



P.O Box 119 Brattleboro, VT 05302
(802) 257-5544

PARENT HANDBOOK

Revised Spring 2010

The Neighborhood Schoolhouse is an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, ancestry, place of birth, ethnicity or physical disability, including, but not exclusive of, the admission of students and the equal use of all facilities.

This handbook does not constitute a contract and may be changed unilaterally by the school at any time.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been said that practicality is nothing but an ideal put to use. That's the story of The Neighborhood Schoolhouse. We began in the spring of 1980 as a small group of people who shared some simple but strong ideals. Since that first gathering, we have taken steps--along with the help of good fortune--to turn these ideals into a reality that continues to grow.

Perhaps the most important step we took that first year was to establish a basic structure that maintains a balance between our original purpose and the influx of new energies. We decided that the Board of Directors, comprised of parents of students and people from the outside community, has final responsibility for running the school. We held firmly at the outset that we must trust the people we carefully choose as our administrative and teaching staff to make fundamental day-to-day decisions. By the very nature of our ideals, this trust is necessary if we are to have the school we envision. Our staff must know that we have faith in them, because they are primarily responsible for making our dream a reality.

In rounding out the role of responsibility for our school, we knew when we began that we wanted and needed parents to actively participate in all levels. We imagined that people who wanted their children to come to a school such as ours would come from diverse backgrounds, and that children receive a far richer education when their parents are active participants with them. Finally, we understood that to make our school affordable to as many as possible, we needed parents to help raise additional funds and cut costs by volunteering their labor.

As for the good fortune that has contributed to the growth of our school, it has been plentiful. We have had many supportive people with us along the way--people whose level of involvement has ranged from simple, heartfelt encouragement to unaccountable expenditures of time, money, and energy. We were extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to locate at Solar Hill when we opened in the fall of 1981.

Solar Hill, which serves as the site for a variety of other worthwhile endeavors, provides a rich environment for children. We have acres of woodland, a garden plot, swings, playground equipment and an obstacle course. Indoors--always keeping in mind that we want the best educational experience we can possibly provide--we continue each year to change, improve, and expand our classrooms as well as our learning tools and resources.

Finally, we consider ourselves fortunate to be in Brattleboro. Right from the beginning we intended to emphasize learning through direct experience, to have our children go beyond the classroom walls to learn from their neighborhood. Brattleboro is a rich source of learning for all of us. There are people with a variety of interests, talents, and professions; cultural life is actively diverse; the natural environment offers many seasonal possibilities; the local history has a rich heritage; the opportunities are limitless.

All of this--what we ourselves have decided and done, as well as what has happened by chance--has turned our ideals into an especially fine, small school. We are proud of what we have today and we remain loyal to the ideals we had when we first started.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLHOUSE

MISSION STATEMENT

MISSION

Our mission is to inspire a lifelong love of learning and to provide our students with the skills needed to contribute to their communities as insightful, effective, caring individuals.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

At the heart of The Neighborhood Schoolhouse philosophy is the understanding that we are all students as well as teachers. We learn in all types of environments, at all times of day. When we trust each other we take risks from which we emerge changed. *How* children go about their learning is as important to us as *what* they learn. Children learn in their own unique ways and at their own unique paces. Our responsibility is to nurture and encourage children's growth by providing a rich and challenging environment.

We educate the whole child, realizing the importance of social, emotional, intellectual, and creative growth. We provide a safe, nurturing environment in which the children's developmental needs are recognized. We provide opportunities for the children to take an active role in their education, and to interact with children of all ages. Our students raise questions and seek answers on their own. They experiment, discover the diversity within themselves and their surroundings, and openly meet new challenges.

We believe that ultimately education must encourage children to care: to care about themselves, about others, and about their own ability to effect positive change in their world.

We encourage:

- an awareness of the interdependence of all living things;
- a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the environment;
- the ability to play and work cooperatively;
- a willingness to strive toward peaceful resolution of conflict;
- learning through experience and play;
- respect and tolerance for others;
- global awareness and respect for cultural differences;
- outlets for creative expression;
- the development of a positive self-image;
- the acquisition of academic and non-academic learning skills.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT STAFF:

Molly Oglesby, Preschool Teacher: Preschool Program

Molly comes to the Neighborhood Schoolhouse with a wide variety of skills and experience in the early childhood field. With a background in library skills, psychology, experience in special education and tutoring, she brings a solid base and the ability to create a classroom where students are eager to learn, play, explore, create, dance, sing, laugh, feel safe, have fun, be curious, and succeed. She co-founded Preschools in Wilmington and Wardsboro, has been a fourth grade teacher, was a consultant to Timson Hill in Williamsville, VT and worked in the primary classroom at Hilltop Montessori. As an ELF/4 Winds volunteer, she brought her love and knowledge of nature to children ages 3 to 8, an awareness she also brings to the preschool program here.

Stacey Johnston, Assistant Teacher: Preschool Program

Stacey brings five years of teaching experience to her classroom work at the Neighborhood Schoolhouse. She has been a substitute and assistant teacher at several schools in the Brattleboro, VT area for those years. She works closely with parents to promote understanding of their child's growth and development and looks for the sparkle in the children's eyes as her primary motivation to give the love and energy that teaching requires. She believes that freedom to explore combined with learning to accept responsibility helps children define their place as individuals and members of the group. She seeks to understand and support all her students' needs.

Charity Peffer, Teacher: After School Care Program

Charity is completing a Master of Arts in Teaching ESOL for K-12 at the School for International Training Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT. She has taught in Brattleboro area schools as an intern and a substitute for the past two years while working on that degree, and she taught abroad and in the Midwest before that. While studying and teaching ESOL in Costa Rica and Morocco, she began working on fluency in Spanish and other languages. She holds a BA in Creative Writing from Carson-Newman College, and a Certificate in Canine Behavior from Arizona Canine Academy. She is also a singer-songwriter and a poet. She hopes to share her gifts with the children in the After School Care Program while learning new lessons in life and early childhood education from them. She believes in collaboration with families and her fellow teachers to develop a reflective practice that will facilitate life long hunger for learning for each student.

Laureen Reavey, Teacher: Pre Kindergarten; After School Care Director

Laureen joined the staff of Neighborhood Schoolhouse in September 2002, after receiving a B.A. in Psychology with a concentration in counseling from Keene State College. While in school, she worked at the Child Development Center at Keene State College with three-and four-year olds. She has also worked as a parent aide with Monadnock Family Services as a camp counselor, and has done private childcare for years. In 2003 Laureen became the After School Care Director at Neighborhood, injecting her special brand of enthusiasm and joy into the program. Laureen was also instrumental in the start up and continuation of Neighborhood's Pre-K class. Laureen is a children's yoga instructor and created and still runs lively camps at Neighborhood during the summer, focusing on positive learning and fun! Her outside interests include running, yoga and enjoying the outdoors

Dot MacDonald, Teacher: Kindergarten

Dot joined the Schoolhouse in the Fall of 1989 as a special aide in the pre-school program. Shortly thereafter she became an assistant in the primary program. Since 1995 she has been a co-teacher in that program with a focus on the kindergarten group. She has a BA from New York University. She has earned credits toward a Master's Degree in Special Education from the Rural Satellite Program of Norwich University and has been extensively trained as a literacy tutor in recent years. During the summer Dot runs hiking and canoeing camps. A lover of the outside, Dot spends time hiking and biking, having completed the Appalachian Trail.

Jennifer Manwell, Teacher: Primary/Elementary Program

Jennifer has a Bachelor's degree in Human Development and Social Relations (emphasis in Education) from Earlham College and additional graduate course work in education from Syracuse University. Jennifer taught for four years at the New School, an independent, alternative school in Syracuse with a philosophy similar to that of Neighborhood. There she worked with students grades K-6 in multi-aged classrooms. Prior to that she taught for four years in an "inclusive Preschool", implementing IEP goals and developmentally appropriate curriculum for groups of 18-month to six year olds. Jennifer has most recently earned a Masters of Education through the Experienced Educators' program at Antioch, where she completed internships at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, Jonathan Daniels Elementary School, and the Hitchcock Center for the Environment. She has been with Neighborhood since Fall 2001.

Laura Goldblatt, Teacher: Primary/Elementary Program

Laura comes to the Neighborhood Schoolhouse in 2008 after having taught at the Renaissance School and the Shelburne Community School in Shelburne, Vermont. While obtaining her Master's Degree in Education at Antioch in Keene, she was an intern here at Neighborhood in the 1st/2nd grade class with Jen Manwell. She has experience with Responsive Classroom and Investigations curricula and has implemented literacy programs for 1st -5th grade. At the Renaissance School she developed an original interdisciplinary curriculum in social studies, science, literacy and math. She is well travelled, is fluent in Spanish, and enjoys hiking and music.

Nan Mann, Administrative Coordinator

Since 1987, Nan has taught creative dramatics and dance to children; as an artist-in-residence at NSH and for the Town of Brattleboro, in summer camps for the Whetstone Theater and for the Brattleboro School of Dance. She joined Neighborhood School house in 1992 as the After School Care Director, left to teach preschool at the Winston Prouty Center and returns this year as the Administrative Director. In the intervening years, she has also been the Administrator at the Brattleboro School of Dance for seven years. She brings a combination of organizational and administrative skills to the office, combined with years of experience as an educator as well. A well known area actress and performer, she also teaches dance and performs regularly in local dance and theater productions. Her daughter, Louisa, studying to be a professional dancer, is a Neighborhood Schoolhouse graduate.

SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Neighborhood Schoolhouse is a state-approved independent school, under section 16 V.S.A. Our most recent re-approval application and visitation occurred in the spring of 2003 and is valid for up to five years. We submitted application for re-approval in 2008, but the state is backlogged and has not had time to visit and approve it yet. Our approval status is “extended until the State Board of Education acts on further approval” (SBE rule 2222.5)

Daily Schedule

7:30 a.m.	Before-school care begins (subject to change)
8:30 a.m.	Children arrive
8:45 a.m.	School day begins
12:00 p.m.	Preschool students depart
1:00 p.m.	Kindergarten and Pre-K students depart
3:00 p.m.	Full day students depart
4:30 p.m.	After school care over (subject to care needed)

Program Descriptions

Our school programs serve students ages three through twelve. Our mixed-age classrooms may change each year. For 2010-2011 they will be: preschool, pre-K/kindergarten, 1-2-3-4-5-6 described below.

Preschool:

Our Preschool program is licensed by the state of Vermont. The program runs from 8:30 a.m. - noon and is led by a head teacher and an assistant teacher. Full enrollment is 21 students, 15 on any given day. There are choices of a 5-day program, a 3-day program (Wed.-Fri.) and a 2-day program (Mon., Tues.).

Pre-Kindergarten

This program is for preschoolers who are prepared for a more academic emphasis in their daily routine. Students must be 4½ by September 1 to enter this program. It has a full enrollment of 8 to 9 students. The pre-k has one head teacher who works with the kindergarten teacher for many activities. The pre-k meets five days a week, begins at 8:45 and ends at 1:00 p.m

Kindergarten

Our Kindergarten program is for students ages 5-6 and has full enrollment of 9 to 10 students. There is one head teacher. The program shares a space with the pre-k students and is integrated with the pre-k students for some activities. The program begins at 8:45 and ends at 1:00 p.m.

Primary and Elementary:

Our Primary/Elementary program is for students ages 6-12 and has a full enrollment of 18 students. When fully enrolled, there are two lead teachers, who work together with the mixed aged group. They split the class according to abilities for most academic activities. The program is housed on the third floor. The program is from 8:45 a.m. to 3:00.

Before- and After-School Care

The Neighborhood Schoolhouse offers a Before School Care program (BSC) and After School Care program (ASC) to accommodate parent scheduling needs and provide children with care in a familiar and safe place. These programs are contracted separately and hours of availability may change from year to year, based on enrollment and need.

Special Programs

In addition to our regular classroom program, The Neighborhood Schoolhouse encourages special programming, which may include:

Field trips:

Teachers are encouraged to take their classes on field trips that enhance the curriculum. Parents may sign a general release form that gives permission for all trips. (Note: The oldest class traditionally has an overnight in the spring.)

(see School Policy Handbook for details)

Music and All-School Sing:

One day each week, we begin the day with an All-School Sing, at which parents are encouraged to join us. Music classes are offered one morning per week.

Environmental Science:

This program is offered primarily to the students in the upper level, full day program and focuses on an awareness of nature, seasonal activities, and scientific method of curiosity based learning. However, teachers of the younger students lead their classes in seasonal and environmental awareness as part of the curriculum as well.

Art program:

We integrate the arts throughout our curriculum, occasionally supplementing with artist residencies and/or studio experiences in Brattleboro.

P.E. program:

Students in the preschool and kindergarten programs have movement classes at least once each week. On some afternoons, students in the Primary and Elementary students go to the gym at the Gibson Aiken Center for P.E.

Hiking program:

We plan two hikes a year, one in the fall and one in the spring, primarily for Kindergartners and older.

Winter Sports program:

For five or six weeks we offer a winter sports program. One afternoon upper class students may either downhill/cross country ski or snowboard; on another afternoon the kindergarten class joins the upper grades for skating.

Special Events

During the course of the year, there are several special events that we celebrate each year. Individual classrooms may plan additional events as well.

All-Family Meeting/Picnic:

This meeting generally happens on the first Sunday of the school year. While children play outdoors, parents gather briefly with the board of directors and then with the staff. We then share in a potluck meal, as a whole community.

Grandparent/Special Friends' Day:

This special day takes place on the Friday of Columbus Day weekend. We welcome all grandparents and/or special friends to visit classrooms with students, and then hold an evening gathering with dessert and entertainment.

Peace Pole Ceremony:

On the Monday before Thanksgiving we join together to rededicate our peace pole and share a light meal together.

Family Curriculum Night:

Once a year, we invite parents and children to an evening of sharing in the classrooms. Students share their favorite activities and work with their families in the classrooms.

Ribbon Ceremony/ Graduation:

On the afternoon prior to the last day of school we have a ceremony that includes music performances and a celebration of all students and graduation ceremonies.

Daily Procedures

Attendance:

Attendance in school is required by state law (VT statute 1121: "A person having the control of a child between the ages of 7 and 16 shall cause the child to attend school...for the full number of days that school is held..."). Please help your child arrive on time. If your child will not be at school for any reason, please notify the school no later than 8:30 a.m. In the event that a child does not arrive at school and the school has not been called, the school will call the parents to confirm absence. (Note: If the child generally walks, rides a bike or uses public transportation to get to school, the police will be notified if the parents cannot be reached.)

Transportation:

Parents are responsible for transportation to and from school. The school must be informed, on the arrival/dismissal form or in writing, who has permission to pick up at dismissal and if a child will be walking, riding a bike or using public transportation to and from school.

The parking lot and driveway can become very busy, so we ask that families respect the following policies for the safety of all:

- Please park in the lot to drop off children and pick them up. The driveway up to the school is for delivery and emergency vehicles only. Avoid using it as much as possible between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:45 p.m.
- Please pull the whole way around the bend into the parking lot to allow for a flow of traffic.
- **Please drive slowly and cautiously on the Solar Hill driveway and obey the STOP sign at the top before proceeding down the hill. In the winter, wait at the top until cars coming up have gone by, as the slippery hill can be very dangerous.**
- When meeting young children at the end of the day, please walk with them through the parking lot.

Morning Procedures:

- Recess begins at 8:30 a.m. to allow students to transition into their school day. The school day begins at 8:45 a.m.
- All drivers must park in the lower parking lot when dropping off children.
- Preschool and kindergarten aged children must be walked up the hill and met by the recess supervisor before parent/guardian leaves school.
- Primary and elementary students may walk up the hill independently, at parents' discretion.
- When walking or biking to and from school, both adults and students must use the Solar Hill field, not the driveway. This is especially crucial during snow season.

Afternoon Procedures:

- School is dismissed at 3:00 p.m.
- Children in ASC should go directly from the classroom to ASC.
- All drivers must park in the lower parking lot when picking up children.
- All students must wait at the top of the hill for parent/guardian's arrival.
- Before leaving the hill, children must check in with classroom teacher.
- Parents will inform the school, in writing, if anyone else will be taking their child/children home (this may be done on blanket form in fall).
- Only children who have written permission to walk or bike home will be allowed to leave the school grounds without an adult.
- A late fee of \$10 will be charged for late pickup after the 3pm school day. Any pickup more than 15 minutes after 3pm will be considered a late pickup. The end time of the after school care program holds firm and has a \$1 per minute late pick up fee. There is no grace period for other pick up times. In addition, you will be charged for after-school care if your child goes there while waiting.
- All parents, including staff members, present at the school during after-school hours must keep their children with them, formally enroll them in the after school care program, or have children under the care of a child caretaker who will enforce school rules and accept authority of staff member present. Children may not play alone in classrooms or on the playground.

Biking Procedures:

- Students who ride bikes must wear helmets.
- Students must walk bikes up and down the field, not the driveway, as they arrive at and leave school.

- Bikes must be parked by the lower shed.
- Students who arrive at school with no bike helmet will not be allowed to ride home until they return with a helmet.
- Students who neglect to wear a helmet two times will have biking privileges revoked for a month. For recurring difficulties, the privileges will be restored only after a parent conference.

After-school Activities:

We ask that families arrange after-school activities before school starts, to avoid overuse of the school's business phone. Please inform the school, in writing, of pick-up arrangements that differ from usual.

In-service Days

There are four (4) full-day in service days , to allow for staff training/ planning time. They generally follow the local public school district's full-day in services, in September, October (followed by a parent conference day), in November, and in January. Spring parent conferences are usually held in March.

SCHOOL BUSINESS

Communications

We have a number of systems in place to communicate about important school business, and Nan(Administrative Coordinator) is usually available in the office for quick questions. In addition, we welcome your input about any issue of concern. Please put special questions or requests in writing whenever possible.

Parent Mailboxes:

Each family has at least one mailbox; it is very important to check your mailbox several times each week. Parent mailboxes are located in the lobby, just inside the entrance door.

School Calendar:

The school calendar shows all parent meetings, school holidays and special days off. Parents are notified directly if there is a change in the schedule (excluding weather decisions of WSESU).

Parent Memos:

A memo is published each week and is sent via email or distributed to parent mailboxes. Memos include curriculum updates, information about upcoming school events, work hour opportunities, community news and miscellaneous information. (Note: If you have something you would like to put in the memo, please bring it to the office by Tuesday at 9:00 a.m.)

Email:

The school's email addresses are as follows:

Principal, Molly Oglesby	molly@neighborhoodschoolhouse.com
Administrative	admin@neighborhoodschoolhouse.com

Bulletin Board:

There are a number of bulletin boards in the reception area. Please check them to keep up with other school community news. Please give posters or other material you want posted on the parent bulletin board to the administrative coordinator for posting.

Meetings:

There may be as many as five special meetings during the school year: an orientation, curriculum nights, and the annual meeting of The Neighborhood Schoolhouse Corporation (either held at the beginning or end of the school year). Sometimes we will arrange for a parent forum on a special topic as well. We ask parents to participate in these meetings, especially the orientation meeting in the fall, when we introduce new families and begin the school year.

Inclement Weather/School Cancellation:

If the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union cancels or delays the start of school because of bad weather, we will too. Radio stations WKVT (92.7 FM) and WTSA (96.8 FM) announce school cancellations between 6:00 and 7:30 a.m. Before- and after-school care will be canceled if school is canceled. The same is true if the weather gets bad during a school day. Parents are welcome to pick up their children early. **We do not call families in the event of a cancellation; please listen to the radio for early dismissal announcements if you have any questions.**

Phone Tree:

In the event of an unexpected need to communicate with school families, we will use the phone tree to deliver a specific message. The Parent Coordinator will send out a message, and phone tree members are responsible for calling a group of parents to relay important messages. Each family is included in the phone tree.

Finances/Tuition**General:**

Bookkeeping services are done by a professional bookkeeper. The school's Principal and the Finance Committee do overall management of financial matters. Financial questions may be given to the office so they can be directed appropriately.

Payments:

All payments may be put in the box marked "tuition" located in the office or mailed directly to the school at P.O. Box 119, Brattleboro VT 05302. Payment schedules are outlined on the tuition contract; please refer to the contract for specifics.

You will be billed according to your chosen payment plan. You may choose to receive bills through parent mailbox on premises, email, or US mail. *Statements* of tuition are distributed monthly.

If you have financial difficulties or find that the payment plan you have chosen is not working for you, it is very important that you communicate with the Finance Committee immediately by calling the school.

Tuition Aid:

Partial tuition assistance is available based on financial need. The amount of aid we are able to offer changes yearly according to grants received, and the allocations vary with the number and circumstances of families applying. Awards are made before the May 1 non-refundable payment is due.

We use the School and Student Service for Financial Aid to help us determine how much aid each applying family will receive. SSS applications are available in the office in mid-January and must be mailed by the deadline, along with a fee. Applications may also be done on-line. A cover sheet detailing the family's request is required by the school as well, and only complete applications that are submitted by the deadline will be able to be considered.

Dylan Johnson Scholarship

The Dylan Johnson Scholarship was created in 1994 by Bob and Elaine Johnson in memory of their son, Dylan, who died a week before his graduation from The Neighborhood Schoolhouse. This scholarship is awarded yearly to a child who displays the characteristics similar to Dylan—active, kind, curious, questioning, “a nature kid,”... the kind of child who may struggle in a highly structured environment but thrives at NSH. The scholarship may be granted to just one child or split among several children.

Parents who wish to apply for this scholarship must write an essay describing their child and his need for the scholarship. A committee will review applications and award the scholarship(s) yearly. The Dylan Scholarship must be applied for each year; it is not automatically re-awarded. (Note: Applicants must be eligible for regular tuition aid.) The Dylan Scholarship does not affect a regular aid application—it is granted over and above any other aid.

Tuition Exchanges:

The school offers several work exchanges. The following jobs are available: weekend cleaning (five weekends per family, approximately 10 hours each), evening cleaning (one day per week, approximately 2-3 hours), and Mr./Ms. Fix-It (small maintenance jobs). There may also be administrative work exchanges available. Please see the Principal if you are interested in one of these positions. If you have an idea for an exchange, you may propose it, in writing, for the Director and the Finance Committee to review.

Emergency Tuition Fund:

The Neighborhood Schoolhouse has an emergency tuition aid fund to assist families who experience a change in their financial situation part-way through the year due to an emergency such as illness, extended hospital stay, loss of a job, etc. The emergency assistance will be up to the equivalent of one month's tuition and may be applied for in writing explaining the change that has necessitated the request. The Finance Committee will review the request and make a recommendation to the Board.

Governance

The Neighborhood Schoolhouse is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors. Parents are represented on the Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of four officers: President, Vice-President, Clerk, and Treasurer. Parent representatives are nominated by the Board and introduced at the annual meeting in June.

Regular meetings of the Board take place at 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month. Parents are welcome. Items for the agenda must be presented to the Board President nine days in advance of a scheduled meeting unless decided otherwise by the President.

The Board has a number of working committees as well, most of which welcome non-Board members. Meetings times are set each year at a time that is convenient for the members. Working on a committee allows you to become involved in the school and to fulfill a portion of your work requirement.

STUDENT RECORDS AND EVALUATION

Records

Student records are on file in the office and are available for parent review at any time. For each student there are two files: a family file (including contracts, communication, etc.) and a student file (including reports, checklists, sample work, etc.).

These records are considered confidential and are available to parents according to FERPA regulations and to school personnel working with the student and State Department of Education personnel. Staff members must obtain written consent from parents before sharing any school records and/or written or verbal information about a child with another individual, school or agency, unless such a release is required by law, regulation, or court order. Such permission is sought and granted through the use of a "Permission to Release Information" form.

Evaluation

Our evaluations are as individual as our students and are used by our teachers as tools to guide their instruction. Rather than use traditional letter grades and report cards, The Neighborhood Schoolhouse uses the Work Sampling system to track student progress and needs. Work Sampling includes portfolios, observations, written narrative reports, parent/teacher conferences and student/teacher conferences. Students are encouraged to set goals and complete self assessments, which they revisit throughout the year.

Teachers use a variety of assessment methods. They keep observational records, design problem solving challenges, use skill checklists, and review student work on an on-going basis. Though they generally do not test students, there are some instances in which tests may be appropriate.

For example, in the older programs, students may be tested in some subject areas to prepare them for the transition to a new school.

There are four reporting periods during each school year. Through parent conferences and written reports, the school provides parents with a detailed evaluation of their child's school experience. Parent conferences are held in October and March to review student work and discuss progress. Narrative reports are sent home in January and June. In addition, parents may ask for a special conference to discuss concerns as they arise.

In sum, the following principles form the foundation for our approach to student evaluation:

- Student assessment helps inform our teaching strategies and directions.
- We take a holistic approach to evaluation, looking at the physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth of our students.
- Children develop at different rates and should be encouraged to grow at a rate that is comfortable and challenging for them, individually.
- Careful observation is a crucial element in good evaluation.
- The home-school link is very important, and frequent communication is needed.
- Daily performance and response to assessment challenges give us a clearer picture of student learning than do test scores and letter grades.

Special Needs Policy

Though the NSH is committed to meeting the needs of all its students and will work closely with parents and consultants to do so, our school may not be the appropriate school for all children and we reserve the right to make this determination. We do not pay for testing, offer special education services, or employ staff with special education certification.

(see School Policy Handbook for details)

Transferring Records

In order to send copies of student records to other schools, The Neighborhood Schoolhouse must receive a "Permission to Release Information" sheet or a request for records from another school, signed by the parent. The Neighborhood Schoolhouse will send copies of student records to three schools, free of charge, after which time there will be a \$10 fee for every request.

SCHOOL GUIDELINES

The mission of The Neighborhood Schoolhouse is to inspire a life-long love of learning and to provide our students with the skills needed to contribute to their communities as insightful, effective, caring individuals. This requires the collective efforts of the whole school community – students, staff and families. We ask your support in creating a community in which the following guidelines are respected.

We show care and respect for ourselves. We do this by:

- taking care of our personal belongings
- taking responsibility for our assignments and our projects
- refraining from violent play
- asking for help when we need it
- striving to do our best in our schoolwork
- dressing appropriately for the weather and eating healthful food

We show care and respect for others. Some ways we do this are by:

- listening when others speak
- using our voices appropriately – indoor voices inside; no swearing or name calling
- sharing our skills and helping others when necessary
- helping with community service tasks and projects
- cleaning up after ourselves
- making responsible decisions and apologizing if we make mistakes
- letting others know with words when we don't like something they are doing
- walking when indoors and always being aware of others' space
- keeping our hands and feet to ourselves – we don't push, shove, etc.
- playing safe, non-violent games
- following all safety rules

We show care and respect for our building and materials. Some ways we do this are by:

- putting things away when we are done with them
- using furniture as it is intended
- not drawing on walls, furniture, etc.
- remembering that books and other school supplies can be fragile
- helping to clean up at the end of the day

Consequences for Inappropriate Behavior

At The Neighborhood Schoolhouse we make every effort to work with children as individuals, helping them to learn and grow in a stimulating educational environment. Sometimes an individual child may have difficulty following the guidelines. In this case the child will be given consequences within the classroom. The teacher will speak with the child, focusing on the following issues: What did you do? What do you need to change in order to join the group again?

For repeated or strong offenses, the child will be sent to the office until he or she is ready to rejoin the class. If we find that a child must make frequent visits to the office, we will arrange a parent conference to implement an appropriate disciplinary plan.

Suspension or Dismissal of a Student

Suspension:

Suspension is not part of the usual disciplinary practice of The Neighborhood Schoolhouse. If all other strategies have failed and the behavior the student is repeatedly exhibiting puts him/herself or other students in physical or emotional jeopardy, or if the staff feels this is the only recourse left, the staff may decide that suspension is warranted. Such a step should be discussed in advance with the principal, teacher, parent(s), and with the child. A contract will be prepared, which will be signed by the parent(s) and student if the student is school-age. This contract will state consequences of continued behavior, including length of suspension, and will be filed in the child's permanent record. The child should know that the next time s/he repeats said behavior, his/her parents would be called and s/he would go home.

If a student exhibits behavior that the staff judges will put anyone in the school (including the student) in immediate jeopardy, that student may be immediately suspended without prior consultation with parent or student.

Dismissal:

Students may be dismissed if at any time the school determines that the behavior of the child or parent is jeopardizing the functioning of the school or the education of any student, the school cannot meet the needs of the students, or tuition payments are behind by 60 days or more.

Approved May 9, 1996

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

The state of Vermont requires by law (33 V.S.A. Chapter 14.S 681-68) that "Any administrator, guidance counselor, school nurse, or teacher who has reasonable cause for suspecting child abuse or neglect must report or cause a report to be made to the district of Social Welfare Services Offices of SRS." In Brattleboro the address is 232 Main Street; the phone number is 257-2888.

(see School Policy Handbook for details)

THE PARENTS' ROLE

At The Neighborhood Schoolhouse we very much value the parents' role in education. We encourage parents to visit and volunteer in classrooms, voice their opinions about the school program and stay in contact with their child/ren's teacher about individual progress and/or concerns.

Checklist of Children's Needs for School

In August, the teachers will send an introductory letter to each child and family, with a list of assorted school supplies to bring when school begins in September. Below is a list of some items that are crucial for your child's time in school:

- Children bring their own snacks and lunches every day. All children have a morning snack; elementary, primary, kindergarten and extended-day preschool students have lunch; and those who stay for ASC have afternoon snack at 3:00 p.m. We ask that parents include nutritious food that is low in sugar – please avoid chocolate and soda.
- Children need to have an extra set of clothes at school. Please label all clothes and put them in a labeled shoe box. Check periodically to make sure that the extra clothes are intact, suitable for the season and still fit properly.
- A pair of comfortable footwear *appropriate for an emergency fire drill* is needed for inside wear only.
- Children may bring comfort toys, such as a favorite stuffed animal, to school. Action figures and electronic games as well as toys that encourage violent play (guns, knives, pointed objects) are not allowed at school. Please check each day to be sure that your child does not bring these items to school.
- Children must wear clothes and footwear suitable for rugged outdoor play EVERY DAY, including the winter months and rainy days.
- On P.E. day (usually Thurs.) students will need clean, indoor sneakers. We ask that parents kindly leave their children's booster seats so we can transport the children.

Student Health

- Parents of new students must complete our new-student health form which includes an immunization record, results of the student's recent physical examination, and documentation of special considerations, such as allergies and chronic illnesses; release forms; and an emergency card. Returning parents must complete a health form update plus the other release forms and emergency card. A signed exemption form must be on file if a parent has elected not to immunize his/her child(ren).
- Please call the school by 8:30 a.m. to let us know if your child is ill and will not be attending school.
- Children should be sent to school in good health, able to participate fully in the school program--children with fevers or other contagious conditions may be sent home. (*See School Policy Handbook for details.*) In the event of an illness during school, the parents will be called to take the child home. If parents are not available, their designated emergency contact people will be called. Teachers will decide when it is appropriate to go outdoors to play. Therefore, children should not be sent to school if they are unable to play outdoors. Exceptions must be discussed beforehand with a teacher.
- The staff cannot be solely responsible for administering medications. If your child needs medication during school hours, you must fill out a medical administration form and give the meds to the director or administrative coordinator. The staff will make every effort to see your child takes it, but cannot guarantee it.

- If your child has been diagnosed with or is suspected of having a communicable disease, the school must be notified immediately. The principal will consult with the Vermont Department of Health and abide by its recommendations.
- It is the responsibility of each family to check regularly for head lice. We have learned that the earlier the detection, the easier the prevention of spreading and re-infection. As a preventive measure, we *try* to do monthly head checks. Anyone found with head lice or nits will be sent home for removal and may not return to school until the child is nit-free.

Conferences/Meetings

We ask all new families to have an intake interview with a staff member near the start of school. When possible we will arrange to have such a meeting during the summer. Otherwise, we will schedule interviews for some time during the first few weeks of school. The interview may be held by phone or in person.

We have parent-teacher conferences twice each year -- once in the fall and once in the spring. The dates of these conferences are noted on the school calendar. (Note: there is no school for the children on those days.) We also encourage parents to schedule additional conferences with teachers as needed, outside class time. The director and administrative coordinator are also available to meet with parents during school hours.

Transportation

Parents are responsible for transportation to and from school. (See “Daily Procedures” section of this handbook for specifics.)

For some field trips and special programs, students will be transported in the personal vehicles of parents and/or Neighborhood Schoolhouse staff. Anyone who drives on a field trip must have a seat belt for every child in the car, a valid driver’s license and insurance of \$100,000/300,000 liability and \$50,000 property. Children under age 8 are required by law to have a booster seat. Children may not sit in front seat if car has a passenger air bag.

* Please become familiar with the school’s Emergency Plan, which is posted on the Parent Bulletin Board.

Work Requirement

Family involvement is important at The Neighborhood Schoolhouse, and it helps keep our tuition as low as possible. Working together is a wonderful way to build community and rediscover what a special school you are helping to sustain!

To fulfill the work requirement, each family is required to contribute at least 15 hours (8 for 2- and 3-day preschool families) of work (special programs, maintenance, publicity, etc.) per year to the school, 4 of which must happen at a summer work party. During the year there will be notices in the Parent Memo about jobs we have available.

Parent Concerns

We expect that parents will, from time to time, have concerns or questions about the school program and we encourage them to address issues with the appropriate parties directly as they arise.

- Concerns about a child go to the child's teacher. Unresolved issues are taken first to the director, and then the President of the Board, either in person or in writing.
- Broader concerns about the educational program or about the administration or organization of the school go directly to the director. If the parent is not satisfied with the response of the director, s/he may consult with the President of the Board.
- Concerns with the President of the Board go to the director. If that does not resolve the concerns, a parent may make a written grievance to the Policy Committee, which will meet without the President. If the parent is dissatisfied with the response of the Policy Committee s/he will make a written appeal to the Board, which will meet without the President.

In any of the above instances, a parent may request of the President to call for a meeting of the Policy Committee. If the parent is dissatisfied with the response of the President or the Policy Committee, that person may present concerns directly to the Board.

If concerns about the preschool or after school care have not been adequately addressed after following the above procedure, you may call the Child Care Consumer Concern Line at 1-800-540-7942.

All incidents or potential claims involving students, staff or Board members of The Neighborhood Schoolhouse must be reported immediately to the appropriate authority, the director and/or President of the Board. Such complaints will be documented in detail.

APPENDICES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I learn about upcoming school events?

A parent memo is distributed by e-mail or to parent mailboxes every Tuesday afternoon. It includes curriculum articles, general notices about school, community news and parent work opportunities.

Where is my mailbox?

Parent mailboxes are located in the reception area.

When can I meet with a teacher?

There are two scheduled conference times per year; teachers are available for additional conferences as needed throughout the year. If you need to check in briefly with a teacher, they are usually on the hill at the end of the day. Please remember that before school or just as the school day is beginning is often a very busy time for teachers.

What do we do in the morning?

Unless you are enrolled in the Before School Program, please do not arrive before 8:30 a.m. We ask Preschool and Kindergarten parents to walk students up to the school; others may be dropped off on the hill. Preschool students may go directly to their classrooms at 8:30. For all other students, unless they have alternate instructions from their classroom teachers, we ask that they leave their bags on the stairs and stay outside for recess, or go to Neighbor's Hall if it is bad weather, until 8:45. If you arrive at or after 8:45, your child should go directly to the classroom.

How/where do I pay tuition and fees?

There is a tuition box in the office, or mail to P.O. Box 119, Brattleboro VT 05302. Tuition is due on the first of the month (for monthly plans); statements are issued for overdue accounts by the middle of the month. Other costs, such as winter sports costs, field trips, etc. are collected separately.

Where do I park or drop off my child?

We ask that you park in the lower lot; for safety reasons, please don't drive up to the school. If you have a preschool or kindergarten child, we ask that you walk him/her up the hill. Older Primary and Elementary aged children may walk up alone, at the parents' discretion.

How do I know when there will be a vacation, special event or early release day?

Each year we publish a school calendar that lists all special events. Please check this and put the dates on your personal calendars. (Note: Our calendar loosely follows the WSESU calendar.)

How do I know if school is cancelled for a snow day?

We follow WSESU's school cancellation decisions: when the WSESU cancels school, we also cancel school. Listen to WKVT or WTSA for school cancellations. Even if Neighborhood is not specifically mentioned, if WSESU cancels school, we cancel school. We do not use our phone tree for weather cancellations.

PARENT CHECKLIST

I have returned to the school:

- Completed registration form with \$250 non-refundable deposit
- Signed tuition and work contracts (May 1)
- First non-refundable tuition payment (May 1)
- Tuition aid application , if applicable
- Request for tuition exchange job, if applicable
- Student paperwork including health form, permission release form, arrival/dismissal form, annual appeal names, emergency card) by July 1

I am on track with my tuition payments:

- monthly, beginning June 1 OR
- quarterly, beginning July 1 OR
- annually, on July 1

I have marked on my calendar for future reference:

- September All-Family meeting
- In Service Days and other closures
- Vacations
- Special Events

On the first day of school I have sent in with my child:

- Extra set of labeled clothes in a labeled container
- Inside shoes
- Clean shoes for PE on Thursdays (for primary/elementary students)
- Plenty of nutritious snacks
- Any requests from teachers

CONTENTS OF SCHOOL POLICY BOOK

The Neighborhood Schoolhouse has administrative policies that have not been included here. For example, we have personnel policies, health and safety policies and general miscellaneous policies. These are available for parent review – there is a copy in the parent room and in the office. Below is a list of the contents of the administrative policy book:

(Note: currently in the process of being rewritten – this page will be distributed at a later date.)