

# PARENT HANDBOOK

For The River Preschool



March 2019

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS TERRITORY**

We gratefully acknowledge the Songhees and Esquimalt peoples, speakers of the Lekwungen language and traditional keepers of the land where the children of The River Preschool attend to their work through play. As a community of faith we believe in and are committed to the work of reconciliation.

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The River Preschool wishes to acknowledge and thank Ms. Kate Lawes of The Tree of Life Playschool for her guidance and support in the development of this Parent Handbook.

# **WELCOME TO THE RIVER PRESCHOOL**

## **ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK**

Our Parent Handbook is aimed to provide you with everything you might want to know about our programs and information that you will need to get started here with us. Please read through the handbook carefully, as it provides information around our program, philosophy, and safety policies. If you have any further questions, please feel free to bring them to a board member.

## **HISTORY**

Eight years ago St. Barnabas Church started a drop in playgroup for toddlers and their parents. A play group that reflected the core beliefs of their faith community, creating a place of reverence, warmth and love. “Everything will live where the River flows” are words from the Prophet Ezekiel that gave the play group at the church its name as well as its purpose: to hold a space for children where they can live fully, deeply immersed in imaginative play, amazed in wonder, touched by the Holy Spirit.

The River playgroup has become so popular, and has touched many lives that three years ago members from St. Barnabas and parents from The River came together to explore the idea of opening a faith-based and Waldorf-inspired preschool.

We are happy this dream has finally become a reality and we are pleased to welcome your children in our program!

## **PHILOSOPHY**

At the River Preschool, we recognize and welcome with reverence the unique gifts brought by each child we serve. We believe that preschool aged children are laying their lifelong foundation.

Our play-based program will support the children’s physical, emotional and spiritual development on their individual path. We will help them lay a foundation of imagination, life-skill, respect, gratitude, and curiosity for each other and for God’s great creation in the natural World.

We believe that healthy early childhood development will unfold fully in the context of healthy social relationships among parents, teachers and children. The River Preschool joins together

with the community of St. Barnabas, a Christian church in the Anglican tradition, to create a warm and joyful space for preschoolers and their families.

The River Preschool will seek to offer:

- Love and Warmth
- A cared for environment that nourishes the senses
- Free imaginative play
- Protection for the sanctity of childhood
- Predictable daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms
- Stories and celebration of the Christian calendar
- Gratitude, reverence, wonder and prayer
- An opportunity for adult caregivers to be on a path of spiritual, intellectual and creative development and to nurture an inner attitude of reverence towards the children

## **OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

### **FUNCTION OF THE BOARD**

The purpose of the board is to provide the governance and the overall operation and direction of the River Preschool. The River Preschool board members are elected by The River: St. Barnabas Preschool Society which is a registered society with BC Societies. The Board of Directors meets on the second Wednesday of every month.

If a parent wishes to address the Board, they must inform the Chair so that their presentation is added to the Agenda. The Board works in close cooperation with the staff in regards to matters concerning (but not limited to) the following:

- Balancing of the budget and other financial concerns
- Long range plans for the preschool
- Education of staff and parents
- Community awareness
- Fund-raising
- Daily operation including wages and expenditures
- Tuition fees

- Capital expenditure
- Adherence to Waldorf Principles and Christian Values

## **CONTACTING THE BOARD**

Board members can be contacted at the following email address: [riverpreschoolvic@gmail.com](mailto:riverpreschoolvic@gmail.com)

## **OUR STAFF**

The River Preschool will have one director, one Head Teacher with an ECE certificate, a second teacher with an ECEA certificate and one helper. This staffing is based upon a full enrollment of 20 children.

## **PRACTICUM STUDENTS/VOLUNTEERS**

Practicum students from a recognized educational facility and volunteers will be welcomed at The River Preschool provided they meet the licensing requirements, (Criminal Record Check).

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

We would encourage the development of a parent group to assist with special events, celebrations and fundraisers. Activities may vary from hand sewing of items for Mary's Enchanted Garden to making salads for the Family BBQ.

# **PRESCHOOL RHYTHMS**

We believe that when daily rhythms and routines are predictable, children feel safe and this will have a positive, comforting and reassuring effect on their behaviour and overall well-being.

## **DAILY RHYTHM**

A day in our preschool will begin with welcoming the children into the space, guiding them to put their outdoor shoes away and put on their warm preschool slippers. There will be an opening circle with familiar songs and movement. The opening circle of each day is an important part of the preschool day. For this reason, we ask that parents have their children at the preschool just prior to the 9:00 start. (If parents are late, we ask them to wait until after the opening circle time is concluded.) The rest of the preschool day provides time to play, a small walk, outside play, exploring nature, preparation of snack and meal time as well as rituals accompanying clean up time and saying goodbye.

## **WEEKLY RHYTHM**

While we have a daily predictable Rhythm that will help the children to get settled and feel safe, we will also introduce, on a weekly basis, special crafts, music, theatre and storytelling that relate to the festivals and celebrations of the seasons and the Christian calendar.

## **FOOD AND DRINK**

Preparing and sharing meals together is a central part of our faith based and Waldorf-inspired curriculum. We will take time to carefully prepare food for our snack and lunch time with the children, give thanks for all the good things we are blessed with, remember those who have less, and break bread together, celebrating our fellowship.

## **SEASONAL RHYTHMS AND FESTIVALS**

Festivals and Celebrations are an important part of our curriculum. We will follow the celebrations of the church year and the Waldorf pedagogy: Michaelmas, Halloween, All Souls and All Saints and Martinmas in the fall, Advent, Christmas and Candlemas in the winter, lent, Easter and Mayday and Pentecost in the spring. For most of these celebrations and festivals the preschool will come together with the church family and for some even with the wider community in Fernwood and Victoria. In order



to prepare for these festivals we will hold regular parent meetings and crafting sessions with the parents.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

A child's birthday is a very special day which we honour with a simple celebration. We invite parents to celebrate it with us and to bring a food treat to share. Please discuss the best timing with the teacher of your child.

## **PRACTICAL MATTERS**

### **FEES, PAYMENTS AND REGISTRATION**

Monthly fees are \$685.00. This amount includes \$608.00 for tuition plus \$77.00 for food; (a healthy snack and lunch.) Upon registration a non-refundable deposit of \$175.00 is required.

As the preschool year progresses it may become necessary to ask families to pay a small amount in order to help with the costs of arts and crafts materials. If this becomes necessary, parents will be given a one-month notice for this additional amount.

Fees are due in full on the first day of each month, and can be paid either by post-dated cheque or by email transfer. The email address is: [theriverpreschoolvic@gmail.com](mailto:theriverpreschoolvic@gmail.com).

Cheques should be made payable to The River: St. Barnabas Preschool Society.

### **LATE PAYMENT**

A reminder will be given to parents if fees are not paid at this time. If fees are not paid by the following week of that month the parents will be reminded and expected to pay promptly.

Should concerns over late payments become an ongoing issue, The River Preschool may need to end that child's preschool attendance.

## **REFUNDS**

Refunds are not given unless there are extreme circumstances requiring a parent to withdraw their child from The River Preschool.

Refunds are not given if inclement weather requires that The River Preschool is cancelled.

A full registration refund will be given in the event that The River Preschool is cancelled due to insufficient registration or staffing.

## **RECORDS FOR EACH CHILD**

The River Preschool staff will, where applicable to a preschool, adhere to the guidelines set out in Section 57 (1)(2) of the Community Care and Assisted Living Act; Child Care Licensing Regulation.

## **ORIENTATION AND GRADUAL ENTRY**

At The River Preschool, building an environment that fosters trust, warmth, love and safety is an essential aspect of our philosophy and approach. In order to build this environment, The River Preschool will have a gradual entry during the first week of each new preschool year. During the first week, and in consultation with parents, an attendance schedule will be determined so that children will attend for only two days of that week. This gradual entry will allow time for the children and staff to begin developing a loving and trusting relationship.

In consultation with parents and staff, it may be necessary for a child to attend partial days until the child is feeling comfortable with attending. Again, in consultation with parents and staff, partial attendance may be necessary in the event that a child has a unique care plan that requires such accommodation.

## **PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

The first month of preschool is considered probationary, during which either the parent or the preschool staff may decide that the child's placement and registration is not appropriate. During this probationary period withdrawal from the program will not incur any penalty, and the fees will be prorated.

## **WAITLIST**

The River Preschool board will keep a list of interested parents. Spaces will be filled as they come available.

## **WITHDRAWAL / TERMINATION**

At least one month written notice is required for withdrawal of a child from The River Preschool. If withdrawal is immediate, parents are responsible for payment of one-month fee in lieu of notice. In the event of exceptional circumstances this policy may be reconsidered.

## **HOURS OF OPERATION, ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

The River Preschool is open for the care of children from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. *In order to allow each child to live into the rhythm of the preschool day we expect prompt arrival.* Families are requested to arrive on time to pick up their child at 1:00. (A late pick-up fee of \$5.00/5 minutes will be required after 1:15.) The staff will certainly be available to discuss any important matters that may have arisen during the preschool day, however, parents are asked to be mindful that the preschool staff must have the hall cleared and ready for the hall usage at 2:00. All children will be signed in upon arrival and signed out at the end of the day.

## **PICK UP AND RELEASE OF CHILD**

Children will only be released to the designated parent(s) or to a person authorized by the parent. A picture and identification information will be required for all adults who have been authorized for pick up by the designated parent(s).

## **IMPORTANT DATES AND CLOSURE PERIODS**

The facility will open September 9, 2019 to June 27 th , 2020. The facility will be closed on all statutory holidays and closed for 2 weeks at Christmas, 2 weeks at Spring Break and all of the summer school holidays, reopening the second week of September 2020.

In the event of a caregiver cancellation of a regularly attended day the parent will not be charged and at the end of the year these fees will be prorated on the June cheque.

In the event of parent holidays, or any temporary absence of the child (for example when the child is ill) space can only be reserved for the child if payment of the full monthly fee is made in advance.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Parents are expected to ensure that their children are dressed for outdoor activities. In case of extreme weather, the children will remain indoors for the entire preschool day. Preschool will be cancelled if significant amounts of snow impede staff from getting to the preschool or in the event that strong winds have caused a power outage. Parents will be notified at the earliest time possible if the preschool must close for the day. Fees will not be refunded on such closure days.

## **CHILDREN'S CARE POLICIES**

### **COMMUNICATION**

Having clear, open communication is critically important for the best care of the children and the effective development of relationships between staff, parents and children.

The River Preschool will let parents know, at the start of the year the times and days when the teachers are available for conversations, however a parent communication book will be available at the preschool each day in which the parents can write comments (such as how the day went before preschool, other things happening in the child's life etc.), concerns or observations from the previous preschool day. Where necessary the preschool staff will follow up on this communication.

### **POLICY ON GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR**

We take many measures to prevent behavioural problems. Our goal is to support the development of self-discipline, self-care and social skills within each child. We strive to model ideal behaviour through our interactions between each other as teachers, with the children, and with you as their parents. We will always share any specific incidents we have witnessed or any general concerns we have about your child with you. As well, we hope you will share with us any event that may be new or stressful in the life of your family that would affect your child's behaviour while away from home.

The rhythm of our day goes a long way toward helping the children develop inner discipline and the impulse to care for others, their playthings and their environment. The playroom environment also affects behaviour and, therefore, careful consideration is given to the physical space of the preschool. (See also, "Clothing" section below.)

Of utmost importance to our discipline policy is that we never shame children about their behaviour. Even when we have to intervene, we do so respectfully and guide them towards more appropriate behaviours. Behaviours that are not welcome are:

- biting
- hitting
- aggressive behavior
- threatening or disrespectful language
- bathroom talk
- teasing
- screaming at each other (indoors)

If a child's behaviour is becoming highly disruptive to the entire playroom, the child may be removed from the room (accompanied by a teacher) until they have found their peace, but we try to minimize these measures as much as possible.

Behaviours that will be encouraged are:

- Inside voices
- Walking feet while indoors
- Cleanliness and responsibility in caring for toys
- Sharing and taking turns
- Table manners and safe eating behaviours

Redirection will be used to guide children from behaviours that are not acceptable towards behaviours that we wish to encourage.

Approaches to discipline that will be used are:

- Gesture - Without calling or speaking, we indicate with a gesture what we would like the child to do (i.e. sit down, quiet down, etc.)
- Royal "we" - We speak in "we" rather than individualizing the children. This helps them to learn participation. Ex: "Now we are sitting down," or "We are putting on our shoes," or "We need the door closed."
- Privileged "may" - When asking a child to perform a task or action, we speak with truthfulness. We don't phrase a request as a question when we don't want to receive a yes or no response. Ex: "You may close the door," rather than: "Would you like to close the door."
- Pictorial Language - Children live in pictures. When an adult makes a request through the use of creative language, children often respond with delight and enjoyment. Ex: to encourage a

child to help put all the “food” they’ve made with their sand toys, we may designate a certain part of the sandbox as the refrigerator and say: “let’s put the food away in the fridge.” They then carefully, or not, empty their bowls and cups into the sandbox again!

- Even, Objective Tone of Voice - When our voices waver and escalate to urgency, we lose ourselves (our consciousness) and the child loses respect for us. Discipline is for the benefit of the child and must be done with love and respect.
- Save “NO” for harm to self and others - We try to tell the children what they may do rather than what they may not by describing what we want to see them doing.
- Objectify the deed - Seeing the inherent good in each child, we separate their behavior from who they are. This prevents the child from seeing him or herself as “bad.” Ex: If a child is disrupting the play of others by knocking things over, we may take his or her hands into our own, saying: “I see those hands are knocking into things, let’s make them warm and gentle.”
- Healing stories - Sometimes stories will be told that provide examples and models of how to treat one another with kindness and gentleness. These moral lessons told through stories sink deeply into the child’s consciousness, and provide a way for them to check their behaviour, without specifically citing the moral to the story, as in the fables

## **CHILD SUPERVISION**

The safety of each child will be of paramount concern for all preschool staff. Staff will ensure that safety assessments are conducted regularly of play equipment and apparatus. Safety guidelines will be strictly followed when the children are helping with food preparation in the kitchen. Staff will give their full attention to supervision of the children ensuring that they are playing and interacting safely with an understanding and awareness of child development stages in all developmental areas. An incident form will be completed for any injury or incident that requires emergency care.

## **TOILETING AND HAND WASHING PROCEDURES**

Everyone will wash hands before meals and after using the washroom. A spare change of clothes should be provided by parents in case of accidents.

## **TOYS**

Toys, books, and treasures from home sometimes find their way to school. These are better kept at home since they may become lost or damaged. However, please talk to the teacher about the possibility of your child sharing a special treasure with us.

## **EXTRA ACTIVITIES**

Engaging in play, by themselves or with friends, is a fundamental need of the young child. We recognize this need for daily play, and see the stress that can be created in children's lives by overscheduling. Therefore, because we offer a broad range of activities in art, movement and music, we advise that additional extra-curricular activities and classes are not scheduled until the child is older. Please speak with your child's teacher if you have any questions about this request.

## **CLOTHING**

Children need to be dressed in clothing that is appropriate for the weather and season. Please send your child in comfortable clothes as they will be involved in active play and crafts. Also, parents are asked to bring an extra complete change of clothes that are appropriate to the season. This change of clothes will be kept in their cubbies. Please check your child's cubby area daily just in case some of your child's spare clothing has been used.

We have found that distracting clothing affects behaviour and the quality of play, so we ask that the children wear clothing without lots of lettering or advertising – simple is best. We have observed how letters and characters are essentially a form of media coming into the preschool. If your child does come with characters from movies, monsters, dinosaurs, trucks, etc., we will ask them to invert their shirts as to have it become less distracting to the other children. Please keep this in mind as you are shopping for clothes. If they have a favorite dinosaur shirt that they want to wear, you can say "yes, you may wear that on the weekend". Plain coloured shirts, stripes, etc., are best for preschool. In addition, we have found that tutu/ballerina style dresses are cumbersome to the little girls when going to the bathroom and they have difficulty being independent. So those are best left home for dress-up times and weekends as well. A part of the closet or dresses can be designated as the school attire, and other parts of the closet as non-school attire so that it is not a daily battle when it comes to what to wear.

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICIES

## WELLNESS / ILLNESS POLICY

At the River Preschool children will be expected to be active and engaged in play with the rest of the children. If you feel that your child may not be able to fully participate in the program activities, please consider keeping them home. Sick children also have trouble with behaviour; when a child is unable to cope, it will not be possible for the caregivers to meet their needs and they should be at home.

The River Preschool staff wish to ensure that all children are able to participate in a healthy environment. The staff will assess the health of each child as they arrive for the day. In the event that the staff believe a child may be too unwell to participate, the parent will be requested to take the child home and welcome the child back when he/she is well enough to participate and/or not likely to cause other children to become sick. Depending upon the nature of a child's illness, The River Preschool staff may request that a doctor's note be submitted to assure the staff that it is safe for both their child and the other children to attend.

If a child will not be attending due to illness, parents are requested to contact either the Director or the ECE to inform them of the child's absence. The River Preschool will not refund parents for days their child has missed due to illness.

If a child becomes ill during the day, the parent(s) will be contacted immediately. The staff will ensure that the child is placed in a quiet area; the child will be given necessary comforts, ie: hydration, warmth, access to bathrooms if necessary; and the child will be placed where he/she can be closely monitored until a parent arrives.

Please refer to Appendix III for further information on Childhood Illnesses and Diseases and guidelines on when children can return to preschool activity.

## IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

A copy of the child's immunization record is required upon registration. It must be stated, that should an outbreak of a communicable disease occur within the preschool, licensing requires that the child not attend for a period of time.



## **ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATIONS**

The River Preschool will follow the policy as set out in Section 53 (1) of the Community Care and Assisted Living Act; Child Care Licensing Regulation. Medication must be prescribed by a doctor and the parent must sign an agreement form that the preschool staff may administer the medication. A record of administration will be kept. Non-prescriptive medications will not be administered by The River Preschool staff.

## **LOST CHILD POLICY**

While every measure is taken to ensure safety of the children at all times the following policy explains actions the staff will take in the unlikely event the child does become missing while in care.

- check all play areas
- secure other children with staff member by gathering together for group activity
- telephone police if child is not located immediately
- inform the child's parent(s)
- have a description of the child ready, preferably a recent photo on the emergency card and supply to the police if necessary
- call in emergency caregiver/substitute to care for other children during search
- inform all parties when child has been located
- set up a debriefing with parent
- fill out a critical incident report and submit to Licensing Officer

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

The preschool staff will be fully instructed on the emergency procedure guidelines as developed by the St. Barnabas Church staff and the Victoria Fire Department. Where applicable to the church hall facility and the preschool aged children, guidelines in the Fire Services Act will be implemented. In the event of an emergency, the staff will take the children to the designated safe place outside of the church hall building. Staff will take with them the emergency and first aid totes. At the earliest time parents will be notified of any emergency and the actions to be taken.

Preschool staff will conduct practice fire drills, earthquake and emergency drills on a regular basis. A record will be kept of these drills. The preschool staff will be registered with Vic-Alert.

## CHILD ABUSE

The River Preschool staff will follow the guidelines and protocols as set out in The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse & Neglect for Service Providers, June 2017 and adhere to the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Anglican Diocese of BC.

([http://www.bc.anglican.ca/df\\_media/W1siZiIsIjIwMTcvMDQvMDUvMDkvNTcvMTUvZmU0NzFmNmQtMzk5Zi00ZWE4LThjYzltYTlhMTkOWYxNmM4L1NleHVhbE1pc2NvbmlR1Y3RQb2xpY3lfMjAwOC5wZGYiXV0/SexualMisconductPolicy\\_2008.pdf?sha=4838c44e8e0b7148](http://www.bc.anglican.ca/df_media/W1siZiIsIjIwMTcvMDQvMDUvMDkvNTcvMTUvZmU0NzFmNmQtMzk5Zi00ZWE4LThjYzltYTlhMTkOWYxNmM4L1NleHVhbE1pc2NvbmlR1Y3RQb2xpY3lfMjAwOC5wZGYiXV0/SexualMisconductPolicy_2008.pdf?sha=4838c44e8e0b7148)) The River Preschool staff will ensure that all such matters will be managed in a highly professional and caring manner.

In the event of suspected child abuse, either emotional, physical, sexual or neglect, these are the steps to be followed.

The staff will:

- listen carefully to what the child says (in private)
- be attentive to the child's behaviour
- show concern, calmly without overreacting
- ask if anything is wrong without leading into an answer
- let the child know that we are available to listen anytime and be reassuring
- document the child's words or behaviour that may indicate abuse has occurred
- contact the Ministry for Children and Family Development if we strongly suspect abuse and we fear for the safety of the child

Child Abuse is a serious crime and it is the legal responsibility of any citizen to report suspected child abuse.

## DOCUMENTATION

To document our days a daily log will be kept and photos will be taken. No photos will be posted on Social Media. Photo permission to share photos with other families of your child will be obtained at the beginning of the year. Photos will only be posted on our website with parent permission. We ask that families who take pictures on their days with us do not post photos of the children or the staff without permission.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

We require each child to have emergency contact information available. In the event your child is unwell or otherwise needs to be sent home, we will first use the contact written down on the daily check in clipboard. Otherwise we will refer to the emergency contact information sheet to contact you or a designated guardian if the other contact is not available.

## **SCREENS AND PRESCHOOL CHILDREN**

There is never any television or screen time given to children at the preschool. Children are encouraged to play at preschool by acting out of and exploring their own innate capacity for imaginative play. However a child who has been watching television, movies, playing on a computer or with video games on a regular basis will reenact these experiences during playtime. This prevents the child from receiving the full benefit of the preschool program. Please limit your child's exposure to media. In particular, we ask that you do not allow your child to watch TV in the morning before school. For more information please refer to the websites listed below.

<https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children>

<https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/screen-time-and-young-children>

<http://www.awaldorfjourney.com/2016/12/managing-media-screen-time/>

# **RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR PARENTS**

## **PARENT CRAFT EVENTS**

The Preschool teachers and board will be offering crafting events throughout the year. The focus will be on making crafts to share with your child, such as the typical Waldorf doll and seasonal felted figures, to be used at home. Hopefully before the major holidays we can work on appropriate gifts and toys for our children that reflect both Christian and Waldorf values as opposed to the advertised consumer goods.

## **PARENT EVENINGS**

Throughout the year The River Preschool will offer parent evenings on a variety of topics. Both parents are encouraged to come and child care can be arranged if needed. These are a wonderful way to connect as a group and learn how we can support each other through this wonderful adventure of being a parent.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

There will be two designated Parent-teacher conferences scheduled throughout the year. Parents are welcome to arrange a separate meeting, if needed, outside of the regularly designated parent teacher conference schedule.

## **RESOURCE LIBRARY**

The River Preschool Board and the teachers will be developing a collection of recommended articles and books for adults and another small lending library of books for families to take home and enjoy. To get started we recommend: *Simplicity Parenting* by Kim John Payne and *All Year Round* by Ann Druitt, Christine Fynes-Clinton and Marije Rowling. Another they you might find helpful is a very simple introduction to the Christian faith aimed at elementary school children but suitable for adults: *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd Jones.

# APPENDIX I

## ABOUT WALDORF AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

*(Adapted from Susan Howard's "Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education")*

Waldorf pedagogy emphasizes the following experiences as being essential for healthy early childhood education:

- **Love and warmth** - Children who live in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element. (Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*) Love and warmth, more than any programmatic approach to early education, create the basis for development. These qualities are expressed in the gestures that live between adult and child, in the children's behaviour toward one another, and also in the social relations among the adults in the early childhood centre. In other words, they form the social community of early childhood education.
- **Care for the environment and nourishment for the senses** - The essential task of the early childhood teacher is to create the "proper physical environment" around the children. "Physical environment" must be understood in the widest sense imaginable. It includes not just what happens around children in the material sense, but everything that occurs in their environment, everything that can be perceived by their senses, that can work on the inner powers of children from the surrounding physical space. This includes all moral or immoral actions, all the meaningful and meaningless behaviors that children witness. (Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*) Early learning is profoundly connected to the child's own physical body and sensory experience. Thus the physical surroundings, indoors and outdoors, should provide nourishing, diverse opportunities for the child's active self-education. By integrating diverse elements, and bringing them into a meaningful, understandable and harmonious order, the adult provides surroundings that are accessible to the young child's understanding, feeling, and active will. Such surroundings provide the basis for the development of a sense of coherence. The child unconsciously experiences the love, care, intentions and consciousness expressed through the outer furnishings and materials of the classroom. The inner qualities offer a moral grounding for the child's development; the environment is "ensouled" and nurturing. The adult shapes not only the spatial environment, but also the temporal environment, creating a loving, lively yet orderly "breathing" through rhythm and repetition. Through this healthy breathing process, the child gains a sense of security and confidence in his or her relationship with the world.

• **Creative, artistic experience** - In the early childhood class, the art of education is the art of living. The teacher is an artist in how she perceives and relates to the children and the activities of daily life. She “orchestrates” and “choreographs” the rhythms of each day, the week, and the seasons in such a way that the children can breathe freely within a living structure. In addition, the teacher offers the children opportunities for artistic experiences through song and instrumental music, movement and gesture (including rhythmic games and eurythmy), speech and language (including verses, poetry, and stories), modelling, watercolour painting and drawing, puppetry and marionettes.

• **Meaningful adult activity as an example for the child’s imitation** - The task of the early childhood teacher is to adapt the practical activities of daily life so that they are suitable for the child’s imitation through play. Children do not learn through instruction or admonition, but through imitation. Real, meaningful, purposeful work, adjusted to the needs of the child, is in accordance with the child’s natural and inborn need for activity and is an enormously significant educational activity. Thus, rather than offering “thought-out,” contrived projects and activities for the children, the teacher focuses on her own meaningful work through activities that nurture daily and seasonal life in the classroom - gardening, laundry and cleaning, creating and caring for the materials in the surroundings, and the bodily care of the children. This creates a realm, an atmosphere, of freedom in which the individuality of each child can be active. It is not intended that the children copy the outer movements and actions of the adult, but rather that they experience the inner work attitude: the devotion, care, sense of purpose, intensity of focus, and creative spirit of the adult. And then, in turn, each child is free to act as an artist-doer in his or her own right, through creative free play and active movement, according to his or her own inner needs and possibilities.

• **Free, imaginative play** - In the child’s play activity, we can only provide the conditions for education. What is gained through play stems fundamentally from the self-activity of the child, through everything that cannot be determined by fixed rules. The real educational value of play lies in the fact that we ignore our rules and regulations, our educational theories, and allow the child free rein. (RS, Self Education in the Light of Anthroposophy) And then, a seemingly contradictory indication: Giving direction and guidance to play is one of the essential tasks of sensible education, which is to say of an art of education that is right for humanity. . . The early childhood educator must school his or her observation in order to develop an artistic eye, to detect the individual quality of each child’s play. (Untranslated lecture by Rudolf Steiner, Feb. 24, 1921 in Utrecht, Holland) Little children learn through play. They approach play in an entirely individual way, out of their own unique configuration of soul and spirit and out of their own unique experiences in the world they live in. The task of the teacher is to create an environment that supports the possibility for healthy play. This environment includes the physical surroundings, furnishings, and play materials; the social environment of activities and social

interactions; and the inner/spiritual environment of thoughts, intentions, and imaginations held by the adults.

- **Protection for the forces of childhood** - Although it is highly necessary that each person should be fully awake in later life, the child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which his early years of life are passed. For if we allow his organism to grow strong in this non-intellectual way, he will rightly develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world today. (RS, A Modern Art of Education) The lively, waking dream of the little child's consciousness must be allowed to thrive in the early childhood group. This means that the teacher refrains as much as possible from verbal instruction; instead, her gestures and actions provide a model for the child's imitation, and familiar rhythms and activities provide a context where the need for verbal instruction is reduced. Simple, archetypal imagery in stories, songs, and games provides "digestible" experiences that do not require intellectual or critical reflection or explanation.

- **Gratitude, reverence, and wonder** - An atmosphere of gratitude should grow naturally in children through merely witnessing the gratitude the adults feel as they receive what is freely given by others, and in how they express this gratitude. If a child says "thank you" very naturally – not in response to the urging of others, but simply through imitating – something has been done that will greatly benefit the child's whole life. Out of this an all-embracing gratitude will develop toward the whole world. This cultivation of gratitude is of paramount importance. (RS, The Child's Changing Consciousness) Out of these early all-pervading experiences of gratitude, the first tender capacity for love, which is deeply embedded in each and every child, begins to sprout in earthly life. If, during the first period of life, we create an atmosphere of gratitude around the children, then out of this gratitude toward the world, toward the entire universe, and also out of thankfulness for being able to be in this world, a profound and warm sense of devotion will arise... upright, honest and true. (RS, The Child's Changing Consciousness) This is the basis for what will become a capacity for deep, intimate love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for fervent spiritual or religious devotion, and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world.

- **Joy, humour and happiness** - Children need teachers who look and act with happiness and, most of all, with honest, unaffected love. Happiness and joy should thrive within the group of children and their teachers. The teacher's earnestness and serious striving must be held in a dynamic balance with humour, happiness and joy.

- **Adult caregivers on a path of inner development** - For the small child before the change of teeth, the most important thing in education is the teacher's own being. (RS, Essentials of Education) Just

think what feelings arise in the soul of the early childhood educator who realizes: what I accomplish with this child, I accomplish for the grown-up person in his twenties. What matters is not so much a knowledge of abstract educational principles or pedagogical rules. . . . [W]hat does matter is that a deep sense of responsibility develops in our hearts and minds and affects our world view and the way we stand in life. (RS, "Education In the Face of the Present Day World Situation," June 10, 1920) Here we come to the spiritual environment of the early childhood setting: the thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations living in the adult who cares for the children. This invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child's development.

## APPENDIX II

### CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES AND DISEASES INFORMATION

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Information below is from:

**A Quick Guide to Common Childhood Diseases**  
**BC Centre for Disease Control**  
**An Agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority**  
**May 2009**

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#### **Chicken Pox**

Incubation Period: Usually 8 - 21 days from contact with an infected person

When is the person contagious? From 2 days before spots appear and until all blisters have crusted over (which is usually 5 days after the first blisters appear).

Child is most infectious 12 - 24 hours **before** the rash appears.

**How to prevent spread of the illness to other children:** Exclude child from child care or school when spots first appear until all sores are crusted over (usually 5 days after onset of blisters).

Staff will alert other parents when a case of chickenpox occurs in a child care facility.

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#### **Common Cold/Influenza**

Influenza (the flu) is a respiratory illness caused by Influenza A and Influenza B viruses. Influenza season in Canada is usually November through April.

Signs and symptoms of influenza may include:

\* Fever

\* Cough, sneezing, runny nose



- \* Headache

- \*Body aches and pain

- \*Exhaustion

- \*Sore throat

- \*Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are more common in children than adults.

Incubation period: Usually 1 – 4 days from contact with an infected person

When is the person contagious? Usually from 1 day before to 5 days after symptoms develop (up to 7 days after symptoms develop for young children)

Child may attend school or child care if they feel well enough to take part in activities.

### **Diarrheal Diseases**

Fever, vomiting, watery diarrhea, abdominal pain.

Incubation period: Usually 1-3 days

When is the person contagious? During the acute stage of illness and until diarrhea stops.

Child can return to preschool when feeling well enough to take part in activities and bowel movements return to normal.

### **Fever**

The degree of fever is not as important as the child's behaviour (cranky, fussy, irritable, lethargic).

Look for rash or other signs of illness. If the fever exceeds 39C or 102F the child should see his/her pediatrician.

The child can return to preschool when he/she can actively participate in all parts of the program.

(Credit to 'Tree of Life Preschool Policies and Procedures; Appendix #6)

### **Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease**

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is caused by a coxsackie virus. It occurs mainly in the summer and early fall and is most common in children under 10 years of age.

Signs and symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease usually start suddenly and may include:

- \*Fever

- \* Sore throat

- \* Headache

- \* Small painful blisters inside the mouth on tongue and gums (last 4 to 6 days)

- \*Blisters may appear on the palms of child's hands, on their fingers, and on the soles of their feet for 7 to 10 days

It is possible to have the infection and not have any symptoms.

Incubation period: Usually 3 – 6 days from contact with an infected person

When is the person contagious? During the stage of acute illness, usually for about 7 – 10 days. The virus

can be found in stool for 4 weeks after start of illness.

Child can attend school or child care if the child feels well enough to take part in activities.

### **Head Lice**

Head lice is an infestation, not an infection. Head lice do not cause illness. Head lice are tiny insects that live on the scalp. Lice have 3 stages in their life cycle:

- Nits (eggs) are whitish gray, tan, or yellow ovals, about the size of a grain of sand. They are found stuck to the hair, often behind the ears or at the back of the neck. Nits hatch in 9 – 10 days.
- Nymphs are young lice. They look like adults but are smaller.
- Adult lice are about the size of a sesame seed. Adult lice can live up to 30 days on a person's head. They move around on the scalp and are much more difficult to see than nits. Detection of a live louse is the best way to confirm head lice. The most effective method of detecting live lice is by using a fine tooth lice comb on dry or wet hair.

Signs and symptoms of head lice may include:

- \* Itchy scalp (may be worse at night)
- \* Scratching marks or small red lesions like a rash
- \* Child may have head lice and not have any symptoms

Nymphs and adult lice can live for up to 2 days away from the scalp. Eggs can live for up to 3 days away from the scalp but need the higher temperature near the scalp to hatch.

Head lice cannot fly or hop, but they do crawl very quickly. Head lice that live on people cannot live on pets, such as cats and dogs.

Incubation period: Period from laying of eggs to emerging adult lice is 14 – 23 days

How long can head lice be spread? As long as live lice and live nits are present

Child does not need to be excluded from a child care facility or school.

### **Measles**

Measles is one of the most contagious communicable diseases. It is caused by the measles virus and is a leading cause of vaccine preventable deaths in children worldwide.

Signs and symptoms of measles may include:

- \* Fever, cough, runny nose, and watery inflamed eyes
- \* Small red spots with white or bluish white centers in the mouth
- \* Dusky red, blotchy rash that begins on the face and spreads all over the body

\* Rash begins on 3rd to 7th day of illness and lasts 4 to 7 days

**Incubation period:** Usually about 10 days. Fever usually develops 7 - 18 days after exposure to infected person. Rash usually develops 14 days after exposure.

**When is the person contagious?** From about 5 days before to 4 days after rash appears

Exclude child from school, child care, and non-family contacts until 4 days after the rash appears.

Contact the local health unit.

\*It is recommended that all contacts of a measles case who have not had measles disease or 2 doses of measles vaccine receive measles vaccine within 72 hours of last exposure to the infected child.

\*All susceptible contacts should stay away from the child care facility or school until they have received one dose of measles vaccine or the Medical Health Officer states it is safe for them to return.

\*Immune globulin is available to prevent measles disease in people who are exposed to a case of measles but who are unable to be immunized for any reason.

### **Meningitis**

Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis can be caused by a bacteria or a virus. Diagnosis of meningitis is made by a primary health care provider.

Signs and symptoms of meningitis may include:

\*High fever, headache, and stiff neck are common in anyone over the age of 2 years.

\* Infants < 2 years of age may appear slow or inactive, be irritable, vomit, or be eating poorly.

\* Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion, and sleepiness.

\* Seizures may occur as illness progresses.

Incubation period: For enteroviruses: about 3 – 7 days

When is the person contagious? For enteroviruses: from about 3 days after infection to 10 days after developing symptoms

Child can attend school or child care facility if they feel well enough to take part in activities.

Contact the local public health unit.

### **Mononucleosis (“Mono”)**

Mono is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). It is most common in older children and adolescents. About half of the people infected with EBV will develop symptoms.

Signs and symptoms of mono may include:

\*Fever

- \* Sore throat
- \* Swollen lymph glands
- \* Lethargy (exhaustion)
- \* Enlarged liver and spleen
- \* Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) occurs occasionally

Incubation period: Usually 4 – 6 weeks from contact with an infected person

When is the person contagious? Unclear, but prolonged. The infected child is most infectious when symptoms are at their peak but may remain infectious for up to a year after illness.

Child may go to school or child care when they feel well enough to take part in activities. This may take 1 – 2 weeks or longer after symptoms develop.

### **Pink Eye**

Pink eye is an infection of the covering of the eyeball and the inside of the eyelid. It is usually caused by a virus, but may be caused by bacteria or other irritant. Children under 5 years of age are most often affected.

Signs and symptoms of pink eye may include:

- \*Tearful, red, itchy, painful eye(s)
- \* Eyelid(s) may be swollen
- \* Pus or thick discharge (yellow or yellowish-green color) can make eyelids sticky, especially during sleep
- \*Fever
- \* Eye(s) may be sensitive to sunlight

Incubation period: Usually 1 – 3 days from contact with an infected person

When is the person contagious? During active infection when the child has symptoms

\* If the pink eye is caused by bacteria and the child is started on antibiotic treatment, he/she will not be contagious 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment.

If a child is started on antibiotics, exclude child from school or child care facility until 24 hours after antibiotics started.

### **Pinworms**

Pinworms are tiny, white, thread – like worms that live in the large intestine. The female worms crawl out of the anus (bum) at night and lay their eggs on nearby skin. Pinworms can be unpleasant and uncomfortable but they do not cause disease. Often, children with pinworms have no symptoms

Signs and symptoms of pinworm infection may include:

- \*intense itchiness around anus and vagina, especially at night
- \*sleeplessness

\*irritability

Pinworm infections are common, especially among school aged and preschool aged children, and children attending a child care facility.

Incubation period: The time from first contact with eggs until symptoms appear is usually 1 to 2 months or longer.

When is the person contagious? As long as female worms are still present and producing eggs.

Child can return to preschool or child care after receiving appropriate treatment (usually one dose of a prescribed oral medication).

### **Ringworm**

Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus. It can be found on the scalp, body, groin, or feet.

Signs and symptoms of a ringworm infection may include:

\*Ring shaped rash that is reddish and may be itchy

\*Rash may be dry and scaly or wet and crusty

\*If ringworm infection is on the scalp, there may be patches of hair loss or hair thinning

Scalp ringworm is very contagious, especially among children. It mainly affects children between 2 and 10 years of age. Foot ringworm (athlete's foot) affects males more than females and is more common after puberty. Symptoms of foot ringworm may include foot itching, rash or blisters on foot, and scaling of foot.

Incubation period: Usually 4 – 14 days

When is the person contagious? As long as lesions are present

Exclude child from school or child care until child sees a primary health care provider and has taken the first dose of prescribed medication.

### **Strep Throat**

Scarlet fever and strep throat are both caused by streptococcal bacteria. Rheumatic fever may occur as a result of untreated streptococcal infection.

Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever may include:

\*Red rash that looks like sunburn and feels like rough sandpaper

\* Rash most often begins on chest and stomach and then spreads to rest of body

\* Rash usually lasts 2 – 7 days

\*When rash fades, skin on hands and feet may start to peel

\* Fever

\* Nausea and vomiting

\* Sore throat

\* Red, swollen lips, strawberry – like tongue

- \* Flushed cheeks and pale area around mouth

Signs and symptoms of strep throat may include:

- \* Fever

- \* Very sore throat

- \* Swollen lymph glands

- \* Swollen tonsils

- \* Loss of appetite

Incubation period: Usually 1 – 3 days from contact with an infected person

When is the person contagious? In untreated cases, 10 – 21 days. Untreated cases of strep throat may carry the organism for weeks or months.

- \* Child is no longer infectious after 24 hours of antibiotic therapy.

Exclude child from school or child care until 24 hours after starting antibiotics or fever is gone.