

NORTH MIDDLESEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



2020 - 2021

INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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**NORTH MIDDLESEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ASHBY - PEPPERELL - TOWNSEND, MASSACHUSETTS**

School Committee 2020-2021

Mr. Craig Hansen, Chairperson	Ms. June McNeil
Mr. Michael Morgan, Vice Chairperson	Ms. Randee Rusch
Mr. David Carney	Mr. Robert Templeton
Ms. Susan Robbins	Ms. Lisa Martin
Mr. Thomas Casey	

District Office Administration - 978-597-8713

Mr. Brad Morgan, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Nancy Milligan, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Brad Brooks, Director of Special Education

504 Coordinators

Special Education Director (978) 597-8713 X1501

Coordinators for the Homeless

Special Education Director (978) 597-8713 X1501

Title VI

Assistant Superintendent (978) 597-8713 X1301

Title IX

Assistant Superintendent (978) 597-8713 X1301

DISTRICT COMMITTEES

The following district committees have been developed over the years as vehicles to develop communication. They include: Superintendent Parent Advisory Committee; Special Education Advisory Committee; School Councils and numerous building and district curriculum committees. For further information, please contact the principal's office.

WELCOME LETTER

To All Our Students and Families,

Welcome to the North Middlesex Regional School District. We encourage you to use this handbook, as it provides important guidelines relating to our integrated preschool program and the North Middlesex Regional School District. Becoming familiar with procedures and district policies will assist you in making informed decisions.

The towns of Ashby, Townsend and Pepperell have a preschool program at Squannacook Early Childhood Center that provide a quality education for students age three to five years of age. SECC strives to ensure a consistent program that prepare our youngest learners for entrance into our elementary schools.

The mission of our District is to ensure that every student is achieving at his or her potential. Our schools encourage all students to strive for excellence academically, socially and emotionally, in a safe and supportive atmosphere. Our goal is to work in partnership with parents and our three communities to create an engaging learning experience. Our students will have opportunities to inspire, explore, discover and create.

As part of our goal for frequent communication from our schools to your home, we encourage you to utilize our online tools. Valuable information can be found at the NMRSD website (<http://www.nmrtd.org/>). During the school year, notices and newsletters will be either sent home or made available electronically on a regular basis to support our on-going commitment to communication.

We look forward to your involvement at SECC!

Sincerely,

Anne Cromwell-Gapp, Early Childhood Coordinator of SECC

NMRSD VISION STATEMENT

The North Middlesex Regional School District is dedicated to working with students, families, and the community to ensure that every student is achieving at his or her potential. The social and emotional health of all students is supported in an engaging, inspiring, and challenging learning environment necessary for student success.

INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL MISSION/PHILOSOPHY/PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The mission of Squannacook Early Childhood Center is to foster an education which includes academic and social skills within a safe and caring community. Children are respected as individuals and encouraged to reach their potential as they develop skills through play and academic activities that create a strong, solid foundation for learning.

Children must be three years of age by August 31st. Preschool provides an opportunity for children with and without special needs aged three to five to engage in learning among their peers. It is a positive supplement to the home environment. Preschool stimulates all areas of development: motor, cognitive, language, social/emotional, and self-help skills. The teacher's role is to facilitate and guide at appropriate times, make modifications where needed, and ensure competence and self-esteem. Our goal is to foster a love of learning in a safe, caring, and nurturing environment.

An important feature of our integrated preschool is the integration of children with special needs with their typical peers. A variety of specialists are available to provide diagnostic, consultation, and therapeutic services to students when appropriate. Therapists often work in the integrated classrooms to support staff members in meeting the needs of all students, but particularly those children with special needs who have Individual Educational Programs.

NORTH MIDDLESEX REGIONAL DISTRICT INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK

ABSENCE LINE PROCEDURE

If your child will be absent from school, please call **your school's absence line** before 9:00 AM and leave a short message including your child's name and classroom teacher. "For example, Sue Smith, Mrs. Wendling's class, will be out today. She has a bad cold." You must call every day your child is absent unless you specify the exact dates your child will be out. For example, Sue Smith, M's class, will be out November 1st through the 10th. She has a broken leg.

Each day the absentee list is compared with the recorded messages left by parents.

You should call if your child will be tardy as the child is regarded absent until he or she reaches school.

Please know the phone line is operating **24 hours a day** so you may call it whenever you know your child will be absent or tardy.

ABSENCES

If a student has excessive absences, parents will be contacted by phone call and then by letter and a copy of the letter will be included in the student's file. Pupil absence notices to parents and pupil absence meetings with parents will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 76, § 1B.

Children are required by law to be in school during the hours that school is in session. Upon returning to school after any absence, the student must present a note of explanation by the parent or guardian to the teacher. Please notify the nurse of any contagious illnesses, i.e., chicken pox, strep throat, etc.

Excused Absence: The following types of absences are considered to be excused as long as proper documentation is submitted:

- Death in the family (parent/guardian, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin)
- Professional health appointment (with note from practitioner)
- Chronic Illness (documented by a physician)
- Dismissal from school nurse prior day with illness requiring 24 hours at home
- Religious holiday (with a note from parent/guardian specifying the holiday)
- Legal appointment or court proceeding (must provide proof of appointment/proceeding signed by legal/court representative)
- Two (2) college visits per year with verification from the college (for high school students only)
- Extenuating circumstances as determined by the principal or their designee

ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

The policies contained within this School Student Handbook shall apply to a student's participation in all academic environments, including, but not limited to, in-person classes, distance/remote learning instruction, and environments that combine in-person and distance learning (hybrid) instruction. Students are responsible for complying with all school policies regardless of the academic environment. Parents/guardians are expected to read and discuss the enclosed school policies with their child(ren).

BEHAVIOR CODE

It is suggested that you take the time early in the school year to review the behavior code with your child. A good procedure is to read the rules together and discuss why each one is necessary.

A school is a place of learning. Many children and adults come together at school and spend many hours together. A school needs rules of behavior to make sure that everyone can be free of distractions or discomfort in order that the learning process can take place.

The following is a list of our behavior code:

- Students will respect all public property, and will not break, damage, or deface school property the building and grounds, materials, and furnishings.
- Students will respect the personal property and school materials of the teacher and other students.
- Students will respect the rights of fellow students.
- Students will use language that is free from vulgarity and profanity.
- Students will use honesty in their words and deeds.
- Fighting, wrestling, and biting are not allowed.
- Students will act in a way that does not disrupt the work of the teacher or the learning of other students.
- Students will walk, not run, on school property, except for in the OT/PT space or on the playground.
- Students will enter and leave the school in a quiet, orderly manner.
- Students will not threaten another child or staff member in words, pictures or actions.

- On the playground, students will stay within the designated playground area.
- Students will use playground equipment properly, safely, and will share the use of equipment fairly with other students.
- Gum is not allowed at school or on the van.
- Stealing, coercing other students, or bullying will not be tolerated. Offenders subject themselves to disciplinary action.
- Students are not allowed to use or throw sticks, stones or snowballs. Students will not throw sand, or other objects and materials that may cause an injury.
- On the playground, students will discard refuse into containers provided.
- Students will re-enter the school from the playground only with permission.
- During a fire drill, students will form single-file and follow the designated classroom exit route.
- Students will not run, talk, or push during drills.
- Upon arriving at the school from the vans, students will go immediately to their classrooms.
- Students will not bring personal cell phones, iPods, hand held video games, radios, or iPADS to school unless requested by the teacher.
- Bullying and harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment, will not be tolerated. The district policies are in the principal's office for your review.
- Corporal Punishment – Corporal punishment in public schools is illegal in Massachusetts. School staff may not hit, spank or physically punish students. School staff members may, however, use reasonable force if necessary to protect students, other persons, or themselves from an assault by a student.

CARE OF BUILDING AND PROPERTY

The school belongs to the citizens of the town. We ask our children to take responsibility for the care of the building and property. We ask all students to do their best to keep the school clean inside and out. Students are asked to take proper care of books and other school materials that are loaned to them for the year.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

In the case of a concern or problem, the teacher is to be consulted first. If the matter is not resolved with the teacher, parent/guardian should then contact the building administration (Early Childhood Coordinator). If the matter has not been resolved after

contacting the early Childhood Coordinator, please contact the Superintendent of Schools.

If a parent needs to talk to a teacher concerning their child's progress, we ask that you use the following procedure:

1. Call the school secretary to arrange to have an appointment scheduled with your child's teacher(s).
2. Follow through with the designated conference time.
3. Allow some time for the change to occur. If you still have concerns regarding your child's progress, call the Early Childhood Coordinator that will discuss the situation and look into the problem area. The Early Childhood Coordinator may ask for a joint conference so that everyone can work together as a team to find the most appropriate action.
4. In the unlikely event that the problem cannot be resolved at the building level, the parent has the right to ask for assistance from the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent will ascertain whether all attempts to resolve the problem have been tried at the school building level. Every effort should be made before the Superintendent becomes actively involved to resolve the problem using the personnel at the school. The Superintendent may counsel the parents individually or call for a joint meeting.
5. In extreme cases, the School Committee may become involved when a school district policy is in question.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The North Middlesex Regional School District does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in, its services, programs, and activities, on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, homelessness, or age. Additionally, discrimination or harassment by administrators, teachers, certified and support personnel, students, vendors and other individuals at school or at school-sponsored events is unlawful and strictly prohibited. The North Middlesex Regional School District Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures are included in this Handbook and posted on the District's website.

CLOTHING

Each day the children are engaged in a variety of projects. Please send your child to school in clothes that can take wear and tear, some messes and an occasional spill, as they do occur. Shoes with rubber soles are essential. Each child should bring in a full set of extra clothes to keep in case of an accident. Please place the clothes in a Ziploc bag with your child's name on the bag. If you take soiled clothes home to be washed, remember to bring a fresh supply the next morning.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal Punishment – Corporal punishment in public schools is illegal in Massachusetts. School staff may not hit, spank or physically punish students. School staff members may,

however, use reasonable force if necessary to protect students, other persons, or themselves from an assault by a student.

DAILY ATTENDANCE

We must emphasize the importance of consistent and regular student attendance at school. We ask parents to make every effort to have their children at school on time each day and in good health. A tardy student must report to the school office before going to the classroom.

Please keep your child at home if they display the following conditions: vomiting, in pain, have a contagious condition, have a fever, too tired to make it through the day, diarrhea, open weeping wounds, rash of unknown origin, lice, open sores in mouth, productive cough, and asthma not under control. Students can return to school when: they have been fever free without the use of Tylenol or Motrin for 24 hours, diarrhea free for 24 hours, must be able to eat a normal diet, have been on antibiotics for 24 hours.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The day is organized according to a daily schedule. The day provides time for large-group, small-group, and individual activities. The schedule provides for a balance of active and quiet activities, teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities. A consistent daily schedule gives the children a sense of security and structure.

DELAYED SCHOOL OPENING

When listening to the school closing/delayed lists on the radio or television, you may hear that **"The North Middlesex Regional School District is delayed" followed by the time length of the delay (for example, 2 hours).**

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES BY A PARENT/ GUARDIAN

If there are to be any changes to your child's schedule, please submit a note detailing changes. Notes must contain child's full name, teacher's name and parent signature. Notes will be submitted to the office early in the session. Children will be dismissed by their classroom teachers.

EARLY MORNING ARRIVALS

For safety reasons, students are not to arrive at school prior to the start of school if they are not part of the Before School Program. See Arrival/Dismissal procedures in the first day packet.

EARLY DISMISSAL

If a child must leave school early, the child must have a written statement from the parent/guardian. When the parent/guardian arrives to pick up the child, he/she must

report to the office to properly sign the child out. The office will notify the teacher and the child will report to the office. Students are to remain in class until the parent/guardian arrives.

EARLY RELEASE OR IN-SERVICE DAYS

Please check with the preschool program on specific dismissal time. Please make sure your child's teacher knows if there are any changes. **Written notes are required.**

EASING THE TRANSITION

Adjusting to new situations is an important and exciting part of growing up. Each child adjusts to new situations differently. Both parents/guardians and children need to know that the classroom is a secure and safe place for them.

Things teachers will do to help promote a positive adjustment

- Teachers will work on developing a relationship with your child in an effort to get to know their strengths, interests, and needs.
- Teachers will introduce children to the classroom routine and where to locate materials in the classroom.
- Teachers will help to get the children involved in activities within the classroom.
- Teachers will keep you informed as to how your child is adjusting.

Things parents/guardians can do to promote a positive adjustment

- o Bring your child to school feeling confident that they will be successful. Your child will learn that there is nothing to fear and that they will be picked up at the end of their day.
- o A child can sense when a caretaker is uncertain about leaving. This can increase your child's anxiety. Once a good-bye is said, follow through by leaving. Often when a child is upset, within ten minutes he/she is calm and engaged in an activity.
- o Prompt arrival and pickup is very important. Part of your child's sense of security while participating in the program is his/her awareness of the daily routine.
- o Please share pertinent information with the teachers. Examples may include changes in the family, changes in sleeping habits, changes in medications, etc.
- o Please do not hesitate to request a conference if you have any questions regarding your child's participation in the program.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones and other personal technology are not allowed at school, on the playground or on the school van for any reason. In addition, cell phones and personal technology may not be used to capture images or make recordings.

RADIOS, CD PLAYERS, CELL PHONES, i-PODS, IWATCHES, HANDHELD VIDEO GAMES, iPADS or SIMILAR DEVICES ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BE USED ON THE SCHOOL BUS AND IN SCHOOL AT ANY TIME UNLESS A SPECIFIC SCHOOL BEHAVIOR WRITTEN PLAN IS IN PLACE.

EMAIL

It is the practice of our staff **not** to use email to relay any confidential or personal information concerning students. All school emails are public and therefore it is best to refrain from sending confidential emails about your child.

EMERGENCY CARDS

An emergency card is needed for every student. Parents are required to complete the cards on both sides, sign and return them promptly. The card should list neighbors or relatives who can be notified in case a child becomes ill at school and parents are not available. **Please inform us of changes** of address, telephone numbers, emergency person contact, etc. as they occur throughout the year, as this is our only means of communication.

For the safety of your child: PLEASE MAKE US AWARE OF ANY CHANGES OF ADDRESS, EMERGENCY PERSON TO CONTACT, CHANGE IN CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS, ETC., AS THEY OCCUR THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR.

ENTRANCE INTO THE SCHOOL

All persons entering the school must enter at the front of your child(ren)'s school and sign in at the Main Office; **you are not to go directly to a classroom.** Visitor badges will be issued to individual visitors and volunteers while they are in school. For security reasons, all visitors and volunteers are asked to visibly wear their stickers.

FIELD TRIPS

Once or twice a year, we bring performers or events into our school to enhance our curriculum. If we participate in a field trip off school grounds, parents are given information, via school notice, prior to the trip. The fees charged for field trips are based on admission costs and costs of transportation. Students are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior reflecting school-wide rules and procedures while on a field trip. NMRSD nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities are provided in such a manner as necessary to afford students with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation.

Classroom teachers will obtain chaperones for each field trip. Parents who are not serving as chaperones are not to meet their children at the field trip site as additional adults create a safety issue. Chaperones must have a CORI check on file with the school district in order to be chosen as a chaperone. The CORI form used by North Middlesex Regional School District requires you to verify your identity by showing a photo I.D. in person when completing the form.

FOOD ALLERGIES

Food allergies are increasingly recognized and diagnosed among school age children. Reactions to food allergies vary and exposure to a particular food may result in a severe allergic reaction requiring immediate medical attention. **Squannacook Early Childhood Center is a food free facility.** There will be a designated snack time in each classroom. Only snacks sent from home for your own child are allowed. If your child has a food allergy, feel free to keep extra snacks for them at school in case they forget it at home one day. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the bus company of any allergies.

HEALTH SERVICES and SCHOOL NURSE'S ROLE

The responsibilities of the school nurse(s) include various screenings and participation in a host of activities in addition to emergency treatment of students who are injured or become ill at school. It is not their responsibility to provide parents with opinions about medically related issues which do not arise in school. Parents must seek such opinion from other sources who have such responsibility – family physician, public health nurse, public health clinics, etc. Your cooperation with respect to this matter is greatly appreciated.

CHILDREN WHO BECOME ILL AT SCHOOL

When a child becomes ill at school, he/she is taken to the nurse. If the nurse feels the child should go home, they will contact the parents/guardian. If a parent is not available, a relative or neighbor designated on the Student Emergency Card will be notified. Students will only be released to people listed on the emergency card. Whenever there is a **change** to this information it is **imperative** you notify the school so that time is not wasted when trying to make contact.

MEDICATION POLICY

In compliance with Massachusetts General Law and for the safety of our students, this medication policy has been written and will be strictly enforced. The policy for administration of medications, whether prescribed or over-the-counter, during school hours, is as follows:

- Medication must be accompanied by a MEDICAL PERMISSION FORM signed by both the physician and parent. A signed physician's order, stipulating specific diagnosis requiring treatment, accompanied by a MEDICATION PERMISSION FORM signed by parent will also be accepted.
- Medication must be supplied by the parent in the original pharmacy container. (Please ask your pharmacist to provide a second container and bring only the amount of medication needed to school.)

- Medication is kept locked in the nurse's office and is dispensed by the school nurse. For their own safety and the safety of other students, students are not allowed to carry medication around during school. Parents must bring prescription medications and over the counter medications into the school. They should not be sent to school with the student. When a physician deems it necessary for a student to have immediate access to medication (inhaler), the parent will provide documentation from the physician stipulating such necessity and confirmation that the student has been advised of cautions and proper use of the inhaler in school.
- Psychotropic medication, such as Ritalin, may only be given by obtaining certification from the Department of Public Health. In order to accomplish this, the school must file the following forms:
 - a. Parent/Guardian Consent Form
 - b. Physician's Form
 - c. Application for Certification Form

Application for recertification is required each school year. Psychotropic drugs may only be administered in public school by a registered nurse.

MEDICATION PERMISSION FORM

This form is to be completed by physician and parent for any medication to be dispensed at school.

Under Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) Chapter 112, Section 80B, a licensed nurse must have a medication order from a physician, dentist, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant in order to administer any medication, whether it is a prescription drug or over-the- counter medication.

Physician's Order

Physician:

Please complete this form if the below named student must take prescribed medication during school hours, as you require it to be administered more than three times a day and it cannot be given at home only.

Student's Name:

Name of

School:

Diagnosis:

Medication Prescribed:

Dosage

Prescribed:

Time during the school day to be given:

Duration of medication:

Additional comments:

Date Physician's Signature
Parent or Guardian:

Telephone No.

I, the undersigned, give permission to the school nurse to administer the above named medication to my child. I understand that school personnel are not responsible for any problems arising from the taking of this medication, its side effects (if any), or for the omission of medication. I further agree to indemnify and hold harmless the School Committee and its agents and servants against all claims as a result of any or all acts performed during this authority.

Date Parent/Guardian Signature

Telephone No.

(Please return to the school nurse)

PRESCHOOL ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

A child with special needs is eligible for enrollment in the preschool program when he/she becomes three (3). Children without special needs must be three (3) years of age prior to August 31st. A copy of the child's birth certificate must be presented to the school prior to the entrance date.

A physical examination within a six month period of entrance is a school health requirement. The following immunizations are required and immunization records, a listed below, must be presented:

- DtaP/DTP – 4 doses* If DT is given without Pertussis, a letter of exemption is required from the physician
- Polio – 3 doses
- MMR – 1 dose
- Hepatitis B – 3 doses
- Varicella (chicken pox) 1 dose or the date of the disease in written form from the doctor
- HIB 1-4 doses
- Physical examination

HOMEWORK

From time to time students may receive a project or etc to reinforce and provide enrichment opportunities to go along with the curriculum.

LOST AND FOUND

There will be a table for lost and found clothes and other items in the lobby. Parents are invited to claim articles at any time. Lost books, glasses and jewelry can be found in the school office. **Please do not send valuables to school with your child. At the end of the year, all unclaimed articles will be given to charity.**

MASKS (PRE-K)

In accordance with government orders and DESE requirements to prevent transmission of COVID-19, students in Pre-School are highly encouraged to wear a mask/face covering when on District premises and required during school bus transportation. All mask/face coverings must cover an individual's nose and mouth.

MASSACHUSETTS EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

Squannacook Early Childhood Center adheres to the Massachusetts State Frameworks. Our programs are theme based, building upon the needs, strengths, and interests of the children, while targeting individual goals and objectives. The classrooms are organized to support a variety of learning styles through the use of interest centers. These centers provide focus for activities which actively engage children. Our developmental program recognizes the development of the whole child in the areas of cognitive, social, emotional, language, fine motor, and gross motor skills.

Young children learn through play and need to be provided many varied opportunities to explore and experiment with materials through hands-on activities in their natural and in a comfortable environment. Through these play experiences preschool children continually refine their skill development and understanding. As teachers observe the children's play and development, they are able to identify specific skills that need to be targeted in order to provide new challenges.

Math: Children are introduced to early math concepts and problem solving skills through manipulating concrete materials in their environment. Pre-math skills acquired through play include matching, sequencing, sorting, categorizing, counting, and one-to-one correspondence.

Science: Children are offered a variety of science-related activities through a hands-on approach. Children learn to observe, predict, experiment, categorize, and measure.

Language Arts and Pre-reading: We work to help children develop their ability to understand language and express themselves effectively at their own developmental level. Teachers help children make the connection between written and oral language by reciting what is written on the paper. Our curriculum is based upon the Scott-Foresman reading series which is utilized in the higher grades.

Sensory Motor: Children are continually developing physical mastery within their environment. Our preschool provides opportunities for children to explore spatial concepts through activities including movement games, rhythm songs, and songs with gestures. Small motor control is encouraged daily through manipulation of toys, tools for play, and completion of multi-step projects. Staff members encourage children to develop physical competencies, awareness of physical boundaries, coordinated movement, and hand-eye control.

Socialization Skills: A major goal in preschool is to provide opportunities for children to develop social and pragmatic communication skills to successfully interact with peers and adults. Children are guided throughout the day to develop such skills as cooperation, turn taking, identification of feelings, sharing, decision making, problem solving, following rules, respecting others, and expressing ideas. At the same time, the teachers encourage each student to develop a sense of autonomy so that they can be independent and self-sufficient learners.

Arts: All children are given the opportunity to express themselves through the arts. The arts provide another means of communication for ideas, feelings, and creativity. These experiences promote self-expressions through art, dance, play, and music.

Interest centers include: puzzles, library/quiet reading, language arts, blocks, dramatic play, math, fine motor manipulative, games, art, easel and sensory (sand/water table).

MOTOR VEHICLES

Under state law, unnecessary motor vehicle idling is prohibited on or within 100 feet from school property.

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that schools immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment, such as school records, medical records or proof of residency, as long as the student has been properly immunized. Information on lead screenings as well as immunization records may be transferred over the phone. Parents or Guardians intending to register students who are homeless should be aware of the following:

1. Homeless students have a right to either remain in their school of origin or to attend school where they are temporarily residing.
2. Children who move from a homeless situation into a permanent residence during the course of a school year have the right to stay in the school they were attending while they were temporarily homeless. If the child or youth continues his or her education in the school of origin but begins living in an area served by another school district, the school district of origin and the school district in which the homeless child or youth is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child or youth with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the school districts cannot agree upon a method, the responsibility and costs for transportation are to be shared equally.
3. Students who chose to enroll in school where they are temporarily residing must be enrolled immediately, even if they do not bring the records usually required for enrollment with them. If a homeless student arrives without records, the

school district's designated Homeless Education Liaison will assist the family and contact the previously attended school system to obtain the required records.

4. A child who is homeless and attending any school served by the local educational agency is eligible for Title I services and the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

NMRSD SPED PAC (North Middlesex Regional School District Special Education Parent Advisory Committee)

Massachusetts law requires school districts to create a districtwide special education parent advisory council (SEPAC) offering membership to all parents of eligible students. The parent advisory council duties shall include but not be limited to advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities and meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district's special education programs.

In instances where districts have not had success with generating strong interest in creating a SEPAC (such as ours), districts may work with other districts or through an Educational Collaborative to establish a Regional SEPAC.

The NMRSD participates in a Regional SEPAC with several neighboring districts. SEPAC meeting dates are sent out annually and the meetings generally are located at the offices of the CAPS Collaborative in Westminister.

For SEPAC information, please contact the special education office.

NOTICES

An open line of communication among the administration, teachers and parents/guardians is most important during your child's school years. Many notices are sent home with your child. These notices are important, and will keep you advised of early release days, vacation periods, parent conference scheduling, special programs, and other information necessary to your child's successful school experience. The principal's updates are shared via school website, email and/or, Connect Ed phone calls. Please make sure to have updated email and contact numbers at your child(ren)'s school to receive these notices.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Outreach programs are available to provide support for district families in need. Families in need of resources, such as additional food and clothing during the year should contact the school guidance counselor or school nurse. Information relating to your town's outreach program will be provided.

PARENT COMMITTEES

The following committees have been established over the years as vehicles to develop communication. They included: Superintendent Parent Advisory Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee and Parent Teacher Organization.

PARENT-GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

Parent/guardian involvement is a vital component to the preschool program. We acknowledge and support parents/guardians as their child's primary teacher. Together we promote positive self-esteem and considerations for others. We encourage parents to communicate, share, and participate in their child's school experience. Parent conferences are scheduled twice annually or at parental/guardian request.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher Conferences are encouraged in order to maintain communication between home and school. Conferences can be held whenever there is a need simply by requesting one with the child's teacher. In addition, there are designated times in the fall and winter when early release days are also used for conferences.

PARTY INVITATIONS

Children are welcome to celebrate their birthdays by bringing in goodie bags to share with their friends. Stickers or other small party favors make excellent choices. **Just a reminder: Squannacook Early Childhood Center has a no food policy.**

If you are planning a party for your child, please do not send invitations to be distributed in school unless everyone in the class is invited. If you are not inviting everyone in the class then invitations must be distributed outside the school and not on school grounds. We understand that you must limit the number of children you can invite, however, the children who do not receive an invitation feel left out or excluded.

The first day packet has a form for you to fill out to indicate if you give permission to the classroom teacher to give your child's name, telephone number and address to another parent in the class for the stated purpose of inviting them to a birthday party, for Valentine's cards, special events or a summer event.

PRESCHOOL HOME CONNECTION

Parents/guardians often ask what they can do at home to further enhance their child's preschool experience. The following is a list of skills which parents can help practice at home through modeling and coaching.

Self-Help

Exposure and Practice: hand washing; toileting skills; identifying age and gender; taking off/putting on coat and backpack; zipping jackets, lunchboxes, and backpacks; cleaning up after oneself (snack, art projects, toys, etc.); opening snack containers; appropriate nose blowing, coughing and sneezing into their elbows.

Social Skills

Exposure and Practice: interactions with peers – playdates, playgroups, etc.; storytime at the public library or local books stores; playground; outside social activities; using manners; sharing; taking turns; cooperatives games (board games, card games, etc.)

Fine Motor

Exposure to various manipulative and tools: Playdough; scissors; writing tools (crayons, markers, pencils, etc.); paint (easel, finger paints); various sensory items (sand, rice, glue, shaving cream, etc.)

Gross Motor

Exposure and Practice: hopping; skipping; climbing; running; jumping; walking up and down stairs; catching a ball.

Academic Readiness

Exposure and Practice: numbers and counting; colors; shapes; name recognition; choosing books from the public library.

While preparing your child for preschool, please enjoy the opportunities and activities that include getting messy! Children learn most through play and hands-on creativity.

What Did You Do At School Today?

When preschoolers come home at the end of their day, caretakers often ask, “What did you do at school today?” To parents’ dismay, they are told that their preschooler did “nothing” at school. So much occurs during their time at preschool, so much seems to have happened and so long ago. As they are heading home, their attention may no longer be on school, they are thinking about what they may be having for lunch or what they are going to play with when they get home.

It helps to ask specific questions about your child’s day in order to elicit discussion. A specific question will help focus your child on a particular portion of their day and be able to recall events more readily.

- What did you have for snack today?
- Did you sing today?
- What songs did you sing? Please sing one for me.
- Did you play in the (block, art, puzzle, house, writing, etc.) center today?
- Who did you play with at that center?
- Did you go outside for recess?
- Were you a helper?
- What was something nice you said to a friend today?
- How did you help a friend today?
- What book did the teacher read?
- What was your favorite part of the day?

RECESS

All students have a recess period during each preschool session. Recess is a time for relaxing, exercising, playing, socially communicating, and renewal for learning. The school rules and classroom rules are guidelines for appropriate behavior at recess. The school playgrounds are always supervised by school personnel. Children wishing to play on the equipment cannot be wearing flip flops. Children who disobey rules may lose recess privileges. Bullying, fighting, biting, threatening, swearing, or sexual harassment is strictly forbidden and may result in other disciplinary measures. Please dress your child appropriately for all weather conditions. Weather permitting, children will go outside.

PLEASE NOTE: Children who cannot participate in outdoor recess due to any type of medical or health issue MUST HAVE A DOCTOR'S NOTE EXCUSING THEM FROM OUTDOOR RECESS. Children will not be excused from outdoor recess with only a parent's or guardian's request. PLEASE NOTE: Parents may not attend recess with their child.

REPORT CARDS, PROGRESS AND CONFERENCES FOR PRESCHOOLER

Preschool report cards and progress reports are issued twice a year. (January & June)
Parent conferences are held twice a year. (November & February)

SAFETY DRILLS

Fire and lockdown drill procedures are conducted regularly in connection with Massachusetts State Law. All procedures are posted in the classrooms. These will take place periodically during the school year.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

<https://www.nmrsl.org/Page/2#calendar1/20200915/month>

SCHOOL CANCELLATION FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER OR OTHER EMERGENCIES

In an effort to assist families and support student safety, the administration of the North Middlesex Regional School District offers the following important information about emergency school closings during the school year. In the North Middlesex Regional School District the decision to close school is usually made the prior evening or during early morning hours by the district administrators.

The Superintendent of Schools will send out a Connect-Ed message to all families if there is a decision to close schools. The call may come between 4:30 – 6:30 AM. If you miss the call, you can check the following radio and television stations.

WBZ-TV (Channel 4)

WCVB-TV (Channel 5)

WHDH-TV (Channel 7)

FOX25-TV (Channel 25)

The towns of Ashby, Pepperell, and Townsend are part of one school district called the "North Middlesex Regional School District". When listening to school closing lists on the radio or television, you will hear that "**The North Middlesex Regional School District is closed**". There are seven schools in our district. They are: Ashby Elementary School; Nissitissit Middle School, Varnum Brook Elementary School, North Middlesex Regional High School, Hawthorne Brook Middle School, Spaulding Memorial School, and Squannacook Early Childhood Center.

The North Middlesex Regional School District would generally close schools during the following emergencies:

- Excessive snowfall.
- Dangerous ice/road conditions.
- Flood conditions.
- Hurricane and high wind conditions.
- Problems at schools such as heat, power, or water failure.
- District schools are being used as emergency shelters.

In summary, please remember only central office school officials close school on emergency closing days. You should assume school is open unless you hear otherwise by phone call or on local radio or television stations typically between 4:30 AM and 6:30 AM. Parents are encouraged not to call local communication centers at the police and fire departments.

SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY

Over the course of the school year, district policies may be revised or new ones created. When this occurs, the revised or new policy automatically goes into effect. School district policies can be found at nmrsd.org.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Some students with disabilities may require specialized instruction and/or supportive services to enable them to make effective progress in school. Parents or teachers may refer students to the NMRSD Special Education Department for an evaluation. Upon receipt of the parent(s)' consent, an evaluation will be conducted and a Team meeting will be held to determine if the student is eligible for special education services. If a student is found eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) identifying the necessary services.

Additionally, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Pursuant to Section 504, any qualified student with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Section 504 FAPE is

the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet a student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met.

If you would like more information about special education services at NMRSD, please contact the Special Education Department.

SNACKS

Parents provide a snack and beverage for their child each day. For those children who attend a full day program, a lunch and second snack will need to be provided. Please refrain from sending in "sweets" (candy, soda, etc.) as part of snack or lunch. Please note: in the event that a child in the group has a food allergy, some foods might need to be restricted. Your child's teacher and the nurse will provide information if this is the case.

SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASSISTANCE

State and county agencies have provided assistance for any number of family and child concerns. Please see the school guidance counselor or school psychologist for specific information.

STUDENT CONDUCT

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner reflecting a sense of responsibility, good citizenship, and consideration for the rights of others.

CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS TO THE BEHAVIOR CODE

- Administrators will use professional discretion in determining the appropriate consequence and length for each disciplinary step depending on the severity and/or frequency of offense(s). Consequences may range from the following examples:
 1. Phone Call Home and/or email
 2. Apology
 3. Mediation/Counseling
 4. Indoor Recess
 5. Office Lunch
 6. Behavior/Safety Contract
 7. Detention
 8. Out-of-School Suspension

- Students and parents/guardians will be given 24-hour's notice for teacher detentions and office detentions unless parents/guardians are notified and agree that the consequence will be served on the same day it was issued.
- Administrators reserve the right to meet with students at any time in order to gather information related to a violation of the student handbook.
- Any vaporization or electronic cigarette/cigar paraphernalia or material that is confiscated by the administration will be discarded as waste.
- Any controlled substance paraphernalia or material that is confiscated by the administration will be turned over to the local police department.
- ADMINISTRATORS RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE ADDITIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO THE DISCIPLINE CODE IF THE NEED ARISES AND TO IMPOSE ADDITIONAL DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES WHERE DETERMINED TO BE APPROPRIATE.

SUSPENSION (LONG-TERM OR EXPULSION) FROM SCHOOL

Disciplinary action may be taken following a violation of any state or federal law, school committee policy, or rule or policy in this handbook. Each incident will be considered individually, and consideration may be given to the number of offenses, type, and the seriousness of the offense. The Principal has the authority to exercise discretion in deciding the consequences for a student who has violated disciplinary rules. The Principal shall first consider ways to re-engage the student offender in the learning process, and shall avoid using long-term suspension until other remedies and consequences have been tried. Other remedies may include: mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports.

Certain breaches of conduct are so serious that the Principal may long-term suspend or expel a student under the provisions of M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H or 37H ½. These include:

- Possession of a dangerous weapon while on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event
- Possession of a controlled substance while on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event
- An assault on a School Administrator, teacher, teacher's aide, or other staff person
- A felony charge or conviction

Other violations of the code of conduct will subject a student to disciplinary action up to and including mediation, detention, or suspension under the provisions of M.G.L. chapter 71, § 37H ¾.

Due process will be provided in accordance with federal and state law. Please see "Laws and Regulations Pertaining to Student Conduct and Behavior," in this Handbook for details regarding due process.

TARDY

A tardy student **must** report to the school office to obtain a pass before going to the classroom. Being consistently tardy is to be avoided, as it disrupts student learning time. Students are marked tardy based on the arrival time at each elementary school.

TOYS BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

We discourage bringing toys from home to school. Favorite toys can be misplaced or broken and sharing can be difficult. Our goal is to have the children use classroom toys and materials and to leave his/her personal toys at home.

TRANSPORTATION

SCHOOL VAN REGULATIONS and PROCEDURES

The regulations for school van use for all students grades Pre-K-12 in the North Middlesex Regional Schools are:

Previous to Loading: (on the road and at the school)

- Be on time at the designated bus stop.
- Stay off the road at all times while waiting for the bus. Bus riders should conduct themselves in a safe manner while waiting.
- Wait until the van comes to a complete stop before attempting to step onto the bus.
- Do not crowd and push getting on the van.
- Respectfully follow the instructions of school staff members on duty.

While on the van:

- Keep hands and head inside the van. Keep your hands to yourself and don't touch others inappropriately. Horseplay or fighting is not permitted on or around the school van at any time.
- Assist in keeping the van safe and sanitary. (DO NOT throw things on the van, spit or litter the van)
- Keep voice tone at a moderate level. Do not swear or use vulgar or derogatory language.
- Bullying, discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment or assault, will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action.
- Damage to van equipment/property will be paid for by the offender.
- DO NOT leave books, lunches, or other articles on the van.
- Keep books, packages, coats and other objects out of aisles.
- Help look after the safety and comfort of small children.
- DO NOT throw objects inside the van or out the van window.
- DO NOT leave or change your seat while the van is in motion.

- Be courteous to fellow pupils and the van driver.
- Remain quiet when approaching a railroad crossing.
- Remain on the van unless requested to leave by the van driver in an emergency situation.
- Sit where you are told.
- A written permission slip from the parent/guardian is necessary in order for a student to get on or off the van at a place other than his/her regular stop. Students must get on or off the van at their assigned stop.
- Continued refusal to promptly obey the directions of the driver or refusal to obey van regulations may cause a student to be referred to the principal for disciplinary action.
- Possessing a weapon, lighting matches, smoking, alcohol and drug use on the van are prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

After Leaving van:

- Cross the road, when necessary, immediately after getting off the van, at least ten feet in front of the van, and only after looking to be sure that no traffic is approaching from either direction.

Extra-Curricular and Field Trips:

- Van rules and regulations will apply to any trip under school sponsorship.
- Pupils shall respect the wishes of teachers and chaperones appointed by the school.

Bus Contractor:

Van Pool Company- (978) 400-7811
See District policy for Bus Disciplinary Action

USE OF SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

Unauthorized entrance to any area of a school, by anyone, and/or use of any equipment without proper supervision is prohibited. Failure to observe this rule could result in disciplinary action.

VOLUNTEERING AT THE SCHOOL

All volunteers must have CORI checks prior to working in the school. A volunteer application is included in your child's first day packet. If you are interested, please complete the paperwork provided and return to the school. Opportunities to volunteer include work in classrooms, the library, special education classrooms, and at home. Each volunteer donates however much time they have available. Volunteers working in the school must sign in and out and wear a volunteer name tag. CORI (Criminal Record) checks are required for all volunteers, including chaperones. This is a policy that will be strictly enforced. The policy endeavors to provide for the safety of students, employees, and visitors while at school and/or participating in school sponsored activities. Please

complete the volunteer application along with a CORI (available in the school office); upon completion of these forms you may be contacted to volunteer.

WHEN YOUR CHILD MUST LEAVE EARLY

If a child must leave school early, the child should have a written statement from the parent/guardian on the morning of early dismissal. When arriving to pick up the child, please report to the main office to properly sign out the child. The office will notify the teacher over the intercom and the child will then report to the office. **Dismissal is always from the main office. Do not go directly to the classroom.** Thank you.

WITHDRAWAL OF STUDENT(S)

Students moving from North Middlesex to another community will be processed through the Main Office. A transfer card will be issued, as well as a record release form signed. NMRSD may forward student records to a school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll without the signed consent of a parent or eligible student, in accordance with 603 CMR 23.07(4)(g).

