each teacher will be assigned specific children for whom they are responsible. This will involve gathering information and assessing children's progress. The lead teachers are responsible for writing reports and meeting with parents about the child's progress; delegation of these tasks to other members of the teaching team will occur at the lead teacher's discretion and the other teacher's willingness and ability to carry out these duties.

Children's Photographs and Privacy Policy

As part of documentation of children's progress and learning, and of group projects and classroom outings, staff will be taking photographs of the children. These photographs will be used in weekly emails and documentations panels, for internal HCNS use. No photograph of a child whose parent has refused publicity permissions will be displayed on the website or Facebook page, or in any other public venue. Staff may not post photos of any HCNS child on social network sites, via email, or in any other personal correspondence without express permission from the parent of that child.

3. Housekeeping

Classrooms

Clean-up of art and play materials should be an enjoyable, integral part of the daily program, and supervised by the teacher to encourage the proper use of the materials by the children. Emphasis should be placed on the recovery of all parts of puzzles and toys before they are placed in storage. Preschool toys should be cleaned and disinfected monthly.

Children's work should be displayed creatively and should take precedence over commercial or teacher-created displays. The room should be organized for the children's active participation in classroom activities. Before leaving the classroom for the day, make sure that the room is ready for the next day. Floors should be vacuumed, tables cleaned, and shelves arranged.

Bathrooms

Teachers should check the children's bathrooms periodically to ensure that they are well-stocked and clean. Toilet paper and paper towels should be replaced as needed. Teachers are required to wash their hands with soap and water after each bathroom use.

4. Planning

Under the Reggio-inspired approach, curriculum is fluid and changes are made daily based on the interests of the children and the teacher's observations. General themes and longer term projects may occur at the same time.

Weekly Focus

Teaching teams meet weekly to plan for the next week's curriculum directions. The teachers communicate weekly about curriculum planning and environmental changes, materials required, and other planning matters. The results are written up as a "Current Focus" page which is e-mailed to parents and posted on the parent bulletin board.

Substitute Plans

Each teacher is responsible for creating an outline of the day and suggested activities for a substitute to use. In most cases, the substitute will serve at the direction of the regular teacher.

5. Snacks and Nutrition

The teaching staff provides a nutritious snack for the preschool children. Milk and water are provided as drinks. When economically feasible, we buy organic snacks and ingredients. The director purchases milk and other common supplies, and lead teachers purchase specific snack ingredients. Occasionally the children prepare or bake their snacks in school as part of the curriculum, and each teaching team plans and purchases for these projects. To celebrate birthdays parents usually arrange with the teacher to bring in a special snack.

Our birthday policy is below:

We recognize that birthdays are very important to young children. At school, we may mark the event with a "birthday crown," singing "Happy Birthday," and the opportunity for the child to do a job he/she enjoys, choose a favorite song at circle, share a special snack, and so on. 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 to parents 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. (Birthday cake is largely frosting, and some children eat only the frosting.) We offer the following ideas for alternative treats:

- ❖ Fruit &/or berries – pineapple, watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries, fruit

- ❖ salad, etc. (No grapes, please.)
- ❖ Fruit cobbler, crumb, pie, or ambrosia
- ❖ Cake without frosting, such as banana, carrot or applesauce cake or bread
- ❖ Chocolate covered strawberries or other fruit
- ❖ Finger sandwiches-peanut butter and jelly, ham & cheese
- ❖ Muffins
- ❖ Pudding
- ❖ Frozen yogurt
- ❖ Frozen real fruit bars (Edys)
- ❖ Sherbet
- ❖ Light Ice Cream Sandwiches by Smiling Cow

*Most items are egg-free; all items are tree nut-free.

6. Health and Safety

Daily Routines and Supervision

Drop-Off

Each child and parent is welcomed at the door to the classroom area by a teacher. The child first hangs up his or her coat in the coatroom, washes his or her hands with the parent, and then goes into the main classroom. Teachers remain posted in the classroom and hallway during the drop-off period.

Choice Time

When both the main classroom and Creation Station are open, or the Fellowship Hall and main classroom are open, each teacher supervises one of the rooms.

Toileting

Group bathroom visits occur just before snack, for hand washing and toileting, and children have another opportunity to use the toilet while getting ready to go outside. Teachers supervise these bathroom sessions. Children may independently use the toilet during other parts of the day.

Snack

Snack is held in the Fellowship Hall for MWF; TTH children may eat in the Fellowship Hall or the classroom, depending on church uses of the Fellowship Hall. Children independently serve themselves when possible and are encouraged to talk with one another. Staff should sit at the tables with the children---family-style serving helps make this possible. Foods that cause choking, such as grapes and carrot “coins,” should be avoided.

Outside Time

When children leave the building for outside play, they must be under direct supervision at all times. They are counted before they leave the classroom. They are escorted to the playground by the teachers. While on the playground they are supervised by both teachers. They are counted at least once while they are on the playground. If a child has to go to the bathroom while on the playground, he is taken inside by a teacher.

Pick-Up

At dismissal time at noon, parents collect the children from the playground, or from the classroom or Fellowship Hall in the case of inclement weather. Children are released only to their parents or to those individuals whom the parent has given written permission to pick up their child.

Children with Non-Life Threatening Allergies and Chronic Conditions

The names of allergic children and their allergens are posted in the classroom. When specific children have food allergies/sensitivities, these are also posted in the classroom; teachers must be vigilant about reading ingredients of purchased foods.

Classroom Health and Sanitation Practices

Hand-washing is the best defense against spread of illness. Staff and children will wash hands upon arrival, after toileting, before meals, and at other appropriate times. Children will be shown the proper technique for washing hands.

The nursery school expects that all children will have learned to use the toilet. If children are still in the process of toilet learning, they should come in underwear rather than pull-ups. Nursery school staff will not be expected to change diapers or Pull-Ups. If accidents occur, staff will help the child clean up, and change clothes, the clothes will be placed in a sealed bag, and then both staff member and child will wash hands thoroughly.

All tables and working surfaces in the classroom will be cleaned daily with a disinfecting solution. Toys and materials will be sanitized and disinfected on a rotating basis. Cups, dishes and utensils used for food preparation or eating will be washed in the commercial-grade dishwasher. Play areas will be vacuumed daily.

Classrooms will be aired out daily, as weather permits. Children will be taken outside daily for fresh air and exercise, weather permitting.

Immunizations

All children must have an updated immunization record on file, or an approved statement indicating medical contraindications or philosophical differences, as required by the state. Dates of immunization (month/day/year) and vaccine type

shall be on file for each of the following vaccine-preventable illnesses:

- a) measles
- b) mumps
- c) rubella
- d) diphtheria
- e) pertussis
- f) polio
- g) tetanus
- h) haemophilus influenza type B
- i) varicells (chicken pox)
- j) hepatitis B
- k) pneumococcal conjugate

All staff born after 1956 will have on file a Certificate of Immunization for measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria and tetanus. A laboratory blood test proving immunity may also be accepted. Alternatively, staff members will have on file an approved statement indicating medical contraindications or philosophical or religious opposition to immunization, as required by the state.

Contagious Disease Policies

Sick children belong at home, where they can receive the rest and care that they need. Changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns, general mood, aggressiveness, and activity level can often signal a lack of well-being before other, more obvious symptoms appear. Parents and staff will communicate about such changes, and act on them to help the child recuperate.

If a child becomes ill during the day, staff will keep the child comfortable and contact the parent or guardian to come pick the child up. Parents are asked not to send their child to school if he or she has had a fever in the previous 24 hours.

The following symptoms in children require exclusion from the nursery school:

- 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

Children will be re-admitted to school according to physician's recommendation and/or accepted medical standards, such as being fever-free for 24 hours.

By law, we must inform the Maine CDC of certain disease outbreaks. A complete list of CDC reportable conditions is in the health and safety notebook in the classroom.

If an illness becomes a medical emergency, follow the procedure outlined below under Medical Emergencies.

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*:

- 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.

*source: <http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/>

The HCNS policy on avoiding ticks is as follows:

- 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 conduct tick checks, as feasible, toward the end of outdoor time. This will involve checking clothing, arms, legs, belly, neck and head.
- 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
- 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.

Medications

Due to the short hours we are in session, the nursery school does not administer prescription or over-the-counter medications. Parents are asked to give medication before or after school hours.

When specific emergency equipment or medication is necessary---e.g., epipen or inhaler---at least one staff person on site will be trained in how to administer this in an emergency.

Injuries

Please report even minor injuries to the Director. More serious injuries should be written up on an Accident Report Form and the parents notified during the school day that the accident occurred. Minor first aid treatment may be administered by a teacher or other school personnel. First aid supplies are on the top right-hand shelf in the main classroom.

Medical Emergencies

If an injury, illness, or allergic reaction is serious enough to require more than standard treatment, please follow the procedure below:

1. Keep the child quiet and still.
2. Notify the head teacher or Director.
3. The Director and teacher will determine the level of care:
 - immediate care at school,
 - notification of the parent or emergency contact person to advise that the child be taken home or to a physician for treatment, or
 - removal of the child by ambulance after calling 911.
4. Complete an Accident Report Form.

If a medical emergency occurs on a **field trip**:

1. Stabilize the child.
2. Call the 911 emergency number.
3. Call the parent.
4. Never leave the child unattended.

Suspected Child Abuse

All Harpswell Community Nursery School teachers and the Director are mandated by the State of Maine to report to Child Protective Services in the Department of Health and 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.

Procedure to Report Suspected Child Abuse

- Step 1 - Suspicion and Documentation - Date and document in writing every suspected occurrence of child abuse and or neglect by describing the injury or the conversation with a child retelling an incident. Describe the child's physical and emotional behavior. Transcribe any conversation verbatim if possible.
- Step 2 - Discuss suspicions and documentation with the Director within one school day of the first documentation.
- Step 3 - The Director and teacher decide next steps, including contacting parents and CPS.

Fire

Fire drills are conducted monthly. All fire drills will be announced and will be held at different times during the morning.

Fire Drill Procedure

In the case of a real fire, the 911 emergency number will be called by the church administrative assistant or the Director, if on site. The teacher's responsibility is strictly to get the children out of the building. If the fire is small and contained, it

is the responsibility of the administrative assistant or Director to try to extinguish it.

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 except the doors to the office and the Fellowship Hall will be kept locked during classroom hours.
- 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. Each year the director will set up a phone-tree system for communicating speedily with parents, while leaving the teacher/director's phone and classroom phone free for communications with first responders or other vital service providers.

7. Field Trips (Site Visits)

Field trips, or site visits, are an integral part of the Reggio approach. Most of the time, such trips should occur locally, with the possibility of multiple visits, as the needs of a long-term project require. Optimally, teachers will visit the site beforehand to discuss with the experts how best to answer children's questions and expose them to new dimensions of the topic being explored.

Parent chaperones and drivers are necessary for field trips to occur. Staff and parents will transport children to the site. All drivers will be licensed and carry appropriate levels of insurance. Children must be assigned to a particular parent or staff member for supervisory purposes.

8. Child Guidance

Teachers are expected to use positive methods of child management which encourage self-control, self-direction, and cooperation. Occasionally teachers may use a "stop and think" chair for a child who needs a time out after repeated reminders. 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.

9. 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, we will remove the child from the activity and 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.

10. Parent-School Relations

HCNS considers parents to be full partners in the school. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year, in November and May, and all staff contribute to the reports given to parents about their child's progress. Parents are kept informed of the classroom curriculum and events through the following mechanisms:

- ❖ Current focus (weekly plan)---e-mailed and posted on parent bulletin board
- ❖ Weekly email newsletter
- ❖ Monthly calendar

- ❖ Monthly newsletter
- ❖ Slideshows of digital photos taken of children engaged in the classroom
- ❖ Displays of children's work around various themes or projects
- ❖ Parenting articles of interest, printed or via email

A list of parenting and service resources is kept in a binder and is available to parents who need it.

Books on child development and parenting topics are available for loan to parents.

Special speakers may also be invited to speak to parents on topics of interest.

The director (and lead teacher, if interested) will hold periodic talks to address questions parents may have about the curriculum or to offer mini-sessions on topics of interest.

Personnel Policies

1. Hiring

HCNS complies with all federal mandates on equal opportunity employment, Worker's Compensation procedures, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The hiring procedure is as follows:

- A. The Director will maintain current job descriptions of all positions.
- B. If a teacher opening occurs, and a suitable internal candidate or candidates is/ are identified, the candidate(s) will be interviewed following a set list of questions. The lead teacher (where appropriate) and the Director will interview the candidate(s). The Director will check references and make the final hiring decision, subject to approval by the nursery school hiring committee.
- C. If no internal teacher candidates are identified, HCNS will advertise through local channels. The interview process will be the same as above.
- D. When a director vacancy occurs, the nursery school committee is responsible for identifying internal candidates and/or advertising for the position, scheduling and carrying out interviews, and making final hiring decisions.

Prospective employees must submit a list of references, and undergo both a State Bureau of Investigation background check and a Child Protective Services (Department of Health and Human Services) background checks. These must be completed before a formal contract is offered to the employee.

2. Hours and Pay

All teachers are paid on a salary basis. The terms of pay, duties, and hours are contained in each teacher's contract. The children attend 9 am to 12 noon, except for those who attend Monday and/or Wednesday and/or Friday extended day(s)

from 12 pm to 2 pm. Teacher hours are 8:30 am to 12:30 pm; on extended days, they are 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. Teachers and the Director spend the necessary time before and after school hours preparing the classroom, cleaning up and planning.

Extra duties will be considered on a case-by-case basis and paid for at the discretion of the Director.

Substitute teachers are paid \$50 per day; \$75 if also covering the extended day. This rate applies to staff members who serve as subs on days that are not their regular teaching days.

3. Leave

A teacher is allowed sick and annual leave according to the following formula: annual number of days allowed is equal to number of days worked per week. Thus, a teacher who works 3 days a week is allotted 3 days of sick time per year. If you are ill, notify the Director at home (712-0862) or at school as soon as possible, so a substitute can be found.

4. Training, Staff Development, and Professional Advancement

Maine Roads to Quality Provider Registry

All teachers are required to become part of the provider registry. This involves submitting documentation of education and work experience to Maine Roads to Quality. HCNS will pay the fee of \$10 for each staff member to join the registry.

Professional Development

All teachers must complete at least 18 clock hours of training or professional development activity per year. This may be pursued through outside training agencies or by attending approved conferences or study groups, as well as in-house workshops. HCNS will pay for state-sponsored training and for at least a portion of other training. Teachers are encouraged to pursue coursework in ECE. Limited tuition reimbursement is available to staff who take college courses.

CPR/First Aid

All teachers must hold current CPR and First Aid certification. HCNS pays for training to receive certification.

Staff Meetings

Staff members are required to attend bi-weekly staff meetings for the purposes of information sharing, problem solving, and in-house training.

1. Employee Evaluation

Each employee receives an annual evaluation in April, prior to renewal of contracts. The Director performs evaluations on all classroom staff. The Chair of the Nursery

School Advisory Committee performs the Director's evaluation. A professional development plan will be developed for each teacher and the Director every year.

2. Performance Issues and Termination

Termination of employment of classroom employees is at the discretion of the Director. If performance is unsatisfactory, a plan for improvement will be developed and signed by the teacher and Director. If the employee does not show improvement after the period of time outlined in the plan, the employee will be terminated, with 30 days' notice. Certain behaviors, such as (but not limited to) abuse of children, breach of confidentiality, and negligence of safety, will result in immediate dismissal.

3. Grievance Procedure

A staff member who wishes to present a grievance must first present it to the Director. Failing to reach settlement or resolution of the issue with the Director, the staff member may submit to the Chairperson of the Personnel Sub-Committee of the Nursery School Advisory Committee a written statement of the situation, requesting that the situation be reviewed by the Personnel Sub-Committee. The Personnel Sub-Committee will review the grievance and report with recommendations to the full Committee for action.

4. Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and, as such, is prohibited at Harpswell Community Nursery School. The school is committed to maintaining a positive learning and working environment for students, parents and teachers, and will not tolerate sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as any unsolicited, offensive behavior that inappropriately asserts sexuality over status as a student or an employee, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- a. Submission to sexual harassment is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment, enrollment or advancement.
- b. Submission to or rejection of sexual harassment is used as the basis (or threatened to be used as the basis) for employment actions or evaluations or enrollment decisions.
- c. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or educational performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or learning environment.