



PROGRAM GUIDE

2021 / 2022

This handbook can be translated for you.

Este manual se puede traducir para usted.

Это руководство может быть переведено для Вас.

这本手册可以为您被翻译。

The Children's Center
Located at Sharon Middle School
75 Mountain Street
Sharon, MA 02067

Phone: 781-784-1594
Fax: 781-784-1549

The Children's Center
Sharon Public Schools
Early Childhood Program

September 2021

Dear Parents:

We welcome you to the Sharon Public Schools' Early Childhood Program, which offers half-day and full-day integrated preschool classes and one substantially separate classroom. Early Childhood programs that serve children with and without special needs are referred to as "integrated." Integrated programs bring together children as partners in learning. Research continues to support that quality peer partner programs enable all the children to learn and grow at their own rate.

We believe that preschool children learn best in a child-centered environment that provides developmentally appropriate experiences. The major goal of our program is to promote the social, emotional, physical, and conceptual development of young children. Our program is designed to provide children with valuable hands-on learning experiences in accordance with their individual needs and abilities. Differences in rates of development, special talents, interests, and personalities are recognized and respected. Our program provides a safe, accepting, and supportive environment where young children learn to participate in play and other group activities and learn how to pursue individual interests. Children learn about cooperation, sharing, risk-taking, and being considerate of others. Our program is most successful when parents, staff, and children work closely together.

The purpose of this Program Guide is to provide general program information and specific details regarding policies, procedures, and learning objectives for the Early Childhood Program.

We believe that working in partnership with parents is very important, especially when it involves such young children. Your input is always welcome. We look forward to being a part of your child's foundational years, and we are committed to making your entry into the Sharon Public Schools an exciting and memorable journey.

Sincerely,

Lisa Robinson, M.S.
Director of Early Childhood
lrobinson@sharonschools.net

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Early Childhood Program offers a wide range of educational services and programs designed to meet the unique needs of preschool children and their families. The curriculum content of the early childhood program exposes children to a variety of math, literacy, and social emotional skills such as Foundations, Learning Without Tears-Handwriting, and Numbers Plus. These curricula are aligned with the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences and the Massachusetts Common Core. We pride ourselves in offering a robust and engaging curriculum.

Our goal is to provide a rich, in-depth, and integrated environment that:

- recognizes and responds to different learning styles, individual needs, and interests through the use of a variety of instructional strategies.
- is caring and nurturing and conducive to learning.
- fosters curiosity, imagination, independence, and confidence as learners.
- develops relationships of trust and mutual respect among parents, teachers, staff, and children.
- encourages thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and risk-taking.
- understands and respects social and cultural diversity.
- encourages collaboration and communication across the home, school, and community settings.
- provides varied opportunities for learning across disciplines and to the world beyond school.

In order to best meet our goal, the curriculum is one that crosses all domains and will prepare our youngest learners to demonstrate:

- Cognitive Development
- Speech and Language Development
- Social Emotional Development
- Gross Motor Development
- Fine Motor Development
- Activities of Daily Living Skills

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SHARON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Sharon Public Schools is a dynamic and respectful learning community that values diversity, fosters critical and creative thinking, challenges students to reach their academic potential, and prepares them to succeed in, and contribute to, a changing world.

Sharon Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity, homelessness, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

IMPORTANT/EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Sharon Public Schools uses an electronic notification system that will allow us to communicate with you quickly in the event of public safety, emergency, school closings, and information regarding school meetings. Emergency notification will be made via phone and “regular” communications via email. Please supply us with email addresses and any additional phone numbers, either land line or mobile, that can be used to notify you.

Parents have the opportunity to designate emergency contacts upon enrollment and to update all information at the start of each new school year. It is critical that all information, including phone numbers and email addresses, is filled out accurately and is kept up-to-date as the year progresses.

A copy of any legal documents related to parental rights must be on file in the school office. In the case of a restraining order, a photo must be on file.

EVACUATION

This may be used to move the school population off site to a different dismissal location during emergencies that require evacuation. The electronic communication system will notify parents where to pick up children.

PARENTAL AND/OR COMMUNITY CONCERNS

It is the belief of the Sharon School Committee and the Administration that the best interests of our students are served whenever teachers and parents work together on behalf of the children. Therefore, it is essential that all attempts to resolve problems be initiated quickly and carefully.

The Sharon School Committee has adopted the following guidelines to be used by parents or the public in order to expedite information giving and/or problem solving:

1. Questions and problems concerning individual students must first be addressed to the teacher or staff member in question;
2. If unresolved, these matters and/or problems concerning individual students, departments, or schools should be directed to the appropriate principal or program administrator;
3. If the matter is still unresolved, or in the event that questions and/or problems concerning the entire school system occur, they should be directed to the Superintendent of Schools;
4. If the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee cannot bring about a satisfactory resolution to the matter, it may be brought to the School Committee. This should be done in writing by sending the correspondence via email to the attention of the Chair of the School Committee. The Chair may decide that action is required by the full School Committee and that the matter will be placed on a regular agenda for discussion and action. The sender will be notified of the date and time.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS

Integrated Preschool:

The preschool provides programming to children ages three to five, some of whom have special needs. Children with special needs enrolled in these classes require specialized instruction in any or all of the following areas: communication, fine and/or gross motor, social/emotional development, cognition, or behavior.

Typically-developing children who participate in the program benefit from the high quality of staff, developmentally appropriate curriculum, and the extra attention and support of the small group settings. They serve as positive peer models for children with special needs. **Peer models must be three years of age by August 31 to begin school in September.**

Our classrooms are multi-aged and balanced with respect to diversity of the community's population. Together, the children participate in a curriculum designed to address targeted areas of development for both group and individual needs. Through whole-group circle/meeting time, individual and small group activities, creative art, free play, music and movement, snack, and outside time, the children develop their language, cognitive, motor, and social abilities.

Each class is staffed with a Master's level teacher and at least one teacher assistant. Teachers, assistants, and therapists work closely together to provide individualized programs for each child and to maintain consistency in goals and approach.

Classroom Descriptions:

Full Day 1 and 2: These full day classrooms are integrated classrooms for 3 and 4 year olds. It includes children who have the Special Education Team's recommendation for a full-day program as well as peer model children who have requested a full-day program. Within these classrooms, however, there may be some children who attend the morning session only.

AM program: The morning classroom is a half day integrated program for 3 year olds. Parents of peer model children may choose to send their child either four or five mornings per week.

PM program: The afternoon classroom is a half day integrated program for 4 year olds. This class meets five afternoons per week.

Subseparate Class: This classroom is designed primarily for children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or have the Special Education Team's recommendation for this class. Half or full day programming may be recommended as determined by the Team. Children in this classroom have opportunities for inclusion and reverse integration as appropriate to their individual needs and may also be recommended to participate in extended school year (summer) programming. A diagnosis of ASD does not necessarily result in a recommendation for this classroom.

ENROLLMENT

The number of children in each classroom is mandated by the Massachusetts Department of Education's regulations and by the space available for such programs.

- Children with special needs are enrolled in Early Childhood classes only after the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) under Chapter 766 and a determination that such placement is appropriate to meet the needs of the child. Should the Special Education Team make a recommendation for a classroom placement, this does not guarantee placement for the following year, as recommendations are made on a yearly basis. Additionally, if a child is recommended for a classroom placement at The Children's Center, this does not guarantee a future recommendation for full-day kindergarten.
- Children are selected for the non-special needs components through a formal application process. These children serve as peer models to special needs children and should be developmentally age-appropriate in speech and language skills and in play and social skills. Peer models should be toilet trained; however, we will work with families to help with toilet training as needed.
- The Director of Early Childhood will schedule a pre-enrollment meeting to provide an overview about the program and offer a tour of our facilities to ensure that the program is a good fit for the prospective family.
- Children of our current families are given the opportunity to reenroll for the following year, and any remaining peer model openings will be filled by lottery drawing from all applications submitted by a predetermined date. A wait list will be created once all available openings are filled.

EQUAL ACCESS

Sharon Public Schools offers educational and recreational opportunities for all students. All students receiving special education, regardless of placement, shall have an equal opportunity to participate in any activity or service that may be available as part of the general education program.

REGISTRATION

Registration is primarily done online. Specific information regarding the registration process will be sent to families in early spring, after the lottery has been completed.

Welcome letters are sent to families in August with notification of classroom teaching staff. All children will be invited to an orientation prior to the first day of school to visit the classroom and meet the teacher.

TUITION

Tuition is determined by the Sharon School Committee each fiscal year. The 2021-2022 yearly tuition for peer models attending the program is as follows:

Four half days a week is \$3,225
Five half days a week is \$4,032
Full-day program is \$8,798

A non-refundable deposit of \$300 is required with the application. The deposit is deducted from the final March 1st tuition invoice. If a child leaves for any reason before the school year ends, the deposit is not refunded.

There are no reimbursements or changes in the tuition schedule for school missed for vacation time or illness. Bills are sent out on a bimonthly basis and should be paid promptly. If you are having difficulty paying the tuition, please contact the Director of Early Childhood to discuss an alternate payment plan. If tuition is not paid in accordance to the payment plan, Sharon Public Schools' Early Childhood Program reserves the right to terminate the student's participation in the program. If a family qualifies for reduced tuition using the eligibility guidelines for "free and reduced price meals," enrollment in the half-day program would be available at one-third of the tuition. If a family enrolls with a set of twins or triplets, there is a 10 percent discount in total tuition.

SCHOOL HOURS: STARTING/DISMISSAL TIMES

Morning Program M-F	8:40 a.m. - 11:25 a.m.
Afternoon Program M-F	12:05 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.
Full Day Programs M-F	8:40 a.m. - 2:50 p.m.

The school day begins at 8:40 a.m. The school opens at 8:30 a.m. Please note that there is no supervision before that time as the teachers and assistants are preparing their classrooms.

To ensure the safety of children and staff at school, all outside doors are locked and secured throughout the day. During morning drop off and afternoon drop off times, staff will be available to escort your child to class. At all other times during the day, please ring the buzzer and enter through The Children's Center entrance. All visitors must proceed to the office to sign in and obtain a visitor's badge. If arriving or dismissing at a time other than our regular arrival/dismissal times, students must be signed in/out upon entering/exiting the school.

Please remember that arriving on time to school is important in easing your child's transition into school. Late arrival makes it more difficult for your child to enter the group once the classroom routine has begun. Drop off is not a conference time, and therefore teachers are not available to speak with you at length. Feel free to schedule a time to meet with your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns about your child and the classroom.

STAFF

Director of Early Childhood

Lisa Robinson, M.S.

Speech and Language Pathologists:

Anat Stollman, M.S. CCC/SLP

Amanda Weisheit, M.S. CCC/SLP

Occupational Therapist:

Sarah Keough, B.S. OT, M.A.

Physical Therapist:

Celine Caeran, PT, DPT

District Wide School Psychologist:

Chad Ryan, Ph.D.

Program Psychologist:

Janine Symes, Licensed School Psychologist M.Ed.

Special Education Preschool Teachers:

Erin Bolin

Kristina Lutz

Shannon Peachey

Elisa Piskura

Preschool Instructional Assistants:

Colleen Burke

Cheri Ferreira

Diane McGrath

Katherine McLaughlin

Kim Moore

Cristina Pinto

Teri Robbie

Pia Silbert

Lisa Wolff

School Nurse:

Mary Alice Nathan

Administrative Assistant:

Sherry Berlingo

PTO Co-Presidents:

Jeff Mahoney

Bethanne Durell

SCHOOL CALENDAR

- All Early Childhood Programs follow the Sharon Public Schools Calendar, which can be viewed on the Sharon Public Schools website.

INCLEMENT WEATHER:

NO SCHOOL/DELAYED OPENING/EARLY DISMISSAL

The following plan will be in effect for inclement weather:

- A. If weather conditions are severe, or our major roads impassable, school may be canceled or delayed. The “NO SCHOOL and DELAYED OPENING” announcement will be carried by radio and television stations (WBZ TV Channel 4, WCVB TV Channel 5, NBC & CW TV Channels 7 & 56, and NECN). An electronic communication system phone call and email system will be used to inform staff and parents/guardians about such events. The superintendent will also use the school department Twitter account at **@SharonSchools** to tweet the cancellation/delay.
- B. Community members may also check our website www.sharon.k12.ma.us for inclement weather notifications.
- C. NO SCHOOL: This notice indicates all classes and school activities are canceled for the day, including scheduled evening classes.
- D. DELAYED OPENING: This notice indicates that the morning van pickup and the start of classes will be postponed by one hour, 90 minutes, or two hours. In the event of a DELAYED OPENING, all other after school activities will take place at the regularly scheduled times.

IF:	1 Hour Delay	90 Minute Delay	2 Hour Delay*
Children’s Center start time will be:	9:40 a.m.	10:10 a.m.	10:40 am <i>No AM Class</i>

**In the case of a 2-hour delay, there will be no school for the morning half-day class or for any students who attend half days in the morning in one of the other classes.*

Under the conditions outlined in the chart, students riding a van will be picked up one hour, ninety minutes, or two hours later than the normal pick up time. During a “delayed opening” day, school will be dismissed at its regular time.

- E. **EARLY RELEASE – IMPENDING OR QUICKLY DEVELOPING STORM:**
In rare circumstances, it may be advisable to release students early from school. We understand this imposes a hardship on working parents who have to make quick accommodations for their children. Consequently, if quickly changing weather conditions require the call of an early release, please know that we will provide as much advance notice as possible. Parents/guardians should develop an appropriate plan for your child/children's care to address a possible early release from school. The dismissal time of a weather-related early release will coincide with the early release times already established.

	Inclement Weather Early Release
Children's Center	11:35 AM

- F. Parents/guardians are reminded not to send children to school early on a delayed opening. Sufficient supervisory staff may not be in the building(s), and the school parking lots may not yet be plowed. Again, please do not send children to school earlier than the announced start time on any delayed opening.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

As safety is our first priority, please review the following procedures to ensure that the arrival and dismissal of students is safe and secure.

There will be two locations for morning arrival, one location for mid-day arrival and dismissal, and one location for afternoon dismissal. Please read carefully as the directions are specific to the different classrooms.

Parents/family members and students must wear masks for arrival and dismissal.

Van Transportation:

Students riding transportation are required to wear a mask. See information in the Opening Guide if your student is having difficulty with their mask.

Early Dismissal by Parent/Guardian:

If a parent/guardian has to come to the school to dismiss their child, please call our main office in advance at 781-784-1594 to speak to Sherry to schedule a pick-up time. A school staff will walk the student to the ECC entrance to meet parent/guardian/designee. Please make sure the person picking up your child has a valid ID. The person picking up the child will sign out the child on the sign-out sheet that will be brought to you by the staff meeting you at the ECC entrance.

Morning Arrival (8:30-8:40 am; school starts at 8:40 am)

Parents and students will be greeted by a staff member (greeter) and then the student will enter the building with a different staff member (escort). Parents will not be able to enter the building.

Erin's and Kristina's Classes ECC Main Entrance	Miss Peachey's AM Class and Elisa's Class Sharon Middle School Main Entrance
Parents and students in Erin's class and Kristina's class are to park their cars in a spot in the main lot and walk, holding the student's hand, to the ECC door.	Parents and students in Miss Peachey's AM class and Elisa's class are to park their cars in the main lot and walk, holding the student's hand, to the main entrance of the Middle School.

Morning Dismissal (11:25 am)

Miss Peachey's AM Class ECC Main Entrance
Miss Peachey's AM class will be dismissed from the ECC Main Entrance/foyer. Parents will park in the main lot, walk to the building and wait for their student/child.

Mid-Day Arrival (12:05 pm)

Parents and students will be greeted by a staff member (greeter) and then the student will enter the building with a different staff member (escort). Parents will not be able to enter the building.

Miss Peachey's PM Class – ECC Main Entrance
Parents in Miss Peachey's PM class should park their car in the lot and walk, holding the student's hand, to the ECC door.

**Late arrivals: If you should arrive after 8:40 am or 12:10 pm, please park near the ECC Main Entrance and come to the ECC entrance and ring the buzzer. A staff member will then meet your child at the door and escort him/her to the classroom.*

Afternoon Dismissal (2:50 pm)

Weather permitting, students will be outside the ECC entrance waiting for pick up. If there is inclement weather, students will be dismissed from the hallway.

Please be patient as we work through the drop-off and pick-up process. Drive slowly at all times. Your cooperation and support are necessary to ensure that arrival and dismissal times are safe for every child.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Absences:

Following the practice at the elementary schools, it is **important that you call The Children's Center at 781-784-1594** if your child is going to be absent or dismissed early. An answering machine will be activated so that you may leave a message. This calling system has been instituted in the interest of protecting the health and safety of our children.

Transportation:

Transportation may be available for children with special needs in Early Childhood Programs who cannot access regular transportation. Car seats will be provided.

Students who are transported through special education need to be escorted to the van and secured in a seatbelt or car or booster seat by the parent or guardian, or by a responsible adult designated by the parent or guardian.

When students are returned from school, they must be removed from the van by the parent or guardian, or by a responsible adult designated by the parent or guardian.

Students are expected to be ready when the van arrives. Drivers are instructed to wait no more than three minutes as waiting disrupts the entire transportation schedule. If your child is not going to school, please call the driver at the phone number given to you between the time of 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. (in addition to calling The Children's Center office). For the safety of the students, the consumption of food is not permitted on the vans.

Students are not allowed to be transported by any individual other than a parent/guardian unless that individual has been designated an emergency contact or written permission has been provided by the parent/guardian to the classroom teacher or Early Childhood office. Some form of identification for people unknown to the staff is required. Parents driving their child to school must adhere to Massachusetts state law regarding seat belt use and car safety.

Safety and Health Policy:

Safety:

In case of fire, students will be evacuated according to fire drill plans posted in each classroom. Fire drills are held at least quarterly.

In case of an emergency evacuation, the staff will follow the emergency plan developed by the Sharon Public Schools.

Health:

In case of illness, parents will be contacted from phone numbers provided as part of the enrollment process. If parents cannot be contacted, the school will call people listed as alternate contacts. Children will be released only to a person listed on these forms, unless the parent makes other arrangements. Parents may be asked to come and take home any child arriving at school with signs/symptoms of being ill or who becomes ill while at school. Our goal is to insure a positive, healthy school experience for all children and staff.

In an emergency situation where the parents can't be reached, the child's doctor will be consulted, when possible. If the emergency is life threatening, the child may be transported to a hospital emergency room, and the parents notified as soon as possible.

Simple first aid equipment, such as band-aids, ice packs, and supplies for cleansing small wounds, will be available in the classroom area. Other first aid will be provided by the school nurse.

Parents are encouraged to arrange medication schedules so that children can take their required dosage before and after school. When it is necessary for a child to take medication during school hours, the medication policy for grades K-8 of the Sharon Public Schools will be followed.

CHILDREN MUST BE KEPT HOME FROM SCHOOL:

- if they have a temperature over 100°F. Please remember that Tylenol, Advil, etc. can mask the effects of a fever. **Your child should be fever-free (without medication) for 24 hours before returning to school.**
- if they have had vomiting and/or diarrhea (unrelated to a known, non-communicable condition) within 24 hours before returning to school
- if they have a severe cold with fever, sneezing, and thickened nasal discharge
- if they have a cough that keeps a child awake at night, worsens with increased activity, or is combined with other symptoms
- if they have a persistent red, sore throat, especially if the tonsils are enlarged
- if they have a severe and persistent earache
- Redness in the whites of the eyes, yellow discharge, and matted lashes are symptoms of conjunctivitis (pinkeye). A doctor should be consulted, as this may be highly contagious.
- Rashes can be difficult to evaluate. If they are all over the body, blistering, oozing, or painful, they could be a sign of a contagious infection. Please check with your school nurse or your doctor before you send your child to school.

If you are unsure whether to send your child to school, please call your school nurse.

The Children's Center Nurse: 781-784-1594, ext 6604

Parents of children with allergies must submit a list of substances that trigger allergic reactions and a description of the type of reaction usually experienced. The list may be shared with teachers, assistants, and volunteers as needed to prevent exposure. Children subject to anaphylactic reactions due to bee stings or other allergies should bring emergency medication to be kept at school with physician's instructions for its use.

Policy on Dispensing Medication:

All prescription and nonprescription medications must be administered by the nurse. Parents should bring to the nurse a signed physician's order which is dated and states what kind of medication, dosage, and criteria for administration, as well as a parent permission form which will be provided to you by the school nurse. It is the parents' responsibility to bring an appropriate supply of medication to the nurse, in the original pharmacy container. Medication must be delivered in person to the school nurse; students should never transport medication to and from school. Medication is administered only by the school nurse and is stored in a locked cabinet.

Immunizations:

The guidelines of the Massachusetts Department of Health Immunization Program state that "No child shall be required under this regulation to have such immunization if his parent(s) objects thereto, in writing, on the grounds that it conflicts with their religious beliefs, or if the child's physician submits documentation that such a procedure is contraindicated." Exceptions to the immunization laws will be granted on that basis.

Diapering/Toileting Procedures:

- A bathroom equipped with appropriate fixtures is available in each classroom, and students will be encouraged to use it. They will be supervised and given assistance as needed. All areas are sanitized and maintained in a safe manner.
- Toilet training will not be coerced. Generally, staff will assist you in carrying out the toileting routine upon which you have decided. However, please discuss this with your child's teacher to ensure that the teacher is comfortable implementing the plan.
- Students wash their hands with liquid soap and running water after being toileted. Staff members also wash their hands with liquid soap and running water after assisting children with any toileting routine or if dealing with body fluids. Individual paper towels shall be used to dry hands.
- Clothing soiled by feces, urine, vomit, or blood shall be double-bagged in sealed plastic bags and stored apart from other items.

Rest Time:

Students who are in school for more than 5 hours per day are provided with an opportunity to rest during their school day. This rest period is approximately 30 minutes, unless a student falls asleep, and then they are allowed to sleep for a longer period of time usually determined by parent and teacher.

Snacks/Lunch:

Snack is scheduled to occur mid-morning and mid-afternoon. The full day classes also have a lunch break scheduled into their day. Parents are requested to send in healthy snacks, lunch (if appropriate), and drinks for their child. Please see the following section entitled **Peanut/Nut Free Environment** for important information on bringing food from home. The following foods are not served at preschool for safety reasons: popcorn, nuts, hard candy, and whole grapes.

Peanut/Nut Free Environment:

Many children have allergies to peanuts and nuts. These allergies are potentially life-threatening and we are requesting your assistance in making the classroom a safe environment for all students. Some children with food allergies can have a serious reaction by just touching the food or products containing their oils.

Because this situation is so serious, no food which may contain peanuts or nuts (e.g., peanut butter or Nutella) should be sent for your child to eat in school. There can be no exception to this policy. If any child eats these things in class, there is a possibility that residue could be inadvertently left on the tables or on children's hands and the students who are allergic may be exposed to dangerous allergens. **Many foods contain these products and labels should be checked carefully.**

Birthday and Holiday Celebrations:

- Birthdays are very special times for children. While we know special treats are enjoyed, it is often challenging given different allergies and diets. We invite parents to participate in the celebration of their child's birthday, and perhaps a special gift or activity can take the place of a snack. No food may be distributed. Arrangements should be made in advance with the classroom teacher. Summer birthdays will be celebrated on special days set aside at the end of the school year.
- Holiday celebrations are integrated into the curriculum. This provides children with the opportunity to share their cultures and traditions with others. We welcome parents' involvement in these celebrations with us.

Children's Clothing—What to Wear/Bring to School:

Backpack - Please send your child to school each day with a full size backpack that is large enough to hold snack, folder, and art projects that get sent home.

Children should be dressed in play clothes that will allow them to participate in all preschool activities. Our programs include art activities, sand and water play, and outdoor playground activities. Sometimes spilling or staining occurs. While very cute, dressy shoes, sandals, flip-flops, and fashion boots are not safe for play and outdoor activities. In cold weather, please make sure your child has a **hat, mittens, and a warm coat**. In snowy weather, winter boots are requested. Children are not allowed to play outside in snowy weather without proper clothing. Please label all clothing with your child's name.

We also request that you send an extra set of clothing to keep in your child's cubby, including a sweatshirt or sweater for very cold days. Don't forget to label all of your child's belongings and place in a gallon-size clear zip-lock style bag.

Toys

Children may not bring toys, electronic devices, or other valuable items to school. Too often they may get lost, misplaced, and are distracting to the learning environment.

Photos/Videos:

At the preschool, teachers often use photos to create daily schedules, groupings, sign-in boards, classroom portfolios, etc. Throughout the year, the local cable TV channel, newspaper, and school department will take pictures or write about school activities and students. It is the policy of the Sharon School Department to make this information routinely available **unless parents have requested in writing**, in advance, that they do not wish to have this information published. The school department will comply with parents' written requests. If they do not receive a written request, then they will proceed with the publication of student information as described above.

Media Release Permissions are gathered as part of the enrollment process.

Release of Directory Information:

According to FERPA (20 U.S.C. 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99): Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them.

State Regulation Governing Child Abuse:

The Children's Center abides by the same policies and mandates in reporting child abuse and neglect (Chapter 119, Section 51A), which are followed by the Sharon Public Schools.

Visiting the School

Due to COVID-19, only staff and students are allowed in the buildings at this time. No visitors are being permitted until further notice.

All visitors, including parents, must report to the school office upon entering the building. All visitors must sign in and visitor badges must be worn by all visitors at all times. School tours or visits to a classroom must be arranged in advance with the Early Childhood Director and may be made only once or twice in the course of a year. No classroom visits will be allowed in the first three weeks or the last three weeks of school as per SC Policy KI. As per SC Policy KI, parents or their designees requesting a visit/observation to a classroom must fill out the appropriate paperwork, including a Confidentiality Agreement, in the office with advanced notice (usually at least 2 weeks). Please check with your school administration for those forms. No one is allowed into classrooms or offices after school hours.

Parents visiting or volunteering at school may find themselves in the building during a fire drill or safety drill procedure. During a fire drill, visitors should leave the building with the classroom and/or by the nearest exit and immediately report to the staff official with the two-way radio (walkie-talkie), usually the Early Childhood Director.

During a safety drill procedure, visitors in a classroom should stay in the classroom with the children and teacher and follow procedure as directed by teacher. Visitors in non-classroom areas such as cafeterias or workrooms should report to the office immediately and stay there until the drill situation is over. These types of situations illustrate the importance of ***all*** visitors signing in at the office.

Procedures for Student Observations

Due to COVID-19, only staff and students are allowed in the building until further notice.

Sufficient Duration and Extent

Both academic and non-academic components of a program can be observed. The number, frequency, and duration of the observation will be determined on an individual basis in accordance with the law and regulation. Please contact the Early Childhood Director for more information if an observation is needed/requested.

Security Procedures

An emergency response plan for the Sharon Public Schools, which includes a communications system and protocols for events regarding safety, has been developed. This plan is called the “Safety & Crisis Intervention Procedures” and includes a “Staff Immediate Response Handbook.” Each school will notify parents if children need to be dismissed or taken off-site. Security procedures are in place at each school. A video security system is in place at the entrance to each school. All visitors must sign in at the school office and obtain a visitor’s badge to be worn while in the building.

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO):

The PTO has a dual purpose: it is a communication link between home and school as well as a means by which parents can help the school better serve the children. The PTO does so much for The Children’s Center each year and is a great way to become involved. Some of the activities provided by the PTO include organizing family events, fundraising activities that allocate fundraising proceeds towards educational needs not within the school budget, and supporting teachers and staff by sponsoring luncheons and other activities.

The PTO relies on many individuals to help with its various programs throughout the year. The PTO president for the 2021/2022 school year will distribute informational material at the start of school. We hope you will be interested in joining our Parent Teacher Organization and in supporting the programs in whatever way you can. Information will be sent home regarding PTO meetings.

Volunteers (this references SC Policy IJOC):

Due to COVID-19, only staff and students are allowed in the buildings at this time. No volunteers are being permitted until further notice.

There are many ways for parents and other adults in Sharon to enrich the school experience of children and to assist the Early Childhood Program. We will be sending home a questionnaire designed to find out what contribution you may make to the program and the extent of your availability.

In past years, parents and members of the community have been active in doing needs assessments, fundraising, and in planning, implementing, and evaluating the programs. Parents have also actively participated in classroom projects whenever possible.

Volunteers play an active role in the schools, assisting the children, teachers, and other staff.

All volunteers in the Sharon Schools must and will have a Criminal Offender Records Inquiry (CORI) report completed on them. Satisfactory assessment of CORI report by a designee of the Superintendent must be completed before volunteering can begin. CORI forms are available in each office and an original photo ID must accompany the application.

CORI Requirements File: It shall be the policy of the Sharon Public Schools to obtain all available Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) from the criminal history board of prospective employee(s) or volunteer(s) of the school department including any individual who regularly provides school-related transportation to children, who may have direct and unmonitored contact with children, prior to hiring the employee(s) or to accepting any person as a volunteer. (SC Policy ADDA)

For more information, please contact the Director of Early Childhood.

PARENT/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication between parents and staff is essential to provide an optimally supportive environment for young children. Weekly or monthly newsletters and information about important dates, special events, and suggested activities for you and your child will be sent home with your child. Teachers will provide you with their e-mail address at the start of school. Each child should bring a backpack to school every day as he/she will be given a plastic pouch that will be attached to his/her backpack. Notes and other information will be placed in the plastic pouch. We also want to hear from you! Please let us know if your child has been exposed to anything contagious, if something has happened to change your child's routine, or if any other important or exciting information would be useful for staff. By knowing what is happening, we can be supportive of each other. Communications with parents are in simple and commonly understood words. When necessary, Sharon Public Schools provides an interpreter for parents who are deaf or whose native language is other than English.

It is important for us to have correct addresses and phone numbers on file. Please inform us of any changes immediately. This is especially important should any emergency arise with your child. Please contact our Administrative Assistant, Sherry Berlingo, if any changes occur.

Ongoing Communication:

Parents may call the Center at 781-784-1594 at any time to leave a message for a teacher. Teachers will return calls at their earliest convenience. Teachers will not be interrupted during the day to take phone calls. The Director of Early Childhood is available for calls during the day at 781-784-1594 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Parents may also e-mail the director at **lrobinson@sharonschools.net**.

SSEPAC:

Sharon Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SSEPAC) is available for support and guidance to families of the Sharon Public Schools. Information can be found on their facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/sharonpac/>).

Open House:

Due to COVID-19, open house will take place virtually this year.

Open House will take place in late September/early October. This is an evening program for adults only that will give parents an opportunity to visit the classroom and learn more about classroom goals and objectives. You will receive a notice from your child's teacher concerning the schedule.

Workshops for Parents:

A number of parent workshops will be planned for the 2021/2022 school year. Separate notices will be sent out notifying you of upcoming events.

Reporting Student Progress:

Conferences will be held two times during the school year, usually in October/November and April/May. All parents will be invited to conference with the teacher; however, since students with IEPs have scheduled meetings during the year, conferences for these students are not mandatory. The first conference is an informal conference giving the parent and the teacher an opportunity to exchange information about the child and to ask questions. The second conference is a more formal discussion/reflection of the child's progress during the school year. A successful parent-teacher conference is one where there is an exchange of information and ideas. Appointments will be scheduled well in advance. Children with special needs have an annual IEP meeting and semi-annual progress reports. Teachers and therapists are available to meet if needed more frequently per parent request.

Parent Waiting Area:

Due to COVID-19, only staff and students are allowed in the building at this time. The parent waiting area is closed until further notice.

At times, parents need a place to wait for their child as he/she participates in various activities. If the anticipated wait time exceeds 5 minutes, our Administrative Assistant will direct you to the appropriate waiting area. This will help to ensure the confidentiality of our students as well as provide the least disruption possible to activities happening within the center. Cell phone use is discouraged.

Confidentiality:

To protect the privacy of children and their families, we follow strict confidentiality laws. Please respect the privacy of the other families by only discussing and sharing information about your own child.

Parent Lending Library:

We have a small library of books available for parent use. Please call the office if interested in borrowing any reference material. Parents, teachers, private preschools, and day-care providers in Sharon are invited to utilize the resources.

Parent Survey/Evaluation:

We regularly evaluate the early childhood program in our effort to improve the quality of the program and the services provided to families. Evaluations may be distributed to all families at different times during the school year.

TRANSITIONS/STUDENTS' RECORDS AND RIGHTS

When transitions are made, there is prompt and complete communication among Early Childhood staff and the staff of other programs.

When a family moves and a child is transferred out-of-town, the regulations of the State of Massachusetts pertaining to the transfer of records are followed. Each fall the Superintendent's Office, as required by law, mails a brochure to each family that contains an outline of the Students' Record Rights and Regulations and a description of system-wide testing programs. You may refer to this brochure for more complete information in this area.

ACTS OF BULLYING

School Committee Anti-Bullying Policy For the full policy, see School Committee Policies posted on the Sharon Public Schools' website.

Statement from Policy JICFB

This Policy applies to all sites and activities under the supervision and control of the Sharon Public Schools. The Policy also applies and extends to all places where the School Department has authority under state and/or federal law, including but not limited to school buses, athletic fields, bathrooms, locker rooms, classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and/or to those persons who attend or engage in school activities. In addition, incidents of bullying and harassment, even if they occur off school property, outside of school hours, and within a context not directly associated with school activities (for example, Internet, texting, private parties and gatherings and/or social websites), are also prohibited under this Policy when such incidents adversely impact or are reasonably likely to adversely impact the educational climate within a school, disrupt the orderly operation of a school, threaten the safety of a student, and/or harm a student or make the student reasonably fearful of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property.

FEDERAL AND STATE MANDATES

Anti-Discrimination Law

The Anti-Discrimination Law, Chapter 282 of the Acts of 1993, General Laws Chapter 76, states:

No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and courses of study of such public school on account of age, disability, gender identity, homelessness, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.

Enactment of this law advances efforts to ensure that all students can attend school in a safe, supportive environment that is conducive to serious learning.

Protection for Individuals with Disabilities/Section 504

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides comprehensive protection to individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, public accommodations, state and local government services and telecommunications. Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* clearly requires that no institution receiving federal funds shall discriminate against an individual because of a disability. It requires that no school may exclude a child from any course, activity, service, or resource available in the public school because of a disability. Public school systems must comply with the ADA in all of their services, programs, or activities, including those that are open to parents or the public.

Any individual who believes he or she is being discriminated against on the basis of a disability may file a grievance, in writing, with the School Principal.

In addition, schools provide Plans under Section 504 for students with a lifelong disability that affects their academic progress and who need accommodations in class in order to access the general curriculum. If your child has a diagnosed, lifelong disability, you need to speak to the Principal regarding the appropriateness of establishing a Plan under Section 504.

Possession or Use of Illegal Weapons or Substances and Use of Force

Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including but not limited to, a gun or knife, or a controlled substance* as defined in Chapter 94, including but not limited to marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, will be subject to suspension from the school by the principal.

Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide, or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored events, including athletic games, will be subject to suspension from the school by the principal.

Any student who is charged with either offense cited above will be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing before the principal. At the hearing, a student may have representation along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses. After the hearing, the principal will notify the student and parents in writing of the outcome. *(See Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 71, Section 37 H and 37 H 1/2 for complete guidelines regarding this policy.)*

*In the Sharon Public Schools, possession or use of a controlled substance also includes alcohol.

Policies

As elected representatives of the citizens of Sharon, School Committee members are responsible for implementing statutory requirements in ways that reflect expectations of local citizens for the education of the youth of the community. When citizens elect delegates to represent them in the conduct of public education, their representatives have authority to exercise their best judgement in determining policies, making decisions, and approving procedures for fulfilling their responsibilities. All decisions made by the School Committee will be made with the primary goal of optimizing the learning of the children enrolled in our schools. (Excerpt from Policy AB.)

A full list of policies and their narratives can be found on the district website using the link: <https://www.sharon.k12.ma.us/domain/43>

The School Committee updates these policies regularly so please check the link above for current narratives. Newly approved laws and policies may supercede this information.

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We hope you have found this guide useful. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak to your child's teacher or the program director.