Norwich Public Schools
Early Learning Program
Parent Handbook

Preschool Office:	**201 Hickory Street Norwich, CT, 06360 860.892.4342**
Huntington Elementary School:	**80 W Town Street Norwich, CT 06360 860.823.4204**
Moriarty Elementary School:	**20 Lawler Lane Norwich, CT 06360 860-823.4206**
Mahan Elementary School:	**94 Salem Turnpike Norwich, CT 06360 860.823.4205**
Veterans Elementary School:	**80 Crouch Avenue Norwich, CT 06360 860.823.4209**
Uncas Elementary School:	**280 Elizabeth Street Extension Norwich, CT 06306 860.823.4208**

Norwich Public Schools
Early Learning Program

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program! Whether this is your child's first school experience or their second year in PreK, our program is tailored to give your child what is needed. Our classrooms are comforting spaces, full of rich academic, and social-emotional learning opportunities. Our curriculum is diverse in cultural, environmental, developmental, and social-emotional areas and truly reflective of our town and families. We wish for your children to see themselves as productive, confident agents of change and we believe our curriculum supports this goal. Please take this opportunity to read our policies in this handbook. We will refer to the handbook often because it is based on strong early childhood practices from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and is our guide. The program we create for your children is only as strong as the connection between families and school staff. We are here for you as much as we are for your children, so please reach out with any questions, concerns or feedback. We look forward to working together.

Sincerely,

Cori Beckwith

Early Childhood Coordinator

Norwich Public Schools Preschool Mission Statement

The mission of the Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program is:

- To make each child's school experience one that will foster positive self-esteem and a positive attitude toward learning.
- To provide each child with a developmentally appropriate environment that will meet their individual needs and learning styles.
- To encourage each child to think, reason, question and experiment.
- To honor cultural, linguistic, and family diversity and individual differences of children and staff.
- To foster communication and cooperation between parents and teachers to provide a meaningful environment where children learn best.

This program is made possible through grants from
the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.

Program Philosophy

The Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program philosophy is based on the research and position statements of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Preschool follows the sound principles of child development and practices quality programming that is age and individually appropriate for each student. The program believes that all children benefit from rich learning environments in homes, communities and early care education settings. The NPS Early Learning classrooms utilize Teaching Strategies GOLD objectives to measure development and learning, which align with the Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS). Together, these standardized objectives provide the basis for supporting children's growth and development across domains.

We provide learning experiences grounded in relationships and connections, and our goal is to provide children with a sense of self-worth by helping them develop at their own individual pace, learn basic self-help skills, and foster a community built upon these guiding principles. Children who feel confident and secure in a stimulating educational and social environment will explore their world and grow into their capabilities.

Following the criteria of NAEYC, we are committed to promoting and supporting all aspects of a child's growth in an atmosphere of respect. Your child is an individual who is an integral member of a group, and whose uniqueness is acknowledged and appreciated by that group.

Research on the development of learning in preschool shows that young children develop best in stimulating environments that enrich the child's natural growth. Therefore, children participate in a variety of rich, individual and group activities designed to develop language and reading readiness skills and enhance physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth. These skills will increase their ability to succeed in school and create a satisfying life.

The development and training of staff is a continuous process, which includes attending workshops, listening to guest speakers and frequent discussions. The staff is encouraged to visit other programs and to take classes related to child development to further enrich their contribution to the program. At this time, we are integrating concepts from the Science of Reading and executive functioning into our early learning experiences. By incorporating recent educational research in our early learning priorities, we can assure that your child will gain exposure to the methodologies that result in the best outcomes for children.

By partnering with families, our staff will teach you these concepts too. They may come through classroom newsletters, email and Parent Square messages, and direct conversations. We value open and honest communication from you, and you can expect the same from staff, all toward the common goal of helping your child develop into a goal-directed learner who appreciates working through a challenge for the betterment of themselves, their peers, and community.

Preschool Policies

The policies and procedures for the Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program are in addition to the Norwich Public Schools Board of Education policies and procedures. It is requested that you ***scan the QR code below and sign*** electronically as acknowledgement of the NPS Early Learning policies and procedures herein.

NORWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK
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Divisions of Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program

1. PreKindergarten: School Day and Part Day programs
2. 12 Month Program: 7 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday and all year around
3. Family Resource Center
4. Birth-to-Three Coordination

Our PreKindergarten and 12 Month programs deliver preschool instruction in classrooms while our Family Resource Center and Birth-to-Three Coordination offer services to children and families to access school and community resources. This handbook will define the policies and procedures of our classroom-based programs, PreKindergarten and 12 Month Program.

Admissions, Enrollment/Registration and Eligibility for Preschool Programs

All children who reside in Norwich and turn 3 years old by September 1 are eligible for our PreKindergarten or 12 Month Program. There are three school programs available to children and families: **the 12 Month Program, the School Day PreK Program and the Part Day PreK Program**.

The 12 Month Program is available to families who reside in Norwich and turn 3 by September 1. The 12 Month Program operates all year round with 4 weeks of closure throughout the year. The program is closed during the December holiday break, April spring break, and two weeks during the summer. Parents are responsible for providing transportation, and tuition is charged based on a sliding scale.

The School Day PreK Program is available to all children who live in Norwich and turn 3 by September 1. The School Day Program operates school day hours 9:30-3:30 and closes for all school breaks and summer vacation. Bussing is available. Tuition is charged based on a sliding scale.

The Part Day PreK Program is available to all children who live in Norwich and turn 3 by September 1. The Part Day Program has a morning session (9:30am-12:10pm) and an afternoon session (12:50pm-3:30pm). Each session runs for 2 hours and 40 minutes. Bussing is available. Tuition is charged based on a sliding scale.

Children can register for Norwich Public Schools preschool by going to the registration tab on our website https://www.norwichpublicschools.org/district/registration-magnet-application. Registration paperwork must be filled out in its entirety before a student is considered for enrollment in our program; this includes supplying the necessary medical and financial forms along with proof of residency in Norwich. A staff member will be available to assist in completing the forms if needed. Incomplete packets may result in a delay in enrollment. Parents must submit an Early Childhood Health Assessment Record that is completed by the child's physician and is less than one year old.

Once your child is fully registered, you will be offered a program that has an available slot. The classroom offered to your child depends on many factors, including but not limited to: special education needs related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), K-5 zone school closest to the child's home, and staffing ratios. All attempts are made to accommodate parent preferences, but this is not always possible. If you are offered a slot that does not meet your needs, you will be asked to sign the "Declination of Preschool Slot" form. A waitlist of children will be kept who are waiting for a slot, and parents will be invited to have their child join as slots become available.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Students arriving on a school bus or in special transportation will be dropped off and picked up in accordance with each school's arrival and dismissal procedures. Preschool staff will always accompany a child entering the school building during normal school hours to ensure they reach their classroom safely. Students who require a seat belt or STAR Seat (a car seat with 5 point harness built into the bus seat) must be buckled/unbuckled by a preschool staff member, parent or bus monitor (if a monitor is assigned to a bus) in accordance with the car seat's manufacturer. Parents are not permitted to alter the safety restraint system. Parents who transport their child to school are required to drop off and pick up their students in accordance with each school's flow of traffic. Parents may not block the bus line or a fire lane at any time. When dropping off/picking up children outside of normal preschool hours, parents must park in designated parking spaces only and may not double park in a school parking lot or in fire lanes. Students who arrive late to school must be walked into the school and signed in by a parent. Students who must leave school early must be dismissed by a parent by calling the school building office at least one hour prior to the child's dismissal time. You must notify the school office if someone other than the usual person will pick up your child from school, even if the person is listed in PowerSchool on the list of emergency contacts. That person will be required to show identification before the child will be released. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unless we have parental permission to do so.

Parents dropping children off or picking children up at our 12 Month Program at Moriarty must walk their child to/from the designated door and sign them in and out of the program. Parents must note the time of drop off and pick up when signing the child in and out.

Children who take the bus home must be unbuckled by a bus monitor or parent and received by an adult at the bus stop. The Norwich Board of Education Policy reads, "If there is no one home to receive the child, the bus driver returns the preschool child to the school." This practice ensures that the child is supervised and in a safe environment. If a parent is not present at the bus stop to receive their child on multiple occasions, the Early Learning Program reserves the right to take necessary action to prevent additional late pickups including, but not limited to: changing the child's preschool session, requesting a wellness check by the Norwich Police Department, and reporting the parent's failure to provide necessary supervision of the child to the Department of Children and Families. Children rely on consistent drop off routines and it creates stress for them when they must be returned to school after hours.

For families that choose to transport their children to and from school: We encourage you to park your car in the parent line as outlined below rather than idling your vehicle.

Parent Transport for Arrival:

- Park your vehicle in the designated area at your school.
- Wait in your vehicle for a staff member to approach your vehicle for unloading.
- Do not idle your vehicle. Shutting your vehicle off prevents toxic fumes from entering the atmosphere and inside your car.
- Unbuckle your child as the staff member approaches, staff do not unbuckle children from car seats.
- Staff member will escort your child to the school.
- Parents may be asked to escort children to the school door under individual circumstances.
- Vehicles must remain in place until all children and staff are clear from the area.

Assessment and Monitoring the Progress of Children using Systematic Research-Based Instruction (SRBI)/MultiTiered System of Support (MTSS)

Teachers are trained in assessments that align with the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) so the progress of all children can be monitored throughout the school year. The children's performance on the assessment informs the teacher's instruction in the classroom and informs our professional development plan. All children are assessed at the beginning of the school year, and then two to three more times throughout the school year. Assessment information allows teachers to know what skills the class and/or student need to be taught. Report cards are sent to parents in December, March and June. Parent-teacher conferences are held in November/December and March. Parents are encouraged to maintain ongoing contact with teachers throughout the year so discussions can take place about the child's ongoing development. Teachers will contact parents when they have good news, information to share, questions or concerns.

Children who demonstrate challenges in any area of functioning and/or attendance will be identified through the regular review of assessment data. In the event a child is not meeting developmental milestones given instruction through the general education curriculum in the developmental domains of: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive or adaptive, the teacher may request additional instructional support. Through the Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process, we will identify a child's specific needs and design an actionable plan to address the underlying problem. Parents will be notified when their child is referred to the MTSS team. MTSS plans are in place for approximately 6-8 weeks, and data on the child's progress is reviewed and used to adjust the plan. The revised plan is in place for an additional 6-8 weeks, and the student's progress is reviewed again. If the child is making adequate progress, the plan may be faded or kept in place, depending on what the child needs. If the child is not making adequate progress and a disability is suspected, preschool staff will collaborate with our Student Services Department to refer the child to special education. Parents will be informed if a referral to special education is under consideration, and invited to attend a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting. At the PPT, the team describes the areas of concern, and decides if an individualized assessment is needed. Parent permission is required to conduct an individualized assessment. Through the PPT process, Early Learning Program faculty follow all regulations outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. The PPT will determine if a student has a disability, if it is impacting their ability to access their education, and if they require specially designed instruction through special education. If determined eligible for special education, the PPT will write an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

Attendance Policy

Children are expected to attend school everyday when their program is in session unless they have a fever, are vomiting or have diarrhea. Children who attend preschool everyday are more prepared for Kindergarten, more likely to graduate high school, less likely to be identified with a disability, and less likely to be retained. When your child must be absent from school, please call your child's school and inform the administrative assistant. If your child is ill and absent for five or more consecutive days, you must send your child to school with a note from the doctor or have the child checked in by the school nurse. **If your child is absent from school, (for reasons other than illness) for more than 10% of school days in session, their space may be forfeited.** Your child will be placed on the waiting list for the next available preschool slot.

Birthday Celebrations

In Norwich Public Schools, we believe it is important to honor the beliefs and traditions of our students and their families in regard to the acknowledgement of student birthdays. We recognize that birthdays are celebrated in many different ways or not at all. If families wish, there are many ways parents and teachers can collaborate to

acknowledge a child's special day, including, but not limited to: wearing a special pin, banner or crown; parents bringing in the child's favorite book that can be read to the class, parents sending in a picture from each year of the child's life and the class singing a song about the months of the year. Cultural traditions may be shared by parents to help the teacher celebrate the child's birthday in a way that is personally meaningful to them. If you do not wish that your child's birthday is recognized or celebrated in school, please inform your child's teacher. Due to allergies and the conditions outlined through the district's Wellness Policy, food cannot be sent into the class as part of the celebration.

Calendar

The Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program will follow the Norwich Public Schools district calendar. Although the 12 Month Program operates year round, it will be closed for two weeks during the summer in addition to the closure days noted below. Families will be notified of the summer closure dates by March of the current school year.

All Norwich Public School Early Learning Programs will be closed on the following (12) major holidays. Additional closures may be necessary, at times, and are at the discretion of Norwich Public Schools and the Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program. Parents will be given 30 days notice of any school calendar changes.

September:	Labor Day (First Monday in September)
October:	Indigenous Peoples' Day
November:	Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Recess (Thursday and Friday)
December:	Christmas Day, Holiday Recess
January:	New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February:	Presidents' Day, Winter Recess
March/April:	Good Friday (Friday before Easter), Spring Break
May:	Memorial Day
June:	Junteenth
July:	Independence Day (Fourth of July)

The calendar includes scheduled Early Release Days for events like Parent Teacher Conferences and professional development. On an **Early Release day**, the Preschool program will operate as defined below:

PreK Early Release (for all PreK in the district):
School Day: 9:30-1:35
AM Session: 9:30-11:10
PM Session: No afternoon session
12 Month Program at Moriarty: 7:00-1:00

Car Seats/Seat Belts

Full Day Program- All children transported to school by a parent must be in the proper restraint system in the car according to the most recent CT state law. Since the law changes frequently, it is best to refer to the website at: https://portal.ct.gov/dmv/resources/child-passenger-safety?language=en_US)
for the most current and accurate information about transporting your child safely in the car.

Classroom Pet Policy

Following district policy, we do not have pets in the classroom. This is to protect our students who have allergies to animals.

Closure, Delays and Early Dismissals Due to Weather

Weather-related and other emergencies may necessitate a **school closing**. If Norwich Public Schools close due to inclement weather, then the Early Learning Program will close too. Weather closures will be announced via email/ParentSquare or the Norwich Public Schools Facebook page. Please refer to the early release and delayed opening schedule below, in the event of inclement weather.

PreK Early Release (for all PreK in the district):
School Day: 9:30-1:35
AM Session: 9:30-11:10
PM Session: No afternoon session
12 Month Program at Moriarty: 7:00-1:00

PreK Delayed Opening (for all PreK in the district):
School Day: 11:30-3:35
AM Session: No morning session
PM Session: 12:50-3:35
12 Month Program at Moriarty: 9:00-5:00

Parents of students in the 12 Month Program will be responsible to pick children up early. Persons whose numbers are listed on the child's form as emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child if we cannot reach the parent. If the child is not picked up within one hour after the designated emergency closing, the police will be called to retrieve the child, and if parents cannot be reached on multiple occasions, the Department of Children and Families may be notified.

Communication Plan

Formal Reports to Parents

The Early Learning Program uses a standards-based observation, assessment and reporting system. Report cards are shared with parents in December, March and June, aligning with the Norwich Public Schools' distribution of report cards for students in grades K-5.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and spring, and provide an opportunity to discuss your child's progress. The dates of the conferences are listed on the district calendar. Notices and Parent Square messages about appointments for conferences will be sent home in the fall and spring. Conferences are usually 10–15 minutes long. Parents/guardians needing more time may request a longer conference. In addition to the conference, parents/guardians may request a meeting with the teacher (at a mutually convenient time) at any time during the school year. Our goal in the Early Learning Program is to have 100% parent participation in conferences.

Daily Communication from School

Please check your email/ParentSquare and child's backpack daily for details concerning upcoming events, school policies, and other items of interest. Communication between parents/guardians and teachers is extremely important and can occur through email, ParentSquare messages (particularly if translation to another language is needed) and phone calls before the children arrive or after the children dismiss. Teachers are often not available to talk to

parents during the school day while they are teaching in the classroom. If you need to speak to a teacher immediately, please contact the school's main office, and a message will be relayed for you. Teachers may contact you outside of their working hours, but they are not required to do so, and will get back to you the next school day.

Concern/Complaint Procedure

The classroom teacher will assist the parent/guardian with any questions or concerns. In the event that a parent/guardian has a concern that needs to be addressed, the following procedure is recommended:

1. The parent may speak directly to the teacher/Early Learning Educator to discuss concerns.
2. If the parent needs further assistance resolving a concern, they may address concerns with the Early Childhood Coordinator or Principal. The parent, Principal and/or Early Childhood Coordinator may meet together to reach a resolution.
3. If a parent wishes, they may request a meeting to discuss the concern with the Superintendent of Schools, but the process outlined here is recommended first.

Confidentiality

The Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program honors families' rights to privacy. Student files and verbal information remain confidential, unless parents/guardians sign a release of information for it to be shared.

Consultants/Service Providers

Many district and state education department consultants are available to support the children and their programming in the Early Learning Program. District consultants include: registered nurses, educational consultants, dental hygienists, school psychologists, speech pathologists, speech therapy assistants, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapists, social workers, board certified behavior analysts, and registered behavior technicians. State consultants include: a School Readiness liaison, a School Readiness Consultant, a School Readiness Monitor, and a facilitator from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We reserve the right to discuss program and student needs with the professionals listed here to facilitate ongoing program improvement.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Policy

The Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program ensures that the classroom activities respect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all families enrolled in the program. Parents are invited to share aspects of their culture at various times throughout the school year. Children's cultural differences will be seen throughout the classroom's pictures and posters. The program encourages parents from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds to enroll their children in the program. Meetings can be translated into the family's preferred language at the parent's request. Program-wide messages will be automatically translated according to the language the family selects in their Parent Square settings. Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) can also be translated into the family's preferred language upon parent request. Telephone translation is always available as a resource, if needed.

Curriculum

Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program adopts curriculum that aligns with *The Connecticut Early Learning Development Standards* to address growth in the major domains of development: cognitive, motor, social/emotional, physical, language, and adaptive behavior. Our curriculum helps children develop a sense of trust and belonging, inspiring a sense of safety and encouraging children to explore materials and relationships with peers and adults. Children learn by doing and by observing what happens when they explore and interact with materials and other people.

Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program provides early exposure to learning opportunities that aid with the development of phonics skills, which is beneficial in the growth of future literacy skills. It focuses on giving

students an introduction to identifying letters, associating their sounds and teaching children that thoughts can be represented with written symbols.

Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program strategically teaches executive functioning skills to teach children planning, intentionality and self-regulation skills. Executive functioning is important in helping a child to be successful in preschool and throughout their lives. It is about teaching a child to control his/her impulses, and allowing him or her to choose things they should do even when they don't want to do it. These are the skills that help a person to live independently. Some of the other skills include: problem-solving, controlling behaviors, self-awareness, planning and organizing, making decisions, self-evaluating, and delaying gratification. Exposure to the proper activities and intentional conversations to highlight specific executive functioning skills help to increase a child's use of these functions. Executive functioning abilities continue to grow and mature into early adulthood.

In Norwich's Early Learning Program, social, emotional and behavioral instruction involves teaching children acceptable social behavior. We adapt a social emotional curriculum using by our K-5 counterparts called, "Caring School Communities." Teachers and ELEs infuse social/emotional themes of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making into circle-time, center activities, and conversations during real-life scenarios where these skills are required. In addition, staff are trained in coregulation, which is a technique where adults use their calming energy to guide the emotional regulation of children when they feel upset.

Daily Schedule

Young children learn through play opportunities that are intentionally designed by our teachers and ELEs. A quality schedule for preschoolers offers a balance between the following types of activities: active and quiet times; large group activities, small group activities, and time to play alone or with others; indoor and outdoor play times; and time for children to explore and select their own activities and time for teacher-led instruction. The teacher will also allow time for the following routines: arrival and departure; meals and/or snacks; self-help skills such as toileting, and hand washing; clean-up; and transitions from one activity to another. Actual schedules will vary from one classroom to another. Your child's teacher will have a copy of their daily schedule posted in their room. During any preschool activity there will be no more than 10 children to 1 adult. There will be no more than 20 children in a room at any given time.

Disabilities Services

The Norwich Public School Early Learning Program follows the Norwich Public Schools, CT State Department of Education and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) policies and procedures to meet the needs of all children who have been identified with disabling conditions. Federal and state guidelines are followed so that children's needs are met within the least restrictive environment. Children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) will be serviced within the preschool classroom by special education teachers and/or service providers. All decisions regarding a child's IEP will be made through the PPT process and require parental permission. If you suspect your child has a disability, please talk to your child's teacher and we can help you through a referral to special education.

Discharging a Child from the Program

The Early Learning Program reserves the right to dismiss a child from the Early Learning Program for the following reasons: if a family is not meeting tuition obligations; if a parent does not comply with our policies; if the child is picked up late three times; if a child is absent from school 10% of school days in session without a doctor's note or prior discussion with the Early Childhood Coordinator, or if a parent becomes verbally or physically abusive to a

staff member. The Early Learning Program reserves the right to place the child in a program that best meets the child's needs.

Discipline Policy through Emotional Regulation

Positive communication builds teacher/child relationships and helps children develop internal controls. This minimizes the need for external regulatory measures. Children naturally seek attention and connection, and much care must be taken by the adults supplying it. In Norwich's Early Learning Program, we take a positive approach to behavioral instruction that revolves around teaching children acceptable social behavior. We implement an adapted version of a social/emotional curriculum called, "Caring School Community" and design our classrooms to teach executive function skills. Faculty and staff are trained in coregulation, which is a technique where adults use their calming energy to guide the emotional regulation of children when they feel upset.

Staff shall never use abusive, corporal, humiliating, or frightening punishment under any circumstances. Staff shall never use physical punishment such as shaking or hitting children, and will not engage in psychological abuse or coercion. Examples of psychological abuse are shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection, or seclusion. Examples of physical punishment are shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time.

Furthermore, faculty and staff shall serve as positive role models for the children. Faculty and staff will use a quiet and respectful tone when speaking, promote positive interactions and conversations, and model behaviors that are expected of children. For example, staff will not sit on tables or shelves, eat food/drink coffee or use cell phones at inappropriate times, yell across the room to children, or use a child's name with a negative tone.

Faculty and staff will implement guidelines from our social-emotional curriculum, "Caring School Community" throughout the day, highlighting the pillars of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Faculty and staff will focus on the positive by stating what we want the child to do ("Please walk.") instead of not do ("Don't run."), Staff will provide five positive interactions acknowledging positive behaviors for every one negative (5:1). Teachers collaborate with parents, support staff, administrators, etc. to assess the function of behaviors and develop an individual plan to address any underlying needs responsible for the manifestation of the misbehavior.

The goal of emotional regulation is to assist children to learn to develop internal control to prevent emotional escalation. The following guidelines shall be observed **BEFORE a child is excluded or separated from the learning environment**:

1. Consistent positive communication with attention given to positive behavior and with minimal attention given for misbehavior. The majority of this communication is directed to individual children rather than the group as a whole.

2. Attention shall be directed toward the recipient of problem behavior rather than to the child who may have caused it. This teaches children that inappropriate behavior does not get special attention.

3. Praise, correction, and redirection shall be non-judgmental and delivered specifically for emphasis on the child meeting the expectation.

4. Problems are handled in a manner that will redirect the child to a more positive activity. For example, a disruptive child at group time may be asked to sit closer to the teacher rather than be removed from the group. In this way, the child does not miss an important activity and the teacher may help to prevent further disruptive behavior.

5. Directives are stated in a positive manner, using "DO" in place of "DON'T". For example, "Walk," as opposed to "Don't run."

In situations where a student's **behavior causes disruption to the learning environment**, separation from the group may be required for the safety of the dysregulated child and the rest of the group. When separation is necessary, adults will:

a. calmly guide the child away from the group, and toward a regulating experience, with as little disruption as possible.
b. state expectations without continued discussion to avoid escalating the child's emotions.
c. direct the child to a quiet place where visual supervision by staff can be maintained at all times.
d. never place a child "in the corner" or other humiliating situations.
e. keep a child away from reinforcement no longer than four minutes (usually one minute for each year of age is appropriate).
f. Never use physical or emotional abuse. Physical, emotional and verbal abuse is absolutely forbidden under any circumstances, and was previously defined in this document. If challenging behavior is ongoing, the team will develop a Positive Behavior Support Plan with an individualized plan to meet the child's needs.

In situations where a student's behavior is ongoing or so severe that it **causes significant physical harm** to others, all efforts will be made to: determine the function of a child's behavior, intervene using a family systems approach where school and family work together to create a responsive action plan, and make any program changes that may benefit the child's ability to self-regulate more effectively (ie: change from a school day program to a part day program, or change from an afternoon program to a morning program so children can get more rest at home). If restraint or seclusion is required to manage the safety of children in school, only faculty and staff trained in restraint, seclusion, and de-escalation will be involved.

Family and staff must work together to limit or eliminate the use of seclusion, suspension, expulsion or any other exclusionary measures from our practices in Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program and replace these practices with developmentally appropriate, research based, culturally sensitive and trauma informed practices. Children exhibiting significant behavioral challenges will be referred to our MTSS team for planning, monitoring and intervention or a referral to special education will be made depending on the nature of the concern. Plans will be implemented with fidelity and data collection, adjusted, and implemented with fidelity and data collection again. **We believe we can make changes in the preschool environment to improve habits of mind and regulation for a lifetime to come, so for this reason exclusionary measures will not be considered until all other possible interventions have been exhausted, and there is agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the child.** Information about limiting or eliminating seclusion, suspension, expulsion or any other exclusionary measures of preschool students is in both our Faculty & Staff AND Parent Handbooks. The information is reviewed annually with staff, upon enrollment with students, and upon hire for new employees. **If exclusionary measures must be taken, the NPS Early Learning Program offers services and assistance through our many community partners to aid in developing a continuum of care in and out of school. NPS Early Learning complies with all mandates set forth according to state and federal civil rights laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

The following is an excerpt from Norwich Public Schools' board discipline policy 5114:

In any preschool program provided by the Board of Education or provided by a regional educational service center or a state or local charter school pursuant to an agreement with the Board of Education, no student enrolled in such a preschool program shall be expelled from such preschool program, except an expulsion hearing shall be conducted by the Board of Education in accordance with Section VIII of this policy whenever the Administration has reason to believe that that a student enrolled in such preschool program was in possession of a firearm as defined in 18 U.S. § 921, as amended from time to time, on or off school grounds, on school transportation, or at a preschool program-sponsored event. The term "firearm" is defined above in Section I.

If suspended, such suspension shall be an in-school suspension, except the responsible administrator or the administrator's designee may impose an out-of-school suspension on any pupil:in grades preschool to two, inclusive, if the responsible administrator or the administrator's designee determines that an out-of-school suspension is appropriate for such pupil based on evidence that such pupil's conduct on school grounds or on school transportation is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers persons.

An update to PA 24-45 further states:
Effective July 1, 2024, **Public Act 24-45** lowers from ten consecutive days to five consecutive days the maximum term for an *in-school suspension*. This Act also revises the standard for determining when a school may issue an *out-of-school suspension* for students in preschool through grade two to circumstances where a student's conduct on school grounds constitutes behavior that "causes physical harm."

In addition, when any such student in preschool through grade two receives an out-of-school suspension, such student must receive trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate services that align with any behavioral intervention plan, individualized education program, or Section 504 plan immediately upon the student's return to school after the suspension; the school district must also consider whether to convene a planning and placement team meeting to evaluate whether the student may need special education or related services.

Our goal is to provide children with the opportunity and self-direction to:

a. Make choices
b. Function independently
c. Learn social skills through gentle, encouraged guidance
d. Respect the needs and rights of others
e. Adapt to routines and simple rules
f. Become a responsible group member
g. Feel secure and safe

Dress Code

Norwich Public Schools does not have a uniform policy. On a daily basis, please dress your child in clothing that is comfortable, able to get messy, and easy to take on and off to facilitate toilet training. Please dress your child in clothes that they can pull on and off him/herself (i.e. no belts, difficult buttons, one-piece rompers, etc.). Sturdy shoes and sneakers allow for better outdoor and gross motor play. Sandals and dress shoes are unsafe for playground use and are **discouraged**. The children will play outside in all but severe weather. In winter, snow pants, hats, mittens, boots, etc., are necessary. **All outer garments should be labeled with the child's name**.

An extra set of clothing, labeled and suitable for the season, should be kept at school for emergencies. This is in case your child spills something or gets wet playing outside. A large plastic bag works well for this purpose. Please label the bag with your child's first and last name.

Emergency Plans

Staff will take the Emergency Bag whenever staff and children leave the building in emergency situations. The Emergency Kit contains: first aid kit, attendance roster and lists, parents' and emergency contacts' phone numbers. **Please make every effort to update any changes in phone numbers for yourselves and emergency contacts.**

Medical Emergencies

If your child should have a medical emergency while in school, a staff member on duty who is trained in First Aid/CPR will follow first aid procedures. **If there is a life-threatening situation, we will call 911.** If transport to the hospital is necessary, a staff member will travel and remain with the child until a parent arrives. Parents/guardians or emergency contacts listed on your enrollment forms will be called if your child has a medical

emergency while at preschool. If the child has a medical emergency, staff will fill out **Incident/Accident Reports.** The reports will be kept on file.

Fire

Standard school fire drill procedures are posted at the door and will be followed in case of fire or in case of fire drill. The Emergency Bag will be taken with the class. Staff will carry emergency attendance and phone number lists during a fire drill or actual fire emergency evacuation. Attendance will be taken. If a fire is suspected, a staff member will contact the fire department.

Evacuation

In the event that the children and staff need to evacuate the building, staff will follow emergency fire procedures. Each school building has an emergency evacuation location which is within walking distance from the school building. They will re-enter the building when fire, police, or other school or city officials have declared the building safe. If re-entry is not possible, the children may be transported by public school bus to a safe location, which may be another public school. Parents or emergency numbers listed on the children's enrollment form will be called to inform them about the emergency situation. Every effort will be made to insure the children's safety and comfort.

Enrollment Policy

Children who will be three September 1st of the school year in Norwich are eligible to apply for the preschool program. Registration is completed by accessing the registration link on the Norwich Public Schools website. Parents will be prompted to complete demographic information and upload documents including the child's birth certificate, proof of residency, previous year tax return and four weeks of pay stubs. Children with IEPs are prioritized when enrolling in our preschool programs. Typically developing children are accepted into the program on a first come first serve basis, and are placed in their home school or closest school to home with openings. Children who are not admitted to a preschool slot may request to be placed on a waiting list, and families will be called once a slot becomes available. Children need not be toilet trained to register for preschool, however, the preschool program makes every effort to ensure all children become independent and successful in caring for all toileting needs as soon as they are ready.

Family Education and Support Activities

Parenting activities are available throughout the school year on topics that may be of interest to our families. They may include parent leadership and training opportunities, GED and high school completion programs, job training and English as a Second Language classes in collaboration with Norwich Adult Education. Flyers are sent home virtually through Parent Square, on paper in student backpacks, and posted on social media. Parents are encouraged to attend any activities that meet their needs. Our Early Learning Program has a Family Resource Center with a home visitor available to support our families in accessing affordable utilities, local food pantries, and local play groups for parents and their children ages birth to 5 years old. During the community playgroups, speakers on various topics including interactive literacy activities join in. We also offer a Parents as Teachers training program. Through our collaboration with Head Start, we offer 20 families, in school or full days slots, support in meeting the basic needs of their family.

Family Involvement

The family is each child's first and most influential teacher. Family involvement in your child's education promotes deeper learning and a trusting bond between home and school. We welcome your ideas, comments, suggestions and participation throughout our time together in the Early Learning program. We also welcome the sharing of your concerns. Through a home-school connection, we hope to partner on the beginning of your child's lifelong learning journey. Information will be communicated with you on our website, through Parent Square, emails home, notes and flyers in children's backpacks, and phone calls. **Ongoing contact with your child's teacher may be the single most effective way for families to remain informed about their child's experience in school.** Please inform us of changes in the family (a grandparent's visit, the arrival of a new baby or moving to a new location) because we can often support such transitions in the life of a child.

Family Surveys

The Early Learning Program is committed to developing and maintaining a high quality early learning program for the children and families of Norwich. To do this, we must collect data from multiple sources. You will likely receive two surveys while your child attends the Early Learning Program. One survey will be from the school building where your child is attending. The second survey is a preschool-specific survey, NAEYC Parent Survey, whereby information is collected on parents' perception of the effectiveness of the Early Learning Program, including your understanding of the policies that govern us. The program will send you a summary of the parent surveys, and we will use the information to make improvements to our Early Learning Program.

Fundraising

Throughout the year the Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program may sponsor fundraising events. Parent participation is very much appreciated, but is, of course, voluntary. The proceeds will be used to benefit the preschool program.

Handwashing Plan

Cleanliness is very important to the safety of the children and staff in the Preschool classrooms. Proper hand washing helps to maintain a clean environment and keep illnesses to a minimum. Staff will model proper hand washing procedures and will help your child learn to properly wash his/her hands. Children will be reminded throughout the day to wash their hands especially after using the restroom, after coughing, sneezing or wiping his/her nose, before and after playing in the water table, and before meals. Any person coming into the classroom longer than to just drop off or pick up their child must wash their hands upon entering the room.

Staff shall wash their hands:

- Before and after changing a child's diaper
- After toileting or assisting a child using the toilet
- Before eating or handling food, preparing bottles, or feeding children
- After handling bodily fluids (saliva, nasal secretions, blood, vomit, etc.)
- After handling soiled items, such as garbage

- After handling animals/animal cages
- Whenever hands are visibly soiled

Children shall wash their hands:

- Before and after each diaper change
- After toileting
- Before eating meals or snacks
- After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Before and after water or sensory play
- After playground use/outdoor play
- After handling animals/animal cages
- Whenever hands are visibly soiled

Children will be taught the following handwashing technique:

1. Wet the hands and apply a small amount of liquid soap to the hands
2. Rub hands together vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (about two rounds of the "Happy Birthday" song!)
3. Wash all surfaces of the hands, including the backs of the hands, palms, wrists, between fingers, and fingernails
4. Rinse hands thoroughly to remove the soap lather
5. Dry hands with a single-use disposable towel
6. Turn the faucet off with the towel.

Hardship Policy

In the event that your family is experiencing financial hardship and cannot pay the family fee, please contact the Early Childhood Coordinator to discuss alternate arrangements. Family fees are determined by the household income and number of dependents upon registration. Tuition amounts are updated for families approximately every February and August. Our policy is to charge you the fee according to your current, accurate income. Fees are determined by the state on a sliding scale. If your life circumstances changed since your fee was determined (loss of housing, death of a spouse, divorce, loss of job, etc.), please contact us to discuss a hardship agreement. Families are required to report within fifteen (15) calendar days changes in family composition and changes in income of fifty dollars ($50.00) or more per week. We will ask you to provide documentation to illustrate your request.

Health/Illness

State law requires that all children have a current medical form (ED191) on file in the school. This form includes a health screen pursuant to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT). This form **must be no more than one year old and must be updated annually**. Children without the appropriate medical form **may not** register nor attend preschool. All health records are kept on file and up to date in the Nurse's office. The school nurse will send home a reminder when your child's physical is about to expire, but keeping an updated physical on file is ultimately the parent's responsibility. Children in need of securing medical insurance are guided through the process by the school's social worker. The school nurse can aid the family in accessing,often through our School Based Health Center, on-going well-child care, immunizations and health, dental and nutritional screenings. **Through the school nurse, preschool children are provided vision and hearing screenings annually**. Dental screenings are offered through United Community and Family Services.

Please notify your child's school if your child contracts a contagious illness or will not attend for an extended period. For illnesses that require exclusion (children must be kept home), please refer to the addendum to this handbook titled, *Health Reasons for Exclusion from School*.

If your child becomes ill while in school, you will be called. While our staff will do everything possible to make your child comfortable during this time, please note that we do not have staff or facilities to care for sick children for extended periods, and children will need to be picked up as soon as possible.

Flu Shot and Immunization Requirements
Preschool children are required to have immunizations to register for and participate in Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program. We require children to follow the State of Connecticut immunization schedule.

Hepatitis B: 3 doses, last one on or after 24 weeks of age
DTaP: 4 doses (by 18 months for programs with children 18 months of age)
Polio: 3 doses (by 18 months for programs with children 18 months of age)
MMR: 1 dose on or after 1st birthday
Varicella: 1 dose on or after 1st birthday or verification of disease
Hepatitis A: 2 doses given six calendar months apart, 1st dose on or after 1st birthday
Hib: 1 dose on or after 1st birthday
Pneumococcal: 1 dose on or after 1st birthday
Influenza: 1 dose administered each year between August 1st-December 31st (2 doses separated by at least 28 days required for those receiving the flu shot for the first time)

For children born and originally educated outside of the United States, our nursing staff will support you in arranging an immunization catch-up schedule so you can attend our program. Please contact us if you need to discuss this option for your preschooler.

Home and School Partnership

The Early Learning Program has developed the following strategies to provide parents the opportunity to participate in their child's education. The Early Learning Program provides open access to parents and encourages parent participation in their child's education.

Parenting- parent education programs are offered periodically throughout the year, both during the day and at night. Family Resource Center staff is available to help parents who need access to social services, parent leadership development, parent workshops and parent support groups.

Communication- staff and family communication is ongoing and encouraged. The district utilizes Parent Square for efficient communication between families and the school/district. Parent Square translates written messages in the family's preference. Parents are also able to communicate through email, phone calls, and in person meetings with staff. We have telephone translation to support in-person, virtual and phone meetings.

Volunteering- parents are encouraged to volunteer at the school. NPS now has a district volunteer coordinator who provides training and guidance to on-going volunteers. It is required that parents who wish to volunteer complete the volunteer training and orientation prior to spending time in classrooms.

Decision Making- Parents are encouraged to join and become active in the Parent Advisory Committee, and the local School Readiness Council.

Collaborations within the Community- NPS preschool programs have strong collaborations with Norwich, Youth, Family and Recreation Services, United Community and Family services, TVCCA, Otis library, Family

Resource Center, Adult Education Hispanic Health Alliance and CT State College at Three Rivers.

Hours of Operation

The 12 Month program in Norwich Public Schools is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The 12 Month program runs year round with scheduled closure days: Independence Day, Two Week Summer Closure, August Professional Development, Labor Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Break, Holiday Break between Christmas and New Year, Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday, Winter Break in February, April Break, Memorial Day, Juneteenth.

The School Day Program operates from 9:30-3:30 on the 180-day school calendar. The Part Day program runs two sessions per day, one morning and one afternoon session. The morning session runs from 9:30 a.m. to 12:10 p.m. The afternoon session runs from 12:50 to 3:30 p.m.

Insect Repellent

We will play outdoors every day, weather permitting, throughout the school year. Occasionally, we receive notification from the local health department that due to a high risk of insect-borne disease, insect repellent is recommended. Please consider sending insect repellent, labeled with your child's name, for staff to apply once a day if necessary. Only products containing DEET will be accepted. The insect repellent permission slip must be signed and returned if you would like it to be applied to your child.

Late Drop Off/Pick Up/Failure to Receive Child from Bus Stop

The 12 Month preschool program at Moriarty closes at 5:00 p.m. **Closing time is not flexible**. A fee of $40.00 per every portion of 15 minutes you are late is charged for pick up after 5:00pm. The fee must be paid before your child returns to the program. Three late pickups will result in dismissal from the program. The instructional portion of the 12 Month Program operates from 9:30-3:30, with a "before school" program from 7-9:30 and an "after school" program from 3:30-5:00. All families shall plan for their child to be in attendance at least from 9:30-3:30 to receive the full benefit from the program.

Three late pickups from School Day or Part Day programs, or failures to receive your child from the bus stop may result in: an extra charge of $40.00 per every portion of 15 minutes after the child is returned to school; discharge from the program; or a change from one program to another (School Day to Part Day or afternoon session to morning session). Staffing must be paid to stay late, hence the late fee.

Parents or guardians will be called if no one has arrived to pick up the child. A child who is not picked up will stay with staff until a parent or an authorized person comes to pick up the child. Emergency phone numbers listed by the parents on the child's form will be called to make arrangements for the child to be picked up. It is essential that we have working, current phone numbers for 3 emergency contacts. If all efforts fail to reach a parent, guardian, or authorized person after one hour, the Police Department will be called, and/or the Department of Child and Family Services will be notified.

Literacy Experiences

Literacy is an important aspect of the preschool program. Every year, children participate in many literacy activities. We host the Connecticut Storytellers, Otis Library, and the Hispanic Health Alliance several times in our classrooms throughout the school year to provide literary experiences for our preschoolers. Through read alouds, puppet shows and storytelling, these agencies bring reading alive for our young learners by making it engaging and interactive. We encourage parents to read with their children every single night. It is wonderful to read in English and your native language if it is other than English. We also encourage parents to read books over and over, as many times as your young child wants to hear the same story. It helps them learn vocabulary, and familiarize

themselves with the cadence of fluent reading. If you struggle to read or have a family history of dyslexia, please let your child's teacher know so we can watch for early warning signs. If you'd like to receive help for yourself to read more fluently, please contact Norwich Adult Education at 860.823.4299 or Literacy Volunteers at 860.886.9096.

Lunch Program

The Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program offers free breakfast and lunch through the Norwich Public Schools Food Program. Students who attend preschool programs running after 3:30 p.m. receive free dinner as well. The NPS Food Program is part of the National School Lunch Program and follows all the state and federal nutrition mandates.

The school lunch program strives to serve children with food allergies; they work with the parent, school nurse, and child's pediatrician to offer safe nutritional options that meet the needs of the child. The school nurse makes sure to alert the kitchen and classroom teachers of all children with food allergies. List of children's names and allergies are available to all staff in need of knowing about the child. These lists are kept confidential and on a need to know basis only.

If you wish for your child to bring a lunch from home, please pack it securely with your child's name on the outside. We are required to ask you to place an ice pack in the lunchbox as well. Any food that may require refrigeration needs to be in a lunchbox with an ice pack. You can use a frozen juice box or freeze the sandwich overnight if you choose. Leftovers will be put back into the bag or box so that parents may monitor what the child has not eaten. Breakfast or lunch will be available for free for children in the part day program each day.

Mandated Reporting

All Norwich Public Schools early learning staff are mandated reporters by Connecticut state law. We are required to report suspected abuse and/or neglect to DCF (Department of Children and Families). This is always a very difficult situation, but it is done for the protection of the children. The well-being of your child is of utmost importance to us. Specific procedures for governing the reporting of abuse and neglect are contained within the Norwich Public Schools Board of Education Policy Handbook. Educational neglect is a second reason that we may be required to make a report to DCF. Absence from school without communication with your child's teacher or preschool administration may indicate educational neglect and necessitate a report to DCF. Every year, our staff members refresh their mandated reporter training so they are aware of the changes in this requirement. When making a report, our goal is to support families in getting the services and resources they need to lead healthy lives, and DCF often helps families access services that would not otherwise be available.

Medication Administration in School

Arrangements for the administration of medication (including receipt, verification and counting of medication) must be made with the school nurse. Medication Administration forms must be signed by the physician and parent with a clear doctor's order attached. Medication and related paperwork for the administration of medication must be made at least 24 hours prior to school personnel administering the medication, and the first dose of medication must be administered at home by parents. Medication will be kept in a locked container within the 12 Month program at Moriarty and stored in the nurse's office at Huntington, Mahan, Veterans, and Uncas. Rescue medication must be accessible to staff, and inaccessible to children.

Medication will be administered to preschool children under the following conditions.

1. A physician, dentist, Advanced Practitioner Registered Nurse (APRN), or Physician's Assistant (PA) has ordered a medication to be administered during school hours and has provided written documentation.
2. A completed and signed authorization form from the primary physician, dentist, APRN or PA is presented to the school nurse, as required by state law.

3. As required by Connecticut State Law, the parent/guardian will be expected to provide the appropriate completed authorization 24 hours prior to medication being administered during the preschool program.

Medication will be administered by preschool staff when a nurse is not available to administer the medication (typically during the hours before school 7am-8:45am, after school hours 3:30pm-5pm, and summer break June through August).

Medications must be brought to the school nurse by the parent, guardian, or legally authorized adult with medical rights. Medication must be supplied in a physician, dentist or pharmacy prepared container. All medication containers must be clearly labeled.

Non-prescription medication ordered by a physician, dentist, APRN or Physician Assistant must be supplied by the parent or guardian with a completed medication authorization form in an original and labeled container.

MEDICATION IS NOT TO EXCEED A FORTY-FIVE (45) WEEKDAY SUPPLY.
All medication when discontinued must be picked up by the parent, guardian, or assigned adult within one week of school ending. Medication not picked up within the designated time will be discarded according to Connecticut State Regulations.

Open Door Policy

Please feel free to visit your child's school at any time, but scheduled appointments with the administrator or teacher guarantee that you'll be seen when you arrive. If you have a concern, please contact the teacher, Early Learning Coordinator or School Principal. **All visitors are required to report to the main office upon arrival and provide a driver's license or other state issued identification. Your ID card will be scanned, which allows us to determine whether the visitor is listed in any criminal databases. Based on the findings of the database scan, we will welcome the visitor into the school building.** Public Health recommendations may require us to pause visitation in the schools. Your child's school will share information if this situation arises in the future.

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor play is an important part of our daily curriculum, as weather permits. It is important for parents to provide and label the appropriate clothing and outerwear for the weather conditions (e.g., coat, snow pants, boots, gloves, etc.). The buildings and shade from trees often shelter our playground from the cold wind and hot sun. The staff members use the following general guidelines when determining whether to go outside:

When temperatures are extremely cold, staff will monitor the temperature and the wind chill factor. Children will be kept indoors if necessary. As temperatures rise or fall, adjustments may be made to the outdoor learning plan for the day. Children spend a shorter amount of time outside in cold temperatures and are monitored closely. Please make sure your children are dressed appropriately for outdoor play. (This includes boots, snow pants, coats, mittens, hats, scarves and warm clothing.)

As temperatures/heat indexes rise, staff will monitor the latest temperature and weather conditions. Children often participate in water play activities outside in shady areas of the playground. Children are also encouraged to get plenty of drinks to replenish body fluids. Parents are encouraged to provide sunscreen. Typically, the length of time spent outside is reduced in hot weather. Depending on other weather factors, the children may wait to go outside late in the day or early morning when the sun is less intense.

Please note that if your child is not well enough to participate in outdoor play, he or she is not well enough to attend the preschool program.

Staff will take the **Emergency First Aid Kit** along when staff and children leave the building for recess, trips, or emergency situations.

Parent Advisory Board

The Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program will recruit family members annually to serve on the Parent Advisory Board. The Advisory Board shall have no more than 12 voting members. Membership may include parents from the preschool, educators, specialists and community service providers. Each member shall serve a term of one year, with the following exceptions: the public school preschool liaison, the Early Learning Coordinator and school/community members. Enrollment on the Parent Advisory Board will start in September of each year. Parents will be notified of complete details at this time.

Staff, parents and school personnel collect information on the quality of programming and use it to evaluate the effectiveness of the early learning program on an on-going basis. Parents on this board work with staff to plan family events sponsored by the program.

Parent Education and Support Activities

See Family Education and Support Activities

Parent Involvement

See Family Involvement

Parent Surveys

See Family Surveys

Permission for Pick-Up

Dismissal time can be a very busy time in the preschool day. So we can confidently dismiss children to their correct adult, we ask that you always keep dismissal information updated in PowerSchool by completing paperwork with your school or communicating with your school's main office administrative assistant. If you must change your child's routine dismissal plan, you must speak to a staff person at drop-off time, send a signed note/email/Parent Square message, or call the school at least one hour before dismissal if someone other than you or the usual person will pick up your child. Staff will not release your child to another adult unless they have spoken with you. In an emergency situation, if you are unable to be reached, staff will call the people listed as emergency contacts. **Only those persons whose names are listed in PowerSchool as emergency contacts will be allowed to retrieve a child from the Program.** Please make sure you have **three emergency contacts with accurate phone numbers** listed in PowerSchool at all times. For the safety and security of all children, identification will be required for anyone arriving to pick up a child. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unless we have your permission to do so. These rules apply whether the person comes to the school or is meeting the bus at your home. Please understand that this is for your child's safety and your peace of mind.

Personal Belongings

Children are not permitted to bring toys or other personal possessions to school. This prevents a cherished item from being broken or misplaced. At times classes may have special activities where children may bring items from home. If your child needs to bring a special item or sensory tool (such as a small favorite blanket or stuffed toy for comfort and security) from home, please discuss this with the teacher, and individual arrangements may be made.

Photographs and Videos of your Child

At times during the school year, staff may photograph or video your child for posters, special program promotions, projects, or to document academic development. Upon registration in SchoolMint, parents have the opportunity to indicate whether photographs and videos of your child are allowed or prohibited through the Student Media Release

form. We will include this information in PowerSchool so any teacher who needs the information can find it in PowerSchool. We will adhere to your decision about photographing/recording your child. Parents will be allowed to take photographs and video recordings of program-wide celebrations such as Kindergarten Promotion or school-wide events such as Student of the Month.

Professional Development

A significant amount of professional development goes into the preparation for each school year where we welcome returning and new students. To ensure that we have the highest quality educational program for our children, we complete professional development in the following areas:

- Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect
- CPR and First Aid
- Medication Administration
- State of CT Health and Safety
- Child Development and Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Family and Community Relationships
- Observation and Assessment
- Equity and Inclusion

Rest Time

Rest time takes place daily for children in the full day and school day programs. Children will have the opportunity to rest for one hour. Non-sleepers are expected to rest quietly during this time. This is a great opportunity to help children regulate their bodies to a low state of arousal after being in a busy classroom all morning. Each child would benefit from having a small blanket to use during this time. Parents are responsible for supplying a **small** blanket. Blankets will be sent home each Friday for laundering. Please return the blanket with your child on Monday. Please label the blanket to help us keep each child's supplies in the correct place.

School Safety

The schools are locked at all times. Preschool classroom doors are locked at all times, as well. **All visitors are required to report to the main office upon arrival and provide a driver's license or other state issued identification if they want to gain access into the school building. Your ID card will be scanned into our Raptor system, which allows us to determine whether the visitor is listed in any criminal databases. Based on the findings of the database scan, we will welcome the visitor into the school building. Anyone not scanned in through Raptor, will not be allowed into the building. There will be no exceptions.** Visitors are supervised and will be escorted by school staff into the area of the building they need to go.

School Year, Preschool Hours and Locations

Preschool classrooms are located at Huntington, Moriarty, Mahan, Veterans, and Uncas Elementary Schools. There is a mix of school day and part day classrooms at Huntington, Mahan, Veterans and Uncas. Moriarty houses our 12 Month Program which runs year round. The times of the sessions are listed below. All part day and school day preschool classrooms follow the Norwich Public Schools District calendar. The 12 Month program has its own calendar.

- AM Session 9:30-12:10
- PM Session 12:50-3:30
- School Day 9:30-3:30
- 12 Month Program 7am-5pm

Social Media Guidelines

Social Media is a great way to send a message to a large audience very quickly. Caution must be used when using such a far-reaching platform to communicate. For these reasons, we ask everyone associated with the NPS Early Learning Program to consider the implications of social media posts (adapted from our Board policy on social media use).

Please refrain from social media use that:

1. interferes, disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district;

2. is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications (e.g. when such speech relates to a matter of public concern and it's disruptive impact outweighs the importance of the speech);

3. creates a hostile [work] environment;

4. breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or

5. violates the law, Board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

Once preschool students get a bit older, they may be encouraged to analyze social media use considering the "THINK" student-friendly acronym:
T-is it **T**rue?
H-is it **H**elpful?
I-is it **I**nspiring?
N-is it **N**ecessary?
K-is it **K**ind?

We encourage all social media users to apply the advice to their use of social media.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

It is the policy of Norwich Public Schools that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be discriminated against, under any program, including employment, because of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, mental disorder, learning disability or physical disability.

Substance Use

If an authorized person arrives to pick up a child and it is suspected that they are under the influence of any type of substance, such as alcohol or drugs, the following procedure will be in place:
Staff will contact a different authorized person to transport the child. If the person insists on leaving with the child and the staff feel the child may be in danger, the Police Department will be notified.

Toothbrushing

Since children in the School Day and 12 Month Programs will have 2 or more meals while they are in school, they will have the opportunity to brush their teeth once per day starting in the 25-25 school year. If parents choose, they may send in a toothbrush and toothpaste in an individualized container labeled with the child's name. Toothbrushes must be replaced by parents at each report card time.

Transition from Birth-to-Three Services

The Birth to Three transition is an essential step for families whose child is receiving early intervention services. As your child approaches their third birthday, they may be eligible for special education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The transition involves our Birth to Three team, which will evaluate your child's progress and determine if they qualify for services. This team will work closely with you to create a plan that meets your child's needs as they move from early intervention to preschool services. We aim to ensure a smooth and supportive transition to help your child thrive in their new preschool environment.

Transition to Kindergarten: Policy and Activities

All preschool children entering Kindergarten are invited to attend Moving Up Day, where they spend time in a Kindergarten classroom with a Kindergarten teacher. Preschool teachers observe in Kindergarten classrooms early in the school year to ensure that preschoolers are adequately prepared for Kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers are invited to visit preschool classrooms to observe the routines and performance of children. Meetings are scheduled in the spring to discuss individual children's performance and needs as they may present in a Kindergarten classroom. Kindergarten teachers receive a complete cumulative file including report cards, specialized plans, and data sheets of each child that will transition from preschool to Kindergarten. The Norwich Public Schools Early Learning Program uses the same phonemic awareness curriculum as the Norwich Public Schools Kindergarten program, and has focused on the development of social/emotional skills, executive functioning, and academics needed for a successful transition to Kindergarten. In the spring of each school year, families will be alerted to Kindergarten screening processes at each of the elementary schools in our district. Even though your child will leave preschool with a plethora of data and academic reports, the Kindergarten screening allows the faculty and administration at the child's home school to meet the child and family, orient them to the building, and learn any important information to make a smooth transition to Kindergarten the following fall.

Translation Services

Telephone translation service is used to support communication between people who speak different languages.

Written information/letters sent from the administrative offices of Norwich Public Schools are currently translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole and Simplified Chinese. For the translation of other school letters/documents and for the translation of these documents into other languages, Norwich Public Schools uses Google Translate to translate these documents for families.

Tuition

Parents will be responsible for monthly tuition as outlined in the Tuition Agreement upon enrollment. Beginning in the 25-26 school year, family fees will be charged for Part Day, School Day, and 12-Month Preschool Programs. Prior to the 25-26 school year, tuition was charged for the School Day and 12 Month Programs, only. Children with IEPs will not be charged tuition.

Tuition is based on a sliding scale using the Family Fee Calculator and verified by our business department. Fees are calculated based on the household size, household income (1040 and paystubs), and type of preschool program sought. Invoices are sent monthly via Procare, an electronic billing system. Families can set up automatic withdrawals to facilitate timely tuition payments. Payments are also accepted in person or via mail at 526 E. Main Street Norwich. Preschool fees must be pre-paid weekly. Payments are due on Monday for the week. You are charged even if your child does not attend, as we must pay expenses whether or not the child is present. If your payment is more than a week late, and you have not made payment arrangements, your child(ren) will not be permitted to attend preschool the following week. **Please be aware that you, the parent or guardian, are responsible for the care of your child on those days.** Your child may be readmitted or placed on the waiting list if no spot is available, to the program once payment has been made in full. Payments may be made in advance for more than one week at a time. Parents will be given a thirty day notice for any change of their family fee.

All eligible families are invited to apply for Care4Kids, a care assistance program, as of July 1, 2025. Parents are required to complete a Tuition Agreement form, with signature, and will receive a copy for their records.
Fees are redetermined twice per year, in August and February, and any time a family's financial situation changes. If you are experiencing financial hardship and wish to discuss your financial needs with the Early Learning Coordinator, please call 860.892.4342.

Updating Information

Please inform the school administrative assistant or Preschool Administrative Office at 860.892.4342 if there is any change in the following information: name, address, phone number, job, emergency contacts, medical concerns, or protective orders. Also, it is important to notify the staff if a family event (marriage, divorce, a new baby, a death [even death of a pet], illness of a relative, etc.) has occurred which may affect your child's behavior. Financial information will be updated at least twice a year.

Volunteers

We encourage parental involvement in our program and invite you to share your talents and ideas in the classroom. Parents interested in volunteering in the classroom are required to contact our Volunteer Coordinator at 860.823.6284 to complete a volunteer application, interview, and background check.

Electronic Signature

Please scan the QR code below to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the policies contained herein.

Checklist for Your Child's First Day of School

Please label EVERYTHING you send to school with your child's name

Check Off Once Completed	Task
	Read thoroughly and sign Norwich Public School's Early Learning Parent Handbook by using the QR code on page 4 of this document.
	Please deliver any medication your child needs on his or her first day of school with the doctor's order for such medicine to be administered at school.
	Please have your student bring a child-sized backpack that they can carry independently. Backpacks with wheels are not recommended.
	Pack a change of clothing (or two) that is appropriate for the season (labeled with your child's name) that can be kept at school.
	Pack diapers and wipes (if your student is not yet toilet trained).
	Everyday, please send a refillable bottle of water.
	Food is provided, however, you are welcome to supply food from home. Please refrain from sending in peanut products or any food processed in a plant where peanuts are processed.
	Everyday, please ensure your child is dressed appropriately for school and the season. We play outside and complete messy projects in the classroom, and it is to be expected that clothing may get lightly soiled on a daily basis.
	Make sure your child's bus tag is located in the front pocket of their backpack

HEALTH REASONS FOR EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL

2024-2025

ACUTE GASTROENTERITIS:
Vomiting:
2 or more times during the previous 24 hours. During school hours: School Nurse to assess students to determine cause and need for exclusion.

Diarrhea:
2 or more times during the previous 24 hours **or** if the stool cannot be contained by toilet use, underwear or diapers.

COUGH:
Students with a constant/disruptive cough should be kept home until the cough is controlled.

COXSACKIE VIRUS: (Hand, foot, mouth disease)
Exclusion until fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medication. All sores are crusted over and dried.

COVID 19: Per NPS procedure as directed by, CSDE, Center for Disease Control, Uncas Health Department, Department of Public Health and the Superintendent or designee of NPS.

ERYTHEMA INFECTIOSUM: (Fifth Disease)
When fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.

FEVER:
100.4 degrees or greater, students remain at home until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication (Tylenol/Motrin).

FLU SYMPTOMS:
Fever (Greater than 100°F) chills, cough, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, headache, muscle or body aches, fatigue. Vomiting or diarrhea may occur though more common in children than adults. **Student/Staff to be out for 7 days from onset of symptoms or until symptom free for 24 hours .**

HEPATITIS A:
Exclusion 1 week after onset of illness and/or resolution of jaundice (yellow skin color). Physician note required for school re-entry (NO EXCEPTIONS).

HEPATITIS B: (ex. Biting)
No exclusion unless unusually aggressive behavior is present.

HEPATITIS C: (ex. Biting)
No exclusion unless unusually aggressive behavior is present.

HERPES SIMPLEX: (Oral, cold sores, fever blisters)
NO EXCLUSION

HERPES ZOSTER: (Varicella-Zoster, Shingles)
Areas are to be covered. If areas unable to be covered, exclusion 7 days after onset of rash **or** until all areas have crusted.

IMPETIGO: (school-sores)
Exclusion until 24 hours after the start of medication therapy and until purulent drainage can be controlled.

MEASLES (Rubeola):
Exclusion 7 days after onset of rash. Note from physician required before re-entry to school.

MONONUCLEOSIS:
Physician to determine if exclusion is necessary for health and convalescence of students. Physician note required for activity limitations at school.

MUMPS:
Exclusion until 9 days after onset of Parotitis (Inflammation and swelling of parotid gland). Physician note required for school re-entry

PEDICULOSIS: (Head Lice)
No Exclusion. Nurse to consult privately with families as needed to protect privacy and provide teaching.

PERTUSSIS: (Whooping Cough)
Exclusion 3 weeks after onset of disease or 5 days after start of medication. Physician note required for school re-entry.
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PINK EYE: (Conjunctivitis) Exclusion until 24 hours after the start of medication therapy.

RINGWORM: (Tinea)
No Exclusion. Areas must be covered during school hours. No contact sports until healed. If on head/face, cover with ointment.

RUBELLA: (German Measles)
Exclusion 7 days after onset of rash. Physician note or exam by school nurse required for school re-entry.

SCABIES:
Exclusion until treatment is completed (usually 24 hours).

SCARLET FEVER:
Exclusion until 24 hours after the start of medication therapy.

STREP THROAT: (Streptococcal Pharyngitis)
Exclusion 24 hours after the start of medication therapy.

TUBERCULOSIS:

(Active)
Exclusion until the physician and/or health director state that the student is not contagious.

TUBERCULOSIS:

(Contact)
NO EXCLUSION. Situation will be re-evaluated if student doesn't follow through with diagnostic procedures and prophylaxis, if ordered

VARICELLA: (Chicken Pox)
Exclusion 7 days after onset of rash and/or until all areas have crusted. Physician note required for school re-entry. If treated with Zovirax (Acyclovir), physician note required for re-entry stating that Zovirax/Acyclovir ordered.

Dr. Ramindra Walia, NPS Medical Advisor