



Earthplace Preschool Handbook

2020-2021

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Who we are & What we do

Earthplace is a donor-supported, non-profit organization committed to building passion and respect for the natural world and a more sustainable future for our community. Earthplace blends science, conservation, and education into pathways for learning about nature and the environment.

Earthplace Preschool has been a proud part of Earthplace, Inc. since 1967. Being a part of the larger Earthplace organization affords us organizational support from various departments, including Marketing and Development, HR, and the Finance Department. Sharing resources, both organizational and financial, benefits all parts of our organization.

At Earthplace Preschool, we believe that children learn best in an educational program that is focused on the whole child. We strive to meet the social, emotional, cognitive, creative, and physical needs of our students using a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate and engaging.

We provide hands-on learning experiences in nature and in the classroom setting that allow children to make connections to the world around them. And, we believe that families and staff are partners in fostering a lifelong love of learning. We have been at the forefront of nature-based early childhood education ever since its inception.

Positive Guidance & Challenging Behaviors

At Earthplace Preschool, we believe that it is important for our teachers and caregivers to:

- Listen to our students
- Allow our students to express opinions
- Encourage our students to discuss options
- Foster independence and reasoning
- Place limits, consequences, and expectations on behavior
- Express warmth and nurturing
- Act in a fair and consistent manner
- Set the tone for our students
- Lead by example

It is our policy to use positive guidance techniques as well as an authoritative style of discipline. Authoritative discipline is characterized by reasonable demands and high responsiveness. While authoritative teachers and caregivers have high expectations for the children in their care, they also give children the resources and support they need to succeed. Authoritative teachers and caregivers are flexible. If there are extenuating circumstances, they will adjust their response accordingly. Discipline, then, takes into account all of the variables, including the child's behavior, the situation, and so on.

Children with or without special needs will exhibit challenging behaviors. It will become necessary for teachers and caregivers to redirect children when behaviors arise. It will also be necessary for teachers to intervene when interpersonal conflicts arise.

When interpersonal conflicts occur, the teachers will employ the **High Scope Method** of intervention and conflict resolution.

The **High Scope Method** includes the following steps:

1. Approach quickly and calmly; stopping any hurtful or harmful behavior
2. Acknowledge feelings
3. Gather information from all involved
4. Restate the problem as it was told to you
5. Ask for ideas and solutions and choose one together
6. Give follow-up support

The classroom teachers will, at all times, supervise and observe the children in their care. Teachers will, at all times, reserve judgment. Teachers and caregivers may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child.

- **Examples of physical punishment:** 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.
- **Examples of psychological abuse:** shaming, name-calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection.

- **Examples of coercion:** Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up).
(*Standard 1B.8 and 1B.10 ITPKS*)

We expect conflicts and challenging behaviors to arise as a normal course of the preschool experience. When challenging behaviors occur, the teachers will identify the events that precede the behaviors in order to determine if there is a pattern. If a detectable pattern exists, the teachers will make necessary adjustments to the classroom environment and or schedule. See below:

Room arrangement: The room is arranged with a number of different inviting areas of interest. These interest areas ensure that a variety of activities, such as drawing, painting, blocks, manipulatives, sand, housekeeping, and puzzles, are always available in the room. There are spaces for a small group, large group, and individual play. This includes a space for children to get away from the group.

Materials: All materials are in good condition in order to communicate to the children that they are to be taken care of in an appropriate manner. There are enough of each item so that a particular toy does not become the cause of difficulty within the group. Within each area, the materials are organized in a clear manner so that children can utilize and return the items to the shelf or area on their own. The materials in the interest area are kept "novel." For example, books are changed on a regular basis; different accessories are added to the blocks; the housekeeping area is turned into a store, office, or post office; supplies on the writing table are changed, or manipulatives are rotated to go with a particular theme.

Developmentally appropriate transitions: Transitions are clear, fun, and quick and are planned to encourage children's independent behaviors and decision-making abilities.

Setting the tone: The teachers set the tone of the classroom by welcoming all students and their parents.

Setting clear limits: Teachers set clear limits for the children through the routines they create in the classroom. These serve as an overall structure for the children's behavior throughout the day. The behaviors expected at group time, snack time, clean-up time, and dismissal are clear and consistent. Teachers also set clear limits with their directions for the use of materials in the classroom; they explain, discuss, demonstrate, and role-play the expected behaviors at group time and as individual incidents occur. For example, in the block area, the children learn that only those who have built a building may knock it down, that they may build as high as their heads, and that they take one block off the shelf at a time. The same methods are used to communicate the expected behaviors in interpersonal relationships. The children learn that they are to use words when they have a disagreement, include others who would like a role in dramatic play, and think of kind things to say when commenting on another child's artwork.

Presence: The teachers know that simply their presence and positive, nurturing manner promote cooperative behavior as they move about the room.

Modeling: The teachers model the behavior they expect from the children. This would include saying "please" "thank you," and "excuse me." It would also include washing hands at appropriate times, sitting on chairs, and using indoor voices.

Positive Expectations: The teachers state the behavior that they expect from the children. For example, "When I ring the bell, I expect everyone to stop, look, and listen."

Child-directed activities: The teachers honor the children's interests and communicate a caring attitude by organizing the materials needed for the children to follow their ideas.

Teacher-directed activities: The teachers make sure that these activities are developmentally appropriate so that the outcome is a positive experience for all of the children. For example, group times are fun, active, and an appropriate length. Art experiences are creative and open-ended.

Techniques to be used when teacher intervention is needed

Positive redirection: The teachers redirect the children in a positive manner. For example, "Use words," "Blocks are for building," or "Paint on the paper."

Add novelty: The teachers add a novel element to the play. For example, colors, soap, baby dolls, and/or sponges could be added to the water table.

Explain your intervention: The teacher tells why he/she is intervening and what will happen if the behavior continues. "When you splash other people you are showing me that you don't remember how to play at the water table. Keep the water in the table or you'll have to choose another place to play."

Accept children's feelings: The teacher demonstrates that she/he accepts the children's feelings, but not necessarily their actions. Let the children know that they can be mad about something, but that they must work to solve the problem. The teacher explains to the children that she/he will not let them hit anyone and that she/he doesn't want anyone to hit them.

Help the child/children verbalize: The teacher encourages the children to say what they are feeling, or what they think happened, or what they want to do next, etc. The teacher discusses how to solve the problem next time.

Stop hitting or throwing: The teacher tells the child specifically what to do. "Put your hands down," or "Put the block down." The teacher may also put her/his arms around a child to stop him/her from hitting. The teacher lets go quickly and then discusses the situation.

Give choices: The teachers explain to the children what their choices are in the situation. For example, they could stay in the area (or with a friend) and play constructively, or they could choose another area or friend. Or the teacher could give the choice to move to one of two areas. The ideas that there are different choices to make in terms of behavior, areas being played in, or friends being played with, are important concepts to convey.

Time away from the classroom: The teacher removes a child from the room only if his/her behavior is dangerous or disruptive to other children. This would include continuing to throw objects, hitting other children, loud screaming, and a tantrum that does not calm down quickly. The child goes to the hallway or takes a walk with the teacher. The teacher talks with the child about his/her feelings. The child is not kept out of the classroom for more than 10 minutes. The goal of the teacher is for the child to regain control. The teacher helps the child to reenter play or organized activity.

When behaviors are developmentally inappropriate, persistent, hurtful, or dangerous, an incident report will be completed by the classroom teacher. The *Behavior Incident Report* includes a written description of the behavior, the teacher's intervention, and the child's response to the teacher's intervention. The goal is to communicate clearly and openly with our families and to provide ongoing support. The report will be signed

by the Preschool Director and the Parent(s). After three reportable incidents have occurred, we will schedule a meeting with the Lead Teacher, the Parent(s), and the Preschool Director to develop an *Individualized Behavior Care Plan*. The *Behavior Care Plan* lists appropriate support services including modifications to the learning environment, the equipment, the schedule, and the teaching strategies. It may also become necessary to refer the case to an outside specialist or agency such as a social worker, Birth To Three, or the child's home school district to conduct a screening and/or a comprehensive evaluation.

If, after we have exhausted all avenues of intervention, we determine we cannot meet your child's behavioral or educational needs or if your child is a danger to self or others, we will refer you to another program.
(Standard 1E.1 ITPKS)

Code of Conduct

For Parents, Caregivers, Volunteers, & Visitors

At Earthplace, our goals are to promote positive relationships between all children and adults; to encourage each child's sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community; and to foster each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member. With that in mind, we have developed a Code of Conduct for all adults in our programs including parents, caregivers, volunteers, and visitors to ensure that we act as role models for our students. At all times, on Earthplace property and inside the building, children under 12 must be directly supervised by a parent or adult caregiver.

The Earthplace Preschool Code of Conduct reads:

Please Do:

- Wear a face covering when dropping off and picking up your child at school and when closer than six feet to other people.
- Treat others with respect and dignity regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, disability, or any other ground.
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of our parents, guardians, teachers.
- Share all concerns and comments with the teachers first before speaking to the Director.
- Understand that it is the parents' responsibility to share this code of conduct with all caregivers, babysitters, or nannies.
- Understand that during school hours, Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM, the Preschool playgrounds are for school use only.
- Understand that once you have signed your child out of class, you must vacate all preschool spaces including classrooms and playgrounds. The new Nature's Playground is for public use.
- Respect our animals and their enclosures.
- Use the Earthplace building in a respectful manner.
- Use the parking lot in a safe and respectful manner and maintain a safe speed, below 5mph, at all times
- Park only in designated areas.
- Change diapers only in designated areas with a changing table.
- Consume food and beverages in the cafe area only, and please dispose of all trash.
- Encourage children to follow the safety rules of our school while in public spaces such as Natureplace and the Animal Hall:
 - Stay with your adult.
 - Use walking feet.
 - Use quiet voices.
 - Keep shoes on.
 - Care for people and property with kindness and respect.
 - Be safe in the building and in the parking lot.

Please Refrain From:

- All forms of corporal punishment
- Inappropriate behavior or harassment of any kind towards a student, parent/guardian, or teacher
 - Inappropriate behavior includes but is not limited to harassment or intimidation by written note, email, words, gestures and/or body language.
- Using inappropriate language or displaying aggressive or threatening behavior toward staff, children, or other parents while in view of our students or anywhere on our premises.

- Verbal attacks on other children and/or staff, which include racial or other discriminatory slurs, the use of threats, name-calling, as well as repeated profane or degrading language. Individuals engaging in such behavior will be asked to leave the premises immediately.
- Discussing sensitive issues within earshot of children
- Idling in your vehicle on Earthplace Property.
- Attempting to pick up your child if you are impaired by alcohol or other substances
- Allowing children to engage in unsafe behavior while in your care
- Unsafe behavior includes:
 - Running inside the building
 - Using very loud voices inside the building
 - Climbing on furniture
 - Jumping off of furniture
 - Being removed from adult supervision
 - Playing or running in the parking lot or on top of cars

Breach of this Code of Conduct:

- Will result in immediate intervention up to and including the family's expulsion from the building or from any school programs including preschool, after school, summer camp, and field trips.
- May result in temporary closure of public spaces including Natureplace and the Animal Hall
- May result in the call for police involvement.

If an incident should occur in which the parent/guardian breaches the Earthplace Preschool Code of Conduct, the parent/guardian will be given written notice warning them of their inappropriate behavior. The second infraction will result in a written notice of immediate withdrawal. Certain serious infractions will result in immediate withdrawal from any and all programs under the Earthplace Preschool license without prior warning including:

- Preschool
- After School Enrichment Programs for preschool and school-age children
- Summer Camp

Enrollment Procedure

Enrollment priority is given to currently enrolled students and siblings of children currently attending the school. Open enrollment for students not presently attending the school for the following year begins in December.

Earthplace Preschool welcomes students without regard to their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, ability, gender, or family structure.

Interest Form

Application for enrollment begins by filling out the [Interest Form](#).

Tour

Once we have received the interest form we will contact you to make an appointment for a tour of the school. This is a great opportunity to see the classrooms and students while in action as well as a time to ask any questions you may have regarding our philosophy, procedures, and curriculum.

Decision

Within a week of your tour of the school, we ask that you please email preschoolinfo@earthplace.org to inform us of your decision.

Contract & Student Record Form

A contract is sent after we have been informed that you have chosen to have your child attend our preschool. Included in this contract will be a response date; at that time we ask for a non-refundable \$300 registration fee, \$700 contract deposit, and an Earthplace family membership, which starts at \$90 for the year. The Earthplace family membership benefits include free or discounted program fees, newsletters, and access to Natureplace, Animal Hall and the 62-acre open space wildlife sanctuary.

CampDoc

After your signed contract is received, along with your registration fee and contract deposit, you will be emailed a CampDoc account for your child. This CampDoc account, or profile, is required with portions of it helping the teachers get to know your child in advance, and the rest of it is for us to obtain state-required health information. You will also have to electronically sign off on our Positive Guidance Policy, Health and Wellness Policy, and our required Code of Conduct.

Tuition

Tuition is paid in four installments: **January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1, 2020**. Payment is due upon receipt; if payment is not received within 10 days of the invoice due date, a \$50 late fee will be charged. Credit or debit card payments will be subject to a 2.25% convenience fee. If payment is returned by the bank for any reason, the customer is responsible for the payment as well as any fees incurred by Earthplace. If tuition payments have not been received in accordance with the contract, the child will not be permitted to attend.

Provisional Enrollment Period & Withdrawal

We do not have a set provisional period. We work with families to help make the transition a positive individual experience. We try a variety of techniques including our usual home visits, parent and child orientation, adding a teacher for an introductory period, and additionally having the parent stay. If after these and other possible techniques are used, and the family and teachers come to a mutual decision that the child is not benefitting from being in school, the child may then withdraw without owing for the upcoming year.

Another reason that a child may withdraw is that they have been accepted into a preschool for special needs. Usually, this has been done as a part of a process that involved a referral by the school. In this case, the families are also not expected to be liable for the yearly tuition.

Withdrawal & Expulsion

When children have challenging behaviors, the school and the families work together to design a plan that can support the needs of the child and the classroom. Some of these solutions may be referral to the public school, working with professionals that the family has chosen, referral to Birth to Three, use of the Early Childhood Consultation Project (for us this is Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance), and use of our social service consultant and/or our early childhood consultant. If after trying a variety of techniques, we find that our school cannot appropriately support and manage the child within the classroom setting, we will ask that the child be withdrawn from the school. The families will not be expected to be liable for the yearly tuition.

Finance Policy

Family Membership

We require that each family have a one-year family membership at the time of registration. Membership must be maintained while your child is enrolled in our preschool. As a non-profit nature center, Earthplace relies on the continuing support of our families.

Non-Refundable registration fee & Contract Deposit

A non-refundable registration fee of \$300 is due at contract signing. Also due at this time is a non-refundable contract deposit of \$700, which will be deducted from tuition payments.

Credit card fee

If paying tuition by credit card over the phone, please note that a 2.25% transaction fee will be added to cover credit card fees incurred.

Late payment fee

If the tuition is not paid by the date indicated on the bill or during the two week grace period, a \$50 late fee will be added.

Payment plans

Please contact the preschool director if you would like to arrange a payment plan.

Bounced checks

If the bank charges us a fee, we pass the fee along to you.

Tuition refunds

Withdrawal of student: If a child is withdrawn from school before the end of the school year, a prorated refund of the tuition is given only when another child takes the withdrawn child's spot. When the withdrawal is for medical reasons, or when a child leaves to attend a special services preschool, a pro-rated refund will be given even if the spot has not been filled.

Negotiating Differences

If we do find that there are routines, practices, or values that differ from family routines, practices, or values, we will work with the family to find a common ground and attempt a resolution. It is our intention to be respectful of all of our families' practices, values, and cultures. For this reason we do not celebrate holidays, but do learn about those that our families celebrate. Different views of toilet training and eating or drinking habits could also be areas that might need to be discussed. We will always be guided by what is developmentally appropriate and what is a part of our ethical standards when attempting to resolve these differences.

Health & Wellness

Outdoor play safety

Children have a daily opportunity for outdoor play when weather, air quality, or environmental safety conditions do not pose a health risk.

Based on the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, and the American Public Health Association as printed in the book *Caring for Children: the National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*, weather poses a significant health risk at 15° or below, including wind chill factor, and at a heat index at or above 90°. Therefore, as long as the temperature falls within those parameters, and in the winter months, the ground is not dangerously icy, our students play outdoors. We are able to check the exact temperature including the wind chill at our own weather station.

As previously mentioned in the curriculum area, when outdoor opportunities for large-motor activities are not possible because of the conditions then we are able to set up activities in the Auditorium.

Toilet training

Although we encourage your children to be trained in the Hummingbirds, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Falcons classes, this is not a requirement for attendance at Earthplace. This is in accordance with our understanding of the Americans with Disabilities Act. We believe that we need to work with children at their level of development in all areas, including toilet training. We expect to help children in the Chickadees class transition to using the toilet and collaborate with families in terms of the timing.

Illness

Staff members are knowledgeable about the signs and symptoms of childhood illnesses, and they are responsible for the initial observation of each child upon arrival and continued observation throughout the day. If an illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities or creates a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, or if a child's condition is suspected to be contagious and requires exclusion as identified by public health authorities, then the child is made comfortable in the preschool office, where new individuals will not be exposed, on a cot where she or he is supervised by a familiar caregiver.

We will immediately attempt to notify the parent or legal guardian when a child has any sign or symptom that requires exclusion from the program. If the parent or legal guardian cannot be reached within 15 minutes then the authorized emergency contacts will be notified to pick up the child.

Some of the symptoms that would indicate to us that a child was contagious or did not feel well enough to stay in school would be: a fever of 100.3 or greater, diarrhea, severe and persistent cough, vomiting, unexplained rash, or a cold that seems to be keeping the child from benefiting from school. Parents are required to both keep children home when they have these symptoms and consult with their healthcare provider. If the healthcare provider does not suspect COVID-19, then an alternative diagnosis must be documented and the child must be cleared in writing before he or she can return to Earthplace.

Missing school

Please email your child's teacher, the [Director of Early Childhood Education](#) and the [Operations Manager](#) when your child will miss school letting us know the reason for your child's absence. We are then able to share information about possible exposures while always maintaining confidentiality.

Exposure to a contagious disease

When your child has been exposed to a contagious disease at school we will send an email to let you know the name of the disease and its signs and symptoms, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at school and that families should implement at home. We will also announce this information at dismissal time.

COVID-19 & Symptoms of illness

- **At school:** If your child becomes sick or exhibits any symptoms of COVID-19 including fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, the new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea we will notify the child's parent or another authorized adult.
 - **The child must be picked up within 30 minutes**
 - **The child must be evaluated by their healthcare provider**
 - **If the healthcare provider does not suspect COVID-19, then an alternative diagnosis must be documented**
 - **If and when an alternative diagnosis to COVID-19 is provided please follow the applicable exclusion policy, as stated on the following page.**
 - **The child must be cleared in writing before returning to Earthplace**
 - The other children in the classroom will be taken outdoors, if weather permits, while the classroom is cleaned and sanitized
 - Earthplace will contact the Westport/Weston Health District, and we will follow their instructions
 - If there is a positive case of COVID-19, or other communicable disease, all parents in the program will be notified and will receive further instructions
 - Confidentiality will be maintained

- **At home:** If a child becomes sick or exhibits any symptoms of COVID-19 including fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, the new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea:
 - **Earthplace Preschool must be notified immediately via email**
 - **The child will have to be seen by their healthcare provider**
 - **If the healthcare provider does not suspect COVID-19, then an alternative diagnosis must be documented**
 - **If and when an alternative diagnosis to COVID-19 is provided please follow the applicable exclusion policy, as stated on the following page.**
 - **The child must be cleared in writing before returning to Earthplace.**
 - If there is a positive case of COVID-19, or other communicable disease, all parents in the program will be notified and will receive further instructions
 - Confidentiality will be maintained

- **Earthplace staff:** If an Earthplace staff member becomes sick, they will remain at home for the remainder of the week or longer according to their healthcare provider's instructions. Staff members must also be cleared by their healthcare provider and provide a note before they can return to Earthplace. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 or other communicable disease all parents in the program will be notified and will receive further instructions. Confidentiality will be maintained.

If there is a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 in the preschool program:

We will follow the practices below as directed by state and local health officials:

- Contact the Westport/Weston Health District and follow their instructions.
- Determine the date of symptom onset for the child/staff member.
- Determine if the child/staff member attended/worked at the program while symptomatic or during the two days before symptoms began.
- Identify what days the child/staff member attended/worked during that time.
- Determine who had close contact with the child/staff member at the program during those days.
- Notify anyone who had close contact with the child/staff member at the program during those days.
- Exclude the children and staff members who are determined to have had close contact with the affected child/staff member for 14 days after the last day they had contact with the affected child/staff member.
- Conduct appropriate cleaning and disinfection:
 - Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
 - Wait up to 24 hours or as long as possible before cleaning or disinfecting to allow respiratory droplets to settle before cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
 - If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - Depending on the size of the program and the number of people affected, closure of a particular room or rooms in the program or the entire program might need to be considered.

Exclusion & returning to school

- **Chicken Pox (Varicella):** Until all sores have dried and crusted (usually six days)
- **Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)*:** After three treatments with medication prescribed by a physician for this occurrence and completely asymptomatic for 24 hours. You must provide a note from the health care provider to certify that the child is not infectious.
- **COVID-19*:** 14 days
- **Diarrhea*:** Until 24 hours have passed with no diarrhea and cleared by a healthcare provider.
- **Diphtheria*:** Until two negative cultures collected 24 hours after completion of medication.
- **Difficult or rapid breathing*:** Until cleared by a healthcare provider
- **Fever 100.3 F*:** Until fever-free without fever-reducing medication for 72 hours and cleared by a healthcare provider.
- **Fungus or ringworm*:** Excluded at the end of the school day. May return when certified by a health care provider that the patient is under adequate treatment and no longer infectious.
- **Hepatitis A*:** Until one week after onset of illness, jaundice, or as directed by the health care dept. when passive immunoprophylaxis has been administered to appropriate children and staff.
- **Impetigo*:** Until 24 hours after treatment began.
- **Influenza*:** Until clinically well and cleared by a health care provider.
- **Measles:** Four days after the rash appears and the child is well.
- **Meningitis* (all forms):** Until certified by a physician as cured and not infectious.
- **Mumps:** Until nine days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- **Pediculosis (Head Lice)*:** From the end of the day until after first treatment.
- **Pertussis (Whooping Cough):** After five days of appropriate antibiotic therapy.
- **Poison Ivy, Oak, Sumac:** No exclusion.
- **Poliomyelitis*:** Ten days from the onset and certified as not infectious by a physician.
- **Rash*:** Until diagnosed by a physician plus certification that the patient is under adequate treatment or is not infectious.
- **Rubella (German Measles):** Until six days after onset of rash.
- **Scabies*:** Until certified by healthcare provider that adequate treatment has been given to prevent transmission.
- **Strep Throat or other strep infections:** Until 24 hours after initial antibiotic therapy and cessation of fever without fever suppressant medications for 24 hours.
- **Tuberculosis (active)*:** Until the healthcare provider states the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend childcare.

* These illnesses require a doctor's note in order for your child to come back to school.

Return policy after a hospital stay

If your child has been admitted to the hospital for any reason, we require a doctor's note which states:

- that the child may return to school
- whether or not there are any restrictions on the child's activities.

Medical Forms

Connecticut State Law requires that children who attend our school must have had a physical examination by the family doctor within one year. The results of the current medical exam must be completed, state-approved [Health Assessment Record Form](#). We recommend that parents keep a copy of the current, completed medical form at home for their records. As per state licensing regulations, if a current, completed medical form is not in our files on the first day of school; your child CANNOT be permitted to start school. Children must be current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule listed on the State of Connecticut Early Childhood Health Assessment Record.

Your child's medical form may expire during the school year. We will contact you a month in advance so that you will have time to make an appointment for a physical. In accordance with Connecticut State Law you now have a 30-day allowance from the date that it expires. Please help us by scheduling an appointment in advance for the needed physical. When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents/legal guardians must provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child may attend school.

Flu vaccine

The Connecticut State Department of Health requires that all children enrolled in childcare programs have a flu shot. The shot needs to be given before December in the school year the child is attending. A record of the shot needs to be on the Health Record or on a separate form.

Religious or medical exemption

If you have a religious or medical exemption from immunizations your child must still have an annual physical indicated on the medical form, and you must fill out a [State medical exemption certification statement](#).

This document states that "Children with medical (religious) exemptions shall be permitted to attend school except in the case of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak in the school. All susceptible students will be excluded from school based on public health officials' determination that the school is a primary site for disease exposure, transmission and spread into the community. Students excluded from school, for this reason, will not be able to return to school until (1) the danger of the outbreak has passed as determined by public health officials, (2) the student becomes ill with the disease and completely recovers, or (3) the student is immunized".

For example, for measles, the complete incubation period is 18 days from the onset of symptoms for the last case in the community. Outbreaks like measles may last for several months.

If after reporting to and consulting with our nurse consultant and the Westport-Weston Health District, it was decided that we did have an outbreak of vaccine-preventable disease and that we were a primary site for disease exposure, transmission, and spread into the community, the families whose children were not immunized would be contacted. Under the direction of our nurse consultant and the Westport-Weston Health District, we would exclude the children who had not been immunized for the appropriate length of time.

Snacks for children with allergies and food intolerances

All families will be providing snacks, please note that children may not bring peanut, sesame, or tree nut products for snack or lunch. All children will wash their hands at the beginning of the school day and before eating their snack or lunch.

Allergen Policy

Our building cannot be deemed allergen-free because peanut, sesame, and tree nut products are used in the Animal Hall.

Medication

Medications prescribed by a physician will be administered to children by staff trained in medication and Epi-Pen procedures. These may include Benadryl, EpiPens, antibiotics, and asthma drugs such as a bronchodilator via an inhaler or nebulizer.

Medications will only be administered if and when all forms and medications have been received in compliance with the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health Regulations for Daycares.

Parent responsibility

- [Allergy/Food Intolerance Care Plan](#)
For children with food allergies or food intolerances, this form must be signed by the health care provider and the parent. It outlines the signs and symptoms of the allergy or intolerance and the provisions that must be followed at snack and lunch, in the Animal Hall, and outdoors. The form also asks permission from the parent to post information about the child's allergies and/or food intolerances where those preparing snacks and supervising lunch can view the information.
- [Asthma Action Plan](#)
For children with asthma, this form must be filled out by the health care provider to alert the staff to the child's triggers to help us better plan activities to lessen any asthma attacks.
- [Authorization for the Administration of Medication Form](#)
The parent/guardian is responsible for having their health care provider complete the Authorization for Administration of Medication form. The health care provider who fills out this form should be the same person as the prescriber on the medication's pharmacy label. The parent authorization (on the same form) must also be completed in its entirety.
- [Emergency Health Care Plan](#)
For children with allergies, this form must be completed by a health care provider to indicate the procedure to follow when a child is exposed to an allergen, including the order in which to give the prescribed medications, such as Benadryl and an Epi-Pen. The parent/ guardian must also sign and date this form.
- **Individualized Healthcare Plans**
Each child who has a diagnosed medical or developmental condition that requires individualized care will have an individual plan designed and written by the health care consultant, the preschool director and the child's parents. The plan needs to be signed by the parent or guardian.
- **Medication Forms**
The parent/guardian must provide all medications as well as the required forms.

Prescription medication

- Must comply with all State of Connecticut regulations;
- Must be in the original child-resistant safety container;
- Label must contain the following: Child's name, the name of the medication, dosage, directions for the administration of the medication, the prescription number, whether or not it is a controlled drug, the

date of the prescription, the expiration date, the prescriber's name, the pharmacy, the pharmacy's address and phone number;

- If a medication is soon to expire, the parent is responsible for providing the school with a new medication before the expiration date;
- The parent must provide all equipment necessary for the dispensing of the medication, including spacers, nebulizers, and calibrated dispensing utensils.

Over-the-counter medication

- Must be in the original packaging, unopened, with the safety seal intact;
- Must be labeled with the child's name.

Staff responsibility

Training

- The staff is responsible for maintaining certification for the administration of medication for oral, topical, and inhalant medications every three years and for the administration of injectable medications every year.
- The training must be received from a physician, physician's assistant, advanced practice registered nurse or registered nurse who follows the guidelines set forth by the State of Connecticut Health Department's regulations.
- The trained staff must receive written approval from the trainer that indicates that she/he has successfully completed the training program to administer medications.
- A staff member trained in medication administration must be on-site whenever a child who might need medication is in attendance.

When medicine is received, the medication certified staff must:

- Fill out the Medication Administration Record;
- Check that all forms are filled out correctly and completely by the health care provider and the parent;
- Verify that the medication matches what is ordered on the authorization, that the medication has not expired, and that the orders for the administration are clearly understood. If there are any questions, the parent should be asked before leaving. If still unclear, the health care provider or pharmacist should be contacted for clarification. No medication should be administered until all forms are completed correctly and until the medication trained staff clearly understands the orders.
- Proper storage of medication: Medication must be stored in the original child-resistant container with the label requirements, as described above, attached. Medications will be kept in a locked cabinet inaccessible to the children. EpiPens must be stored in a dark place where the temperature will not go below 56°F or above 86°F.
- emergency medications such as epipens will be kept in an UNLOCKED area that is accessible to teachers and AWAY from the reach of children

Procedure for the administration of medicine and record-keeping:

- Any time an EpiPen is administered 911 will be called.
- Only staff trained in the administration of medications will be allowed to administer the medication and fill out the MAR (Medication Administration Record) after giving the medication.

- All staff may fill out Injury-Illness Forms explaining what happened. This is also signed by the person picking up the child.

Abuse & Neglect

All of our staff have a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of any children involved in our center.

Child abuse is defined as a child who has had:

- any non-accidental physical or mental injury (i.e. shaking, beating, burning)
- any form of sexual abuse (i.e. sexual exploitation)
- emotional abuse (i.e. excessive belittling, berating, or teasing which impairs the child's psychological growth)
- at risk behavior (i.e. placing a child in a situation which might endanger him by abuse or neglect)
- injuries which are inconsistent with the explanation given.

Child neglect is defined as a child who has been:

- abandoned
- denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally, for example a child who has not been provided appropriate food, clothing, shelter, education, mental care and supervision,
- allowed to live under circumstances, conditions, or associations injurious to his/her well being (CT GS 46b-120).

As defined in the Connecticut General Statutes, an abused child or youth could be anyone eighteen years of age or younger, who has been inflicted with physical injury or injuries other than by accidental means, has injuries which are at variance with the history given them, or is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment such as but not limited to malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment, or cruel punishment. Teachers are informed of and are required to know the indicators of different forms of abuse and neglect.

Physical abuse indicators:

- The child has bruises, broken bones, lacerations, puncture marks, swollen areas, missing hair, bites, or burn marks
- The child has frequent signs of major or minor injuries
- The child has different injuries in various stages of healing
- The parent or child gives odd or impossible explanations for the child's injuries
- The child is frequently tardy or absent
- The child receives overdue, unsuitable, or no treatment for injuries

Emotional abuse indicators:

The child cannot interact well socially, has very low self-esteem, or is listless, apathetic, or depressed and cannot respond to normal adult behavior.

The child has a parent who treats the child in unusual or abnormal ways, such as refusing to care for or talk to the child, treating the child as an object, keeping the child from normal social experiences, punishing the child for his/her normal behavior, and/or thinking or feeling in a consistently negative way about the child.

Sexual abuse indicators:

- Physical signs: Pain or injury in the mouth or the genital areas, irritated, reddened, or itching genitals, urinary infections, difficulty with urination, and/or unusual orders.

- Behavioral signs: Fear of a person or of certain places, clinging, anxiety, a sudden interest in the genitals of others, unsuitable sexual activity for the child's age, and a return to infantile behavior.

Neglect indicators:

- The child is anxious about his or her survival.
- The child lacks energy or is overactive.
- The child is unable to concentrate or to play.
- The child often seeks attention.
- The child is hungry and/or dirty.
- The child's clothes are inappropriate for the weather.

Prevention of abuse and neglect outside of school

Earthplace has a responsibility to prevent the abuse and neglect of the children enrolled in our school. Teachers are informed of and are required to know signs of suspected abuse.

According to the American Red Cross, teachers may suspect abuse when:

- The child shows sudden behavior changes or erratic behavior.
- The child becomes withdrawn.
- The child is hostile or extremely aggressive.
- The child is suspicious or watchful of others' actions, as if fearing them.

Given our adherence to a Zero Tolerance Policy with abuse and neglect, it is our plan to ensure that the staff is aware of the signs of abuse or neglect. The staff at Earthplace Preschool must take immediate action to help the child whom they suspect is being abused or neglected. As mandated reporters, the director and teachers of Earthplace Preschool must report actual or suspected abuse or neglect or the imminent risk of serious harm of any child to the Department of Children and Families as required by section 17a-101 to section 17a-101e, inclusive of the Connecticut General Statutes.

In the event of suspected abuse and/or neglect staff actions are as follows:

- **Treat injuries.** The teachers treat any immediate injury that is within the scope of their first aid training.
- **Provide clothing.** The teachers provide appropriate clothing for a child who needs it.
- **Increase nutrition at school.** The teachers provide extra snacks or lunches for a child who is hungry.
- **Emotional support of a child.** The teachers provide emotional support within their role as the child's teacher.
- **Access to community resources.** We as a staff must become familiar with the students' families and view our role as a support system. We, our Social Services consultant, and community resources could be called in to help give families guidance. The director of the preschool utilizes contacts in the community to set up needed resources for the child and family. These include medical, social service, financial, and nutritional resources.
- **Call 911.** If the teachers witness the physical abuse, or suspect a child's life is in danger, then 911 is called immediately.
- **Call Department of Children and Families.** Next, or at the same time, the teacher or the director will call the Child Protection Careline at the Department of Children and Families (DCF), open 24 hours a day, 1-800-842-2288. The reporter's name is required but may be kept confidential. The call is made within 12 hours of the suspected abuse. The person calling describes the reason for his/her suspicion of abuse and/or neglect and the indicators that have been observed.
- **Reporting abuse.** After the call to DCF, a written report (DCF-136) is sent to the Department of Children and Families at P.O. Box 882, Middletown, CT 06457, within 48 hours of the suspected abuse or neglect. The report is also given to the Director of Earthplace and the Chairman of the Board. All

reports to DCF shall be documented and kept in the child's file at Earthplace. A copy of all statements from staff and DCF shall also be kept on file.

This report includes the following

- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of the child and his parents and/or guardians;
- The age and gender of the child;
- Relevant information such as physical or behavioral indicator, nature and extent of injury, maltreatment or neglect;
- Exact description of what the reporter has observed;
- The approximate date and time of the injury, abuse, or neglect;
- Any information about previous injuries, maltreatment, or neglect to this child that staff knows about;
- A description of the circumstances under which the reporter learned of abuse/neglect;
- The names of the person or persons suspected of being responsible for the abuse/neglect;
- Any information the reporter believes would be helpful;
- Descriptions of the actions taken to treat, provide shelter, or otherwise assist the child;
- Medical attention given to the child if necessary.

Policy protection of staff as mandated reporters:

Earthplace will not discharge, discriminate, or retaliate against any employee who, in good faith, files an abuse or neglect report, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, Section 17a-101e. The staff also knows they are immune from any liability civil or criminal when making a good faith report.

Prevention of abuse and neglect in school

It is also the responsibility of Earthplace Preschool to prevent any abuse or neglect that could happen at our school. In order to prevent abuse and neglect at our school the following are done:

- Review the approved and prohibited disciplinary techniques on a yearly basis;
- Brainstorm to help teachers figure out ways to deal with disruptive behaviors;
- Review the indicators of abuse and neglect on a yearly basis;
- Conduct a thorough check of the references of new staff;
- Orient new staff using the above policy;
- Supervise new teachers on a close and consistent basis;
- Do a background check on all teachers, including fingerprinting;
- Parents and volunteers from organized middle and high school programs are directly supervised by the teaching staff. Earthplace Preschool does not utilize other adult volunteers.

Prohibited discipline techniques:

Teachers and caregivers may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child.

- Examples of physical punishment: 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.
- Examples of psychological abuse: shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection.
- Examples of coercion: Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up).

In accordance with the *State of Connecticut Department of Health Regulations* the following discipline techniques are prohibited from being used at Earthplace:

- **Inappropriate removal**
 - The teachers may not keep a child out of play for more than three minutes in the room or 10 minutes out of the room.
- **Physical restraint**
 - Teachers may not use physical restraint unless the child is in danger of hurting himself or others. The restraint consists of the teacher wrapping his/her arms around the child.
 - The director and staff may not tie or bind children and shall not physically restrain children except for the protection and safety of the child or others, using the least restrictive methods.
- **Abusive or neglectful punishment**
 - Teachers may not use abusive, neglectful, corporal, humiliating, or frightening punishment under any circumstances.

If a teacher, administrator or parent suspects a staff member of any of the above actions, the following steps, reflecting a Zero Tolerance Policy for abuse and neglect, would be taken:

- Report suspicion to the director of the Preschool, director of Earthplace, and chairman of Earthplace board.
- Call the Child Protection Careline (1-800-842-2288) to report the suspicion of abuse or neglect. Again the call must be made within twelve (12) hours of the suspected abuse.
- Notify the child's parent or legal guardian responsible for the child's care that a report has been made. One of the above administrators calls the parent to explain that a report has been made, what the report says, and what further action and investigation will be taken.
- Suspend the staff member with pay until an investigation by the *Department of Children and Families* (DCF) is completed. The staff member is not allowed in the building when the school is in session. The staff member is only allowed in the facility at other times when requested to be there by the Earthplace board.
- Submit a written report within 48 hours of the suspected abuse. Follow the same criteria as for the reporting of an individual who is not a staff member.
- Additionally a call must be placed to the *Department of Public Health* at 1-800-282-6063 or 1-860-509-8045.
- Convene the Earthplace board to oversee the internal review, which includes:
 1. Interviewing the adults who witnessed and/or reported the abuse or neglect;
 2. Reporting any findings to the DCF;
 3. Recommending either continued employment or termination, based on DCF findings.
- Protect the child during the investigation. The child's teachers receive advice from our Social Service consultant for working with the child in the classroom.

Family Involvement

Family-teacher partnership

Our main goal for students and families is to create a community in which each family, regardless of its family structure, socioeconomic, racial, religious and/or cultural backgrounds, gender, abilities, or preferred language is included in the process of early childhood education and meeting the cognitive, social, emotional, health and developmental needs of their child.

As listed in our guiding principles, families are the primary caregivers and educators of their young children. We use this principle to guide us in our relationship with our families here at Earthplace. In planning our conferences, activities in the classroom, and family events we also base our decisions on our ethical responsibilities to families as stated in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct which says, "Families are of primary importance in children's development. Because the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child's well-being, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about communication, cooperation and collaboration between the home and early childhood program in ways that will enhance the child's development."

Parents are encouraged to regularly contribute information that guides the teachers in making decisions about the child's goals, plans for activities, and services. This communication can take place via email, at parent-teacher conferences, and via phone calls.

Access to program and facility

During the current state of emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic, parents will not be permitted into the building.

Parents are always welcome to enjoy the outdoor walking trails and Nature's Playground with their child(ren) at Earthplace.

Becoming Comfortable at School

For many children, preschool is their first big step away from parents and home. Some children need to separate by initially developing a relationship with the teacher. Others may need to find other children or materials that they are comfortable playing with before the parent leaves. Then there are those children who will really not get started until their parents have left the room. We work with all of the different separating styles. Saying goodbye once is a good technique for a parent. This communicates to the children that you trust the teachers to take good care of them. In some cases the teacher will ring the bell and say that it is time to have a meeting. The teacher will have everyone say goodbye to all of the parents. These are your child's first steps towards becoming an independent, happy individual. We will collaborate with each family to make this a successful and positive experience.

Home visits for all classes

Home visits are suspended during the current state of emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family Orientation 2020

Our teachers will offer a "getting to know you" activity for their students and their families. This orientation will be held outdoors and will be an opportunity to meet the teachers and the other families in your child's class.

First day of school

The first day of school can be exciting for some and troubling for others. We expect children to respond to the first day of school differently. We ask families to reassure their children by letting them know that you will be back to pick them up soon. Children are very perceptive and can sense your emotions. It is best to remain calm and friendly but authentic. If you feel nervous, say that you are nervous. If you are excited, say that you are excited. It is important to know that when you label and express your emotions, you are modeling helpful behaviors for your child.

Parent chats

We have two Parent-Teacher Chats during the year. Our Chats provide an opportunity for the teachers to get together with the parents as a group during the day. Teachers and parents will discuss what is going on in the classroom, as well as child development issues. This may be a zoom or online event if necessary.

Parent-teacher conferences

We have two parent conferences during the year, one each in the fall and one in the spring. A parent may request a third conference if he or she has any additional concerns during the school year. At the first conference, we like to hear about the child so that we have a wider frame of reference for making his/her experience at Earthplace a positive one. The teacher will ask about things that are important to the family in order to help the child grow and learn. The teacher will share a short written form in the fall. We will also discuss the child's first experiences with the standards-based assessments using the Teaching Strategies Gold Child Profile Form. In the spring, we further discuss the child's individual progress, strengths, and areas of need.

Parent organization

In order to continue building an Earthplace community we have created a parent organization. Each class has a room parent who represents their class and meets with the chair of the parent organization. We ask parents to chair the individual committees, such as the Barnes and Noble book fair, Ice Cream Social, Mini-Fair Day, Teacher Appreciation Luncheon, and Garden Committees.

As the parents and teachers work together for the benefit of the children and the school, our goals can be achieved.

Parent volunteers

In addition to the volunteer opportunities mentioned previously, we encourage parents to participate in a variety of other ways. Teachers design different ways to involve parents in the classrooms; for example, parents may be invited to read to the children or to come to help in the classroom. Volunteer sign-up sheets for school-wide events are posted on the Parent Board on the window outside the office. Teachers or room parents contact parents to volunteer for classroom events. We have also started using online sign-up for volunteering in order to make sure that everyone is able to sign up for classroom or school-wide activities.

Parent workshops

We plan workshops that are of interest to our parents, often utilizing our early childhood consultant to conduct them. Past themes have been Building Self-Esteem, Transitioning to Kindergarten, and Setting Limits. We have also co-sponsored speakers with other schools in the area.

Program evaluation

The annual evaluation process includes the use of Google Forms or NAEYC Family and Staff Surveys. These evaluation tools target specific areas of the program, including policies and procedures, program quality,

children's progress and learning, family involvement and satisfaction, and community awareness and satisfaction.

This, plus results of licensing visits, recommendations by our early childhood consultant, nurse, and social service consultant form the basis for a yearly evaluation that points out the strengths of the program and the areas that are in need of attention for the next year.

Email groups

Each class has an email address that can be used by the teachers or the parent organization. During the year, this will be used by the teachers and the director to communicate for various reasons.

Communication Policy

Announcements each day

Our teachers will be able to share daily announcements using a variety of platforms.

- The Infant and Toddler teachers will use Tadpoles to communicate throughout the day
- The preschool teachers will use the Creative Curriculum Cloud to communicate with families
- All classes will also use "Google Hangouts" in lieu of sending text messages

CampDocs

CampDocs is our online portal for program registrations and paperwork, including general and emergency contact information; health history and assessment records; daily attendance records and more. Please make sure your child's account is accurate, up to date and complete at all times.

Communication structure

Your child's Lead Teacher is the primary point of contact for all cognitive, social, emotional, health and developmental concerns. Assistant Teachers are able to speak to you about classroom activities, but we ask you to address all concerns with the Lead Teacher. If you would like to converse with or share a concern with your child's Lead Teacher, please send an email, and the lead teacher will get back to you within 24 hours to schedule an appointment. To best meet your child's needs, we encourage families to raise concerns and work collaboratively to find mutually satisfying solutions that the staff can incorporate into classroom practice.

Grievances & suggestions

If you have a concern related to your child in the classroom setting, please speak with the lead teacher. If this approach is not satisfactory, then please contact preschool director Ameer Borys. We find that the solutions to issues can be positively resolved by working together. When speaking with the lead teacher and the director has not worked, please contact the executive director of Earthplace. If the problem is not resolved, you may contact the CT Office of Early Childhood. In cases of abuse, neglect, or life-threatening situations, please contact the Department of Children and Families at 1-800-842-2288.

Confidentiality of child file

At Earthplace Preschool we make sure that information about your child and his/her progress is kept confidential. Our child files are locked in the main office and can be opened by the lead teachers, the health care consultant, the director and assistant to the director, and regulatory authorities. Teachers and parents can be given access to the files by the preceding staff. The child file contains the Child Record Form; the Medical, Illness, and Injury reports; and plans of action.

Information about who can look at the Child File is on the form parents fill out before school begins. Parents and those who have been designated as legally responsible for the care and well-being of the child may have immediate access to the file.

Newsletter - Check Your Email!

We use Constant Contact as the platform to send out our weekly preschool newsletter.

School Calendar

You can find the [2020-2021 school calendar](#) on our website.

Parent resources

The Earthplace Preschool teachers, consultants, and administrators are happy to help to locate, contact and use relevant community resources to support the needs and interests of the children and families at Earthplace Preschool.

Weekly planning forms

The infant and toddler teachers will share their plans for learning experiences and activities via classroom email newsletter on a weekly basis. The preschool teachers will share their weekly plans with families using the Creative Curriculum Cloud.

Sharing information with family and others

Program staff provides support and information to family members who have been designated as legally responsible for the care and well-being of the child as indicated on the Student Record Form in your CampDoc account.

Before sharing information about a child with other providers, agencies, or programs or allowing the child to be observed, teachers obtain written consent from the family.

Strategies for negotiating differences

If we do find that there are routines, practices, or values that differ from family routines, practices, or values, we will work with the family to find a common ground and attempt a resolution. It is our intention to be respectful of all of our families' practices, values, and cultures. This is why we do not celebrate holidays but do learn about those that our families celebrate. Different views of toilet training, or of eating or drinking habits, could also be areas that might need to be discussed. We will always be guided by what is developmentally appropriate and what is a part of our ethical standards when attempting to resolve these differences.

Translator

The school will contact a translator to help communicate about a child's progress or any other information such as the Parent Handbook, that the parent wishes to be explained in their language. This will be done with the help of the International Institute of Connecticut at 203-336-0141, 670 Clinton Avenue, Bridgeport, 06605, iiconn@aol.com, In addition, we can use the website freetranslation.com to instantly translate a conversation, a flyer, or a letter.

Website

The Earthplace Preschool website contains a wealth of information about our history, our educational philosophy, our teaching staff and our support staff.

Special Needs

When the school and/or the family of a child has concerns that a child needs special attention for developmental or other reasons, a series of steps in which the family and the school work together are followed. Sometimes the family brings their concern to us before school begins or during the first fall conference. At other times it is the teacher who realizes during the assessment process that is linked with our curriculum that a child may need special resource attention. We share this information with the family and then work toward getting the help that together we think is necessary.

The preschool staff helps the family to identify and contact the necessary resources in the community. This could include further screening and assessment and contact with public and private special education programs. This is handled in a sensitive, supportive, confidential manner. Documentation will be provided with an explanation for the concern, and suggested next steps with information for resources will be included. Teachers meet with and work with whomever the parent selects to guide them in working with their child. This could include the public school system or private agencies. If an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed through the public school system, the teachers will work with the specialists to provide the plan in the classroom.

Food & Snacks

Food Policy

During the current state of emergency and COVID-19 pandemic, we ask that parents please provide a daily snack and lunch for their child.

[Please find a list of healthy snacks and lunch suggestions here.](#)

Foods not permitted at school

Peanuts, peanut butter, peanut products, and other tree nut products such as Nutella, other hazelnut products, and almond butter.

Choking foods such as nuts, candy, popcorn, carrots, including "baby" carrots (unless cut lengthwise), raisins, pomegranate seeds, hot dogs (unless cut lengthwise), grapes (unless cut in half), raw peas, and hard pretzels are also not permitted

We do not use "sippy" cups, as we have found that school is a safe place for children to transition to using small cups. Many local speech therapists have advised us to promote using cups at school.

Clothing

Change of clothes for Chickadees, Meadowlarks, Ospreys, and Orioles

Chickadees are asked to bring a change of clothes in a backpack every day they attend school. Please include diapers and wipes. Meadowlarks, Ospreys, and Orioles require a complete change of clothing to be left in school. Please include socks. Place in a clear ziplock type plastic bag clearly labeled with your child's name. If your child is still in diapers or pull-ups, please provide extras along with wipes. Please let your child's teachers know if your child is in transition from diapers to pull-ups or to underpants. For the Blue Jays and the Barn Owls we use a change of clothes from our own supply.

Play clothes

We will be working with paint and other messy materials. Even with smocks (which we provide) children still get paint and glue on them. Please send children in clothing that is appropriate for active play and learning.

Footwear

STURDY SHOES or SNEAKERS WITH SOCKS are the most appropriate footwear for preschool. Our playground and trails are lined with wood chips, which makes it uncomfortable to play or hike in sandals. Because the children are active on the playground, and/or trails and gym time every day, we ask that children not come to school in crocs, sandals, clogs, jellies, cowboy or cowgirl boots, platform shoes, or water shoes. We want them to feel free to run, jump, and play in a safe manner.

Outdoor play clothes

Since we try to get outdoors whenever we can, play clothes are the order of the day, and any clothing that the children can handle on their own promotes independence and a sense of accomplishment. In the winter we ask that families send appropriate clothing for outdoor play, including snow pants, boots, warm jacket, hat, and mittens. Please label all of your child's clothing. The children do not always recognize their hats, mittens, jackets, boots, etc. when the seasons have just changed. We prefer that children wear mittens because they are easier for them to manage than gloves. And please remember, if your child does not come dressed in his/her snowsuit, please bring it in a canvas, mesh, or vinyl bag. We do not think that it is safe to have plastic bags in the classroom and they are not allowed in the Chickadees classroom in accordance with licensing standards.

Our school has extra clothes

We do have some extra clothes at school, such as jackets, mittens, socks, underwear, shirts, and pants, so we can help the children if they need to either get warmer in the winter or dress a bit cooler in the summer. This also helps when children get wet when playing in the water table or get paint on them during an art activity!

Birthdays/Celebrations

We ask that parents talk with the child's teacher before bringing in a birthday snack. We can then communicate with the parents of children who have food allergies or food intolerances, so that they can bring a similar snack for their child that is safe to eat.

Birthdays

We ask that parents talk with the child's teacher before sending in a birthday snack. We can then communicate with the parents of those children who have food allergies or food intolerances, so that they can bring a similar snack for their child that they know is safe to eat.

Birthday snacks - healthy and safe choices

In accordance with our food policy we encourage all families to pick healthy alternatives to traditional large cupcakes. For example, small muffins and fruit with yogurt are favorite birthday snacks.

To create a safe environment for children with food allergies, we ask that you NOT send birthday snacks and/or holiday party snacks made with items not on our snack list. Items we do not include in snack are: Peanut butter, nuts, candy, popcorn, carrots or "baby" carrots (unless cut in thin strips lengthwise), hot dogs (unless cut lengthwise), grapes (unless cut in half), raw peas, and hard pretzels.

We ask that parents talk with their child's teacher before bringing in a birthday snack. We can then communicate with the parents of children who have food allergies or food intolerances so they can bring a similar snack for their children that is safe for them to eat.

Birthdays at school - donate a book!

Instead of bringing in goodie bags we ask that families choose a book from our Book Wish List to donate to the class. We also invite families to come in to read the book to the class.

Holidays

Holiday celebrations are limited to food and crafts. We do not allow children to dress in costumes on Halloween.

Toys from Home

We ask that children leave toys at home. In a group environment the introduction of children's own toys can cause complications with the process of learning to share. This is a major developmental goal for preschoolers, and they are able to master it more successfully using the items at school. It is, however, one of the reasons we have show and tell, which offers children an outlet for bringing to school something special that is then shared in a structured, successful manner.

This does not include "loveys" such as special blankets or stuffed animals that children use to help them transition to new environments. These are always welcome at school, however we do limit it to **one** and it must be washable.

Pets

Pets are not allowed on the grounds of Earthplace, as we are an animal sanctuary and wish to make the environment safe for the turkeys, deer, rabbits, and other wild animals that live here.

There are many animals to visit in Animal Hall and the outdoor animal area. On a weekly basis one of the teaching animals comes to visit the classroom. These are under the care of Earthplace naturalists and local veterinarians. Earthplace holds permits from the US Fish and Wildlife Department and the US Department of Agriculture for the appropriate animals.

Dismissal

Parents are required to wear a mask or approved face covering and maintain physical distance from one another during dismissal time. After parking your car in the lot, please walk to the building and meet your child at the dismissal location. Please do not park in the fire zone. The fire marshal and the police consider this a fire safety zone and will ticket those who park there. When parking please fully turn off your vehicle. Earthplace is an idle-free zone.

At dismissal time, the teacher shares some of the highlights of the day. For example, name the animal who came to visit, name the songs we sang in the classroom, or tell the location of the new trail we explored.

- The Chickadees (Twos) class is dismissed at 12:45 pm or at 6:00 pm from their exterior classroom door.
- The Nest class is dismissed at 4:00 pm from their exterior classroom door.
- The Orioles class is dismissed at 6:00 pm from their exterior classroom door.
- The Bluejays, the Meadowlarks, the Barn Owls and the Ospreys are dismissed at 1:00 pm from their exterior classroom door.
- A designated adult, parent, guardian, or childcare provider, must sign the child out on the sign-out sheet.
- Anyone who comes to our school to pick up a child, including the child's mother, father, grandparents, other relatives, babysitter, nanny, or family friend **MUST** be listed on the Student Record Form or the Authorization Release Form and **MUST** have their photo identification with them. If we have not met this person before we will check the information to verify that it is consistent with the information that you gave us authorizing someone other than yourself to pick up your child.

These procedures are for the safety of the children and for a smooth dismissal. Please remember that traffic safety is a priority on Earthplace grounds. Speed limits into and out of our parking lot must be observed (15 mph).

Dismissal Forms

Emergency Authorization Release Information

This information is required by the State of Connecticut and is now a part of the Student Record Form that is filled out when you enroll your child at Earthplace. At least one local contact name must be listed on the emergency portion of the form. These are people we could call if a child became ill, and we were unable to contact the families.

Some children may be picked up regularly by other adults. Please include these names on the portion of the Student Record Form that is the emergency authorization pick-up portion. We ask that families introduce us to nannies or grandparents who will be picking up on a regular basis. If any of the authorized people should change during the school year, we ask that families inform us in writing on a new form that your classroom will have available.

Updating the emergency authorization release information

If you want your child to go home with a classmate's parent, or anyone other than the people on your original emergency form, we need authorization in writing. Please fill out the Earthplace Authorized Release Form (also available in the preschool office). It must be signed by a parent in ink, dated, and should specify who is going to pick up your child.

These authorization forms may be used to designate someone to pick up your child on a specific day or as a change or addition to the original form. Please bring the form to the preschool office. Here we make a copy of the form if it is a permanent change.

We then add this to the child's permanent file and we put a copy in the class notebook.

If we do not know the person who is picking up your child, we will ask to see his or her photo identification (driver's license).

Parents out of town

Also, we ask that parents let the teachers know in advance when your child will be in the care of another adult, should both parents be going out of town or out of the country. We will need a note that explains who you have designated to be your child's caretaker. Please refer to the COVID-19 Appendix for details about the governor's Executive Order Regarding Travel on page 48 of this document.

Child not picked up at closing time

When a child is not picked up as planned, two staff members who are 18 years or older, will wait with the child on the licensed premises. First we call all of the parents' home, work and cell phone numbers. If we are not able to reach a parent to clarify the situation, we then begin calling the emergency authorization numbers that are listed in the child's file. The parents have given these individuals permission to make decisions as to the health and welfare of their child and to transport their child. If we are unable to contact one of these individuals to pick up the child, we would retry all of the parents' phone numbers. If we are unable to reach a parent or an authorized emergency person two hours after the scheduled pick-up time, or by 7:00 pm, we call the Westport Police Department and follow their instructions.

If an adult who arrives to pick up a child appears to be impaired or intoxicated, we will refuse to release the child to the impaired or intoxicated adult. We will contact the emergency authorization numbers that are listed in the child's file. If we are unable to reach a parent or an authorized emergency person, we will call the Westport Police Department and follow their instructions.

Emergency Preparedness Procedures

Number of Children

The Westport Police, Fire, and Health Departments have been contacted. They know that we are a licensed Preschool. On a daily basis the maximum number of children and staff, *which is subject to change in-line with state guidance*, who could be in attendance is as follows:

Group	Staff	Children
The Nest	2-4	8
Chickadees	2-3	8
Orioles	3	16
Meadowlarks	3	16
Bluejays	3	16
Barn Owls	3	16
Ospreys	3	16

Additional Staff:

Director, Program Support Staff, Administrative Assistant

Location of the School:

We have included a map of our location at 10 Woodside Lane, Westport, CT. in the Appendix

Emergency Announcements, Contacting Classes in the Building:

We can announce an emergency through our:

- Public Address System/Phones
- Walkie Talkies
- Fire Alarm System (in each classroom and other parts of the building, it sets off the alarm and alerts the fire department)
- In Person

Learning About Weather or Other Emergencies:

- *Sirens*: They are located in Saugatuck shores and are tested monthly. Sirens are used to warn of flood events or other situations which might require evacuation. We do know that in our location we do not hear the siren and should then depend on other means of notification.
- *Radio*: Staples Radio WWPT 90.3 FM is the designated radio station for the Town of Westport. Emergency announcements are sent out from this station.
- *Website*: The Town of Westport website is updated with emergency information as it is made available by the Westport Emergency Operations Center.
- *Alternate emergency communication*: We have a radio that has back-up batteries to keep us informed of emergencies.

- *Weather Alert via Computer or Smartphone App:* NOAA.gov, Weather Underground, and Weatherbug provide alerts about weather emergencies.

Contacting Outside of Earthplace (Emergency Notification Numbers)

- Medical, Fire, Rescue: 911
- American Red Cross: 227-9595
- Kings Highway School: our remote shelter :341-1800
- Westport Emergency Evacuation Hotline: 454-6199
- Bus Company to help with Evacuation: First Student Bus Company, Wilton, CT : 762-5093
- Parent contacts

Phone Numbers Location:

- Group Notebook: Each group has a notebook that contains all of the parents' contact numbers including home, cell and business numbers. This goes with each group at all times, both indoors and outdoors.
- Originals: These are kept in the main office.

Contact Procedure:

One person from each group will contact each child's family using their cell phones or messaging from their tablets.

E-Mail Contact Location and Procedure:

Program Administrators and Lead Teachers have parent contact information and emergency contact information for each child enrolled in our program.

Earthplace Site Plan

The Emergency Exit Plan is posted in each room. Included in the plan is the location of:

- Rooms, doors, windows and obstacles
- Fire extinguishers
- Fire alarms
- Two unobstructed routes from each classroom
- Initial meeting place
- Remote Meeting Places (Secondary Evacuation Destinations)
 - Front Playground
 - Executive Director's House, located at the entrance of the Earthplace property, 14 Woodside Lane.
- Indoor Safe Space
 - Natureplace: In the event that we must stay at Earthplace, we have indicated that we would stay in the Natureplace.

Disaster Plans

- Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC)
 - Preschool Director, Ameer Borys
- Alternate Coordinators: (AC)
 - Executive, Director, Tony McDowell
 - Operations Manager, Education Programs, Jessica Mantzaris

Medical Emergency, Who may administer First Aid

- First Aid may be administered to children by all staff members who have current certification in the required American Red Cross Connecticut Childcare First Aid Course (certification is good for 3 years).
- CPR may be administered to children by all staff members who have current certification in the required American Red Cross CPR (certification is good for 1 year)
- Adult First Aid and CPR: Several staff are also asked to be current with Adult CPR and First Aid. These staff could administer aid to the teaching staff.

Staff Responsibilities & Procedures:

In case of a medical emergency these procedures will be followed:

- Attending to Child:
 - Teacher #1, a trained staff member, attends to the child in need.
 - If calling 911 is necessary, Teacher #1 asks a second Teacher #2 to call 911.
 - If the class is on a trail or not close to the phone, Teacher #2 will walkie talkie the Earthplace front desk and give the information that needs to be told to the 911 operator (name of child, nature of the injury, and our Location: Earthplace, 10 Woodside Lane, Westport, CT)
- Attending to other children:
 - Teacher # 3 supervises the rest of the children in the class and removes them from the scene if possible. The teacher-child ratios of 1:4 for 2 year olds and 1:10 for 3 and 4 year olds will be kept by calling a teacher from another class.
- Continuing First Aid:
 - Teacher #1 continues to administer first aid.
- Contacting the EMC or AC:
 - Teacher # 2 then contacts an EMC or the AC.
 - Walkie-talkies are available in each group to be used to aid in this communication.
- Calling the Parents:
 - The EMC or the AC then calls the child's parents to inform them of the situation.
- Going to the Hospital:
 - If the child is to go to the hospital in an ambulance the first Staff Member # 1 goes with the child and brings the Emergency Authorization Form from the group notebook with her.
- Primary Site for Emergency Care:
 - Norwalk Hospital has been informed that we would use their services in an emergency.
 - Writing the Injury Report:
 - Teacher # 2 fills out the Injury Report. This will be given to the parents.

Notification of fire & initial procedures:

- Pull Fire Alarm
 - Fire Alarm: All staff members are responsible for notifying the school of a fire by pulling the fire alarm. This also alerts the fire department that there is a fire at our facility.
- Classes evacuate: The groups would then evacuate by exiting through the closest door as designated on the chart posted in their rooms and then going to their assigned meeting place.
- Sweep of rooms: This is done by the Alternate Coordinator.
- Initial fire/disaster meeting place location:
 - 2's: Meet by the sandbox on the Preschool playground. (2's do not attend at the same time as the 3's)
 - 3's: Meet by the sandbox on the preschool playground.
 - 4's: Meet by the wooden boat on the preschool playground.
 - Lunch Club: Meet by the spider web on the Preschool playground.
- Groups meeting together:

- Teachers are advised that if they have children from one group in two different areas, they are to walkie talkie each other and then meet in their designated spot outdoors if it is safe to do so.
- Taking attendance:
 - Lead teacher takes attendance and reports the results to the EMC, either by walkie talkie or when EMC comes to the group.
- Assessing the situation:
 - The EMC and/or the AC then assess the situation.
 - The groups would then be asked to either:
 - Stay where they are
 - Relocate to one of two remote meeting places
 - Return to their rooms.
- Two remote places to relocate (*Secondary meeting places*):
 - In case it is deemed necessary to move further away from the building, or an evacuation from the site is necessary, the two places to meet are:
 - By the slide and swings on the front playground.
 - In the open field near the Earthplace exit

Taking shelter in the building due to weather

- Alerting the school by public address system:
 - The EMC or an AC would instruct the operations manager in the front office to alert the staff via the Public Address system of the immediate need to take shelter in Natureplace, which has been designated by the Fire Department as a safe space, because it has no windows. This could be due to severe thunder and lightning, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods or bomb threats.
- Alerting the school by walkie talkie or in person:
 - In case of telephone, and electrical failure the EMC and the AC would split the groups and either walkie talkie or personally tell each group if they were to stay in the building in their room, or go to the Natureplace.
 - The walkie-talkies are kept in the front office, Preschool office and each classroom
- Natureplace: Gather all children in Natureplace, the safest place in the building
- Alerting Parents
 - Use cell phones to inform parents of the need to take shelter

Shelter Supplies

- Important information about children:
 - Group Notebooks: Include group list with telephone numbers
 - Attendance record
 - Emergency authorization
 - Authorization for the Administration of Medicine Forms

Staff Responsibilities In Case Of Need To Evacuate From The Building Or From The Remote Site:

- EMC
 - Makes the initial announcement with the AC's help; either
 - in person
 - Public Address System
 - Or instructs the building operations manager in the front office to make the initial announcement via public address system or by
 - Walkie Talkie
 - Takes attendance and checks with each group to make sure that all are accounted for and pass this information to the AC

- Makes the decision to move from the initial evacuation site on Preschool playground (in case of a fire evacuation), or to Natureplace (in case of weather or other evacuation), or to Secondary Site at front playground, or to open field.
- Makes decision with Fire Department (if in communication with) to evacuate to off-site shelter at Kings Highway Elementary School
 - Calls Kings Highway to alert of evacuation
 - Calls bus company to alert to need to come and pick up the children and the teachers
 - Gives the direction to teachers to contact parents and the message to be communicated
- Is the point of contact with Fire, Police and Other Emergency Rescue Teams.
- AC
 - Works in conjunction with the EMC
 - Takes walkie talkie
 - Meets Emergency Teams: goes out front to meet the teams and passes on information
 - Teacher Responsibilities
 - Lead Teacher:
 - Brings the group notebook and a walkie talkie. The group notebook includes a group list, children's individual Emergency Authorization Form, Authorization for the Administration of Medication forms (in case of allergies) and the Emergency Procedure Plans.
 - Assigns the two assistants to either be Teacher #1 or Teacher #2.
 - Teacher # 1:
 - Carries First Aid Kit and walkie talkie
 - Closes windows and doors, and turns off the lights and ventilation system in the room
 - Makes final sweep of room
 - Teacher # 2:
 - Carries fanny packs with children's medications and walkie talkie
 - Takes Attendance: immediately upon arriving at the evacuation. At each step in the evacuation process an attendance check is done, including arrival at King's Highway.
 - Waits for the EMC or AC to come to them or to contact them by walkie talkie to check attendance
 - Coordinates teachers in class to contact parents once the evacuation or taking shelter has begun, one staff member from each group would begin to call parents on his or her cell phone to let them know the plan for their children.

Lost Child Procedure: Code Blue

- Attendance
 - Attendance is taken at the beginning of each class
 - All teachers are made aware of how many children are in the class that day.
 - When children leave early or come late, the attendance book is immediately updated and all of the teachers in the group are alerted to the change in the number of children present.
- Counting Children
 - When changing to another room or going outside or coming inside, the children are counted by all teachers present and the teachers agree that this is the correct number of children present
- Supervision:
 - When walking on a trail or through the building there is always a teacher in the lead and a teacher in the rear-as the last in the line

- When the realization is made that a child is no longer with the group, the following procedure is followed.
 - Communication to rest of Preschool and building
 - Lead Teacher walkie talkies everyone that it is a Code Blue, and the number of children missing from the class is stated
 - Receptionist announces a Code Blue to the entire building over the public address system
 - The EMC or AC will call 911 immediately and provide the following information
 - Child's name and age
 - Address of Preschool: Earthplace, 10 Woodside Lane, Westport, CT
 - Child's address
 - Physical and clothing description, including any distinguishing marks
 - Medical status if appropriate
 - Person with whom the child was last seen
 - Notify parents of missing child: The EMC or AMC
- All classes go into Lost Child Procedure:
 - All classes stay in a lock-down situation until the police tell us otherwise or the child is found
 - Indoors: the teachers lock the doors from the inside and gather the children into a group time and take attendance.
 - Outdoors: the teachers gather all of their class into a group sitting down, take attendance and then go to their classroom.
 - Sweep of the premises
 - Playground: the EMC does a sweep of the playground and building
 - Preschool: the AC does the sweep of the Preschool
 - Classroom: a teacher in each room does a sweep of the classroom.
 - Building: employees all check their areas and report to the EMC
 - Maintenance Coordinator: checks the common areas and downstairs areas
 - A search of the parking lot and the trails is done with the help of the police and Earthplace staff
- Reporting Incident
 - Meeting the Police: The AC goes to meet the police at the front of the building
- Report the incident to the Connecticut Department of Public Health (1-800-282-6063) and the Department of Children and Family Services (1-800-842-2288).
- Complete a written incident report at the earliest opportunity

Lock-Down Procedure: Code Black

- All staff members are responsible for alerting the building for the need of a lock down.
- The Reasons for a Lock-Down:
 - Suspicious person
 - Individual with a weapon
 - Loud unexplained noise
 - Angry person
 - Person trying to see or pick up a child who is not allowed to do so
 - Alert from town that a lock-down is necessary
- Lock-Down Notification:
 - Staff member gets on walkie talkie and calls for a Code Green and indicates the unsafe area
 - Staff at the front desk page entire building calling for a Code Green and indicates the unsafe area.

- AC calls 911 with the help of the person who knows what the problem is and alerts police of lock-down.
- Lock-Down Procedure:
 - Teachers gather their students in their classrooms.
 - If a classroom is not a safe place, the teachers bring their students to another classroom.
 - If the children are outside, go to a safe classroom.
 - If the children are in Natureplace, stay and put the space into lock-down, by locking all outside doors and going into the movie area.
 - Lock the doors
 - Pull the shades
 - Take attendance
 - Teachers keep the classrooms in lock-down until the Westport Police Department advises them otherwise

Sharing, Practice Drills & Updating the Plan

- Sharing Plan:
 - Staff: The plan will be shared with the staff yearly at a meeting
 - Each staff member will be given a copy of the plan for their Personnel Handbook
 - The plan will be in each class book
 - When new staff members are hired, the plan will be discussed with them
 - When the EMC or AC change the plan, all of the above will be updated
- Parents:
 - The plan will be included in the Parent Handbook.
 - It will be discussed at a parent meeting.
- Westport Fire Department, Westport Police Department and Weston-Westport Health District:
 - The plan will be shared with these entities and their advice on the effectiveness of the policies will be solicited. Policies will be changed in accordance with their expert advice.
- Fire Drills:
 - The staff and children will conduct Fire Drills on a monthly basis.
 - Taking Shelter Drill, Lock-Down Drill, Lost Child Drill and Evacuation Drill: each will be practiced once a year by the teachers.

Items & Procedure Checklist for All Emergencies

- Lead Teacher:
 - Group Notebook
 - Walkie Talkie
 - Leads Class Out
 - Takes Attendance
 - Assigns Teachers to be #1 or #2
 - Assigns one teacher to get shelter supplies from kitchen and room 12 when needed
- Teacher #1:
 - Carries First Aid Kit
 - Closes windows, doors, lights and ventilation system
 - Does Final Sweep
 - Helps to call parents with cell phone if evacuation has taken place
- Teacher #2:
 - Carries Medication Fanny Packs and Walkie Talkie
 - Helps to call parents with cell phone if evacuation has taken place

Emergency Management Coordinator, Preschool Director

- Takes walkie talkie from front office
- Communicates with each group and with the AC in regard to attendance and need for further evacuation
- Communicates with Fire, Police or Health Department when needed
- Alternate Coordinator Checklist
- Gets master notebook from the Lunch Club room
- Performs a classroom sweep
- Goes to the front of the building to meet fire trucks, ambulances, and/or police.
- Communicates with EMC
- E-mails parents of emergency status when possible
- Staff members bring cell phones

Building Security & Safety

Earthplace Preschool is located in Earthplace, The Nature Discovery Center. The Center is open to members and the paying public on a daily basis. The playground is not open to members or the paying public when school or camp is in session. Members or the paying public may visit Natureplace, view the indoor and/or outdoor animals, and walk on the trails when Earthplace is open.

Because of the public nature of the Earthplace, the entrance doors to the preschool classrooms are kept locked at all times. The teachers have access to the rooms by key.

Teachers have walkie-talkies and phones in their classrooms and can communicate with each other, the preschool office, and main office at all times. The walkie-talkies also go with the teachers when they are on the playground and on a trail walk. The front desk staff is able to call each room and make building-wide announcements.

Shelter-In-Place or Lockdown Drills:

In each classroom, we practice Shelter-In-Place or lockdown drills. We explain to children that when there is an unsafe situation in the building, we have to leave the building to be safe. When there is an unsafe situation outside, we have to stay in the building to be safe.

Fire Drills

We practice our evacuation procedures on a monthly basis. In the beginning of the year, the Chickadees practice with their teachers, but not with the fire alarm. By the end of the year all classes will have practiced evacuating their room and going to their assigned place on the playground. Here the children stay together in their designated spot and wait until the all-clear is given. We have found that practicing this helps the children better able to respond in a quick and more comfortable manner.

School Closure Due to Inclement Weather or Hazardous Conditions

In the event of any closure of Earthplace or any interruption or suspension, temporary or permanent, of classes resulting from causes beyond Earthplace's reasonable control, including, without limitation, acts of God, fire, power outage, pandemic, epidemic, government action, war, threats or acts of terrorism and insurrection, Earthplace shall not be liable for our inability to provide services.

If inclement weather or hazardous conditions make it necessary for us to cancel, delay, or close school early, we will post an announcement on our website, email parents/guardians, and put an announcement on Channel 12. Any decision to do so is made with the safety of all in mind.

If the Westport Public Schools cancel, delay, or have an early dismissal, we typically follow the same procedure. There may be times when Earthplace Preschool cancels, delays, or has an early dismissal due to conditions near or at Earthplace even when the Westport schools are still in session.

Earthplace Preschool's schedule and school year are fixed long in advance and will not be altered due to school closures. There are no make up days or refunds for closures due to inclement weather or other hazardous conditions.

It is important to note that when school is closed due to the hazardous conditions listed above, we continue to pay our teachers and staff. That is why we do not offer a refund.

However, if the entire preschool is ordered to close for a period of time lasting longer than two weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic or other hazardous conditions beyond Earthplace's reasonable control, a prorated refund of 50% of the unused portion of my tuition will be offered, or you choose to convert that amount into a donation to Earthplace.

COVID-19

The Earthplace Preschool has been an integral part of Earthplace, Inc., our parent organization since 1967. The Director of Early Childhood Education is a member of the Earthplace, Inc. Senior Leadership Team. (SLT) The members of the SLT along with input from members of the Board of Trustees, the Earthplace Preschool Staff, and Preschool Families, have worked diligently to develop our plan to operate safely during this pandemic. Continued cooperation is vital to our success. We are all in this together.

New Preschool Operating Procedures in Response to Covid 19:

Group Sizes/ Dynamics

- Group size shall remain the same for children under the age of three (8 children per group with a minimum 1:4 teacher to child ratio).
- For children age three and up, group size will have a maximum of 16 children with three teachers.
- Students will not interact with other groups of children indoors or outdoors.
- Each group has an assigned bathroom, and bathrooms will be sanitized in between each use.

Executive Order Regarding Travel

Pursuant to Governor Lamont's [Executive Order No. 7III](#), anyone traveling into Connecticut from a state that has a new daily positive test rate higher than 10 per 100,000 residents or a state with a 10% or higher positivity rate over a 7-day rolling average are directed to self-quarantine for a 14-day period from the time of last contact within the identified state.

In addition, anyone entering from one of the identified states must fill out a travel health form upon arrival. Travelers can fill out the form online at ct.gov/travelform.

As of August 18, 2020 there are a total of 34 states, and Puerto Rico, that meet the criteria and are included in Connecticut's travel advisory. Please click the [link](#) to view the full list which is updated regularly

Please Note:

- **Earthplace will not accept the "testing alternative" to this Executive Order.**
- **Earthplace considers anyone who is hosting any individuals from an affected state in their home a risk to the rest of the Earthplace community.**
- **Anyone who has traveled to an affected state or who has guests from an affected state must quarantine for 14 days.**
- **No refunds will be given for missed time due to travel and subsequent quarantine.**
- **This policy is in effect for all families and staff members.**

When Outside:

Within our 62 acres, we have identified nine [Nature Zones](#) for play and exploration in addition to the fenced playground areas. Each group will be assigned daily areas and movements. They include:

1. Goldenrod Meadow, climbing trees and Frog Hollow Pond
2. Stoney Brook from the Wolf Trail balance beam, downstream to the platform bench
3. Big Rock Junction, Discovery Trail and Amphitheater
4. Nature trail walks-Upper Swamp Loop, High Woods, and Meadow Grass
5. The Bear statue Field for lawn games and running around
6. The Parkour Playground and Pine grove for arts and crafts
7. The Newman-Woodward trails and Jurassic Junction
8. The Wadsworth trail, vernal pond and Arboretum
9. Birds of Prey Exhibit

When Inside:

Every group will have a dedicated homebase classroom with outside entrance. Only assigned staff will be in the classroom and all toys and crafts will stay within the group.

Social Distancing Measures

Appropriate social distancing strategies shall be implemented. Please see the document titled: [Guidance for Childcare During COVID-19](#). Social distancing is required and will take many forms including wearing masks, reduced group sizes, staggered drop-off and pick-up times to ensure groups of students remain isolated from one another indoors and out.

- Teachers and staff must wear a face covering at all times unless outside and can keep a distance of 6 feet.
- Children in a child care environment and those with medical conditions are not required to wear a mask.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Precautions

Earthplace, a licensed and accredited preschool and summer camp program, is held to the highest standards of safety and cleanliness for all classroom and public spaces. Our program spaces are sanitized, and disinfected daily in accordance with the state Office of Early Childhood (OEC), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) [guidelines](#).

Daily Health Screenings

Daily Health Screenings will be performed at drop-off.

- Each health screener will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, muscle pain, rash, or extreme fussiness, and confirm that the child is not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.

- The health screener will take the child's temperature. If a child has a temperature of 100.3 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, he or she will not be permitted at school.
- Symptoms will be recorded on the [paper attendance form](#) or the CampDoc digital health form.

Enhanced Health and Wellness Policy

If someone becomes sick or exhibits any symptoms of COVID-19 including fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea while at Earthplace Preschool:

- The child's parents will be notified
- The child must be picked up within 30 minutes and must be evaluated by his or her pediatrician or healthcare provider.
- Please follow the healthcare provider's instructions for exclusion from, or return to, the program.
- The child must be cleared by his or her healthcare provider and must have a note from the healthcare provider before he or she can return to Earthplace.
- The other children in the classroom will be taken outdoors, if weather permits, while the classroom is cleaned and sanitized.
- Earthplace will contact the Westport/Weston Health District, and we will follow their instructions.
- If the sick person is a staff member, the staff member will remain at home for the remainder of the week or longer according to the healthcare provider's instructions. Staff members must also be cleared by their healthcare provider and must have a note from the healthcare provider before they can return to Earthplace.
- All parents in the program will be notified and will receive further instructions.
- Confidentiality will be maintained.

FAQ's

When will the Earthplace Preschool Reopen?

The Preschool will reopen on Monday, August 31st for full-time childcare students and on Tuesday, September 8th for part-time students to allow additional time to prepare our learning environments. Please see the updated program calendars for [full-time and part-time](#) programs. Should public health guidelines change our plan, we will alert families as soon as possible.

The most important thing to remember is we are all in this together. A successful reopening is contingent upon the behavior of our community members including preschool families, teachers, and Earthplace employees to suppress the spread of COVID-19. That includes reporting any coronavirus symptoms listed by the CDC, reporting possible exposure, reporting travel to states that meet the criteria for the [regional travel advisory](#), and abiding by the policies set forth by Earthplace Preschool and the Westport/Weston Health District.

Should I be confident in sending my child to school at this point in time?

Last spring, Earthplace made the decision to close its preschool program and suspend all in-person operations because our state was unprepared for this pandemic. We lacked sufficient testing to guide decision-making and we lacked the PPE needed in order to operate safely.

The conditions in the state of Connecticut are very different now. This summer we have proven that we are able to operate the preschool and summer camp in a manner that meets or exceeds the guidelines set forth by the Office of the Governor and the Office of Early Childhood.

We recognize that children need to be outdoors, to interact socially, and to have enriching hands-on experiences. Earthplace has ample space indoors and outdoors to follow social distancing recommendations, and we have highly trained and professional staff members who will implement our plan as outlined below. Our job is to mitigate risk of infection to the greatest extent possible by meeting or exceeding all state health guidelines for each program.

What are the hours of operation?

Our hours of operation will be:

- 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Full-Day Childcare for Infants
- 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Full-Day Childcare for Toddlers, and Preschoolers
- 9:00 am to 12:45 pm Part-Day Preschool for Toddlers and Twos
- 8:45 am to 1:00 pm Part-Day Preschool for Children Ages Three to Five

Daily Health Screenings will be performed at drop-off including temperature checks, and health related questions.

Will there be any changes to classes and groups?

Yes. Each class group will have a maximum of 16 children until further notice and each class group will be isolated from the other groups to reduce unnecessary contact. This means that classes will need to be reorganized:

- Full-time childcare students will be grouped together:
 - Infants and toddlers in the Nest classroom, 4:00 pm dismissal

- 2-year-olds in the Chickadees classroom, 6:00 pm dismissal
- 3 to 5-year-olds in the Orioles classroom, 6:00 pm dismissal

- Part-time preschool students will be grouped as follows:
 - Chickadees, 2 and 3-year olds 12:45 pm dismissal
 - Blue Jays, Meadowlarks, and Ospreys, 3 and 4-year-olds 1:00 pm dismissal
 - Barn Owls, 4 and 5-year-olds, 1:00 pm dismissal

Will there be Extended Day?

Unfortunately, we can no longer offer Extended Day on a per diem basis.

Will there be a tuition increase?

No increase is planned. Earthplace Preschool has decided to absorb the increased operating costs associated with following state guidelines for smaller class sizes, increased PPE, and cleaning supplies. We are not going to pass on these costs at this time, and are grateful for your continued support of our program.

Will the Earthplace building be open to the public during the 2020-2021 school year?

In order to implement social distancing policies and to prioritize the safety of our students and staff, the Earthplace building will be closed to the public during school hours. There may be limited public access to Animal Hall and NaturePlace from the exterior entrances on weekday afternoons and on weekends .

What will happen if there is a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 in the preschool program?

We will follow the practices below as directed by state and local health officials:

- Contact the Westport/Weston Health District and follow their instructions.
- Determine the date of symptom onset for the child/staff member.
- Determine if the child/staff member attended/worked at the program while symptomatic or during the two days before symptoms began.
- Identify what days the child/staff member attended/worked during that time.
- Determine who had close contact with the child/staff member at the program during those days.
- Notify anyone who had close contact with the child/staff member at the program during those days.
- Exclude the children and staff members who are determined to have had close contact with the affected child/staff member for 14 days after the last day they had contact with the affected child/staff member.
- Conduct appropriate cleaning and disinfection:
 - Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
 - Wait up to 24 hours or as long as possible before cleaning or disinfecting to allow respiratory droplets to settle before cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
 - If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - Depending on the size of the program and the number of people affected, closure of a

particular room or rooms in the program or the entire program might need to be considered.

Will tuition be refunded if the closure of a particular classroom in the program or the entire program is deemed to be necessary by the Earthplace Board or a local, state, or federal government agency?

- In the event of a temporary closure of one or more classrooms lasting 14 days or less due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no tuition refunds..
- If the entire preschool is ordered to close by the Earthplace Board, a federal, state, or local government agency for a duration longer than 14 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic or other hazardous conditions beyond the reasonable control of Earthplace, a prorated refund of 50% of the unused portion of tuition payments will be offered.

Will there be distance learning in the event of a shut down?

- In the event that there is a short-term closure of a particular classroom in the program or the entire program lasting two weeks or less, curriculum materials will be provided.
- In the unlikely event that Earthplace is ordered to close by the Earthplace Board, a federal, state, or local government agency for a duration longer than 14 days, teachers will conduct online meetings for a total of 60 minutes per week and videos and curriculum materials will be provided.

Will Earthplace close its Preschool program if public schools are closed?

No. Earthplace is a state licensed Childcare facility that is regarded by the state of CT as an essential service. We have designed our operating plan to meet or exceed all state requirements and our staff are following all indoor and outdoor guidelines. As an organization we have prioritized the safety of the preschool families and the continued operation of the preschool.

Will there be any new forms to complete?

Yes. We have a new [Earthplace Preschool Contract](#) & Informed Consent form.

Per the Office of Early Childhood, Preschools and Childcare Programs shall inform and obtain signed consent on the [form](#) posted on the OEC website from all staff and the parent(s) of all children enrolled that they have received notice of the following:

- People who are 65 years and older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions or are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are recommended to stay at home. A list of medical conditions associated with a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 can be found in the CDC's guidance. Individuals and families should consult their healthcare providers to determine whether they have medical conditions that place them at risk.
- Staff and children living in households with individuals who are 65 years and older OR have a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are recommended to stay home.