

# MARITIME ODYSSEY PRESCHOOL

## PARENT HANDBOOK

School Year 2020/2021 - 2022



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## **MISSION, VISION & CORE BELIEFS**

### **MISSION**

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool exists to provide a safe, supportive and high-quality learning environment for all students, staff and families.

### **VISION**

We aspire to be an innovative, high-quality early childhood center that prepares each student for success in kindergarten and beyond.

### **CORE BELIEFS**

- We believe that children and their well-being is our first priority.
- We believe that all children can learn and hold high expectations for our children and ourselves.
- We believe that all children, families, staff and their cultures have value and relevance.
- We believe that children should be exposed to STEAM curricula at the earliest possible age.
- We believe that learning and improvement is continuous.
- We believe that success is a collective effort.
- We believe that success is a result of hard work..



## **WHY IS PRESCHOOL IMPORTANT?**

Preschool lays the foundation for children to understand what “school” actually is. Teachers use a variety of methods to help children grow cognitively, as well as conceptually. A positive relationship with preschool teachers can make an exponential difference in a child’s success as they continue through elementary school.

### **School Readiness Program and Child Day Care Program Description**

Our program operates year round Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. We are a state-funded, School Readiness (SR) and Child Day Care (CDC) program licensed by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). We serve children ages 14 months to 5 years old, including children with disabilities and/or special needs. The Maritime Odyssey Preschool promotes the enrollment of children from diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Our priority is to provide high-quality child care, education, nutrition, health and social services along with a strong focus on parental engagement.

The goal of The Maritime Odyssey CDC/SR preschool is to provide high-quality S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Mathematics) education to your child in a safe environment where they can enjoy an exciting well-rounded academic and enrichment program. We encourage support and understanding of each other within the classroom, the program, with parents and within the community.

Children quickly learn to share, take turns and remain on task while developing self-confidence, independence and more. The environment is designed to meet the individual needs of all children in the program, including children with special needs or challenging behaviors. Moreover, our intent is to support children’s growth and development through a wide-range of goals and objectives in helping them to succeed in life.

## **FACILITY**

The program is located in the Nathaniel Ely School at 11 Ingalls Avenue, Norwalk CT 06854

## **ACCREDITATION AND LICENSING**

The program has been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young children since 2018.

The program is licensed by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. A copy of the license is posted in the building.

## **CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT**

For an updated NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct please go to [naeyc.org](http://naeyc.org). Copies of the Code of Ethical Conduct are also available in the preschool office.



## NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, national origin or sexual orientation.

## RATIOS

Appropriate ratios are kept according to the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood licensing manual. The appropriate ratio varies with the age of the children enrolled. The ratios for the program are as follows:

- Mixed ages 5 weeks through 3 year olds - 1 adult to 4 children
- mixed ages 3 years and older - 1 adult to 10 children.

## COLLABORATION

At the Maritime Odyssey preschool we believe that collaborative partnerships strengthen the experiences for children and families. Our two primary partners are the Maritime Aquarium and Grace Baptist Church, both located in South Norwalk, CT. The Maritime Aquarium staff offer daily S.T.E.A.M. classes on-site for children in the S.T.E.A.M. lab, as well as develop an early childhood S.T.E.A.M. curriculum. Grace Baptist Church, through the Family Executive Center of South Norwalk, provides assistance to families in accessing adult education programs and other community resources. In addition to the Maritime Aquarium and Grace Baptist Church, our preschool utilizes the services of an educational consultant, a nurse consultant, a social services consultant and a local dentist.

## CDC/SR SERVICES

The Maritime Odyssey CDC/SR programs and services reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of all families. As an advocate for our families, The Maritime Odyssey CDC/SR program provides collaboration and coordination of resources, within both the public and private sectors, to all members of the community and their children without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

***The Maritime Odyssey Preschool in partnership with Grace Baptist Church and the Maritime Aquarium serves the entire community, but more importantly— it serves the whole child.***

## ODYSSEY FAMILY EXECUTIVE CENTER OF SOUTH NORWALK

The mission of the Family Executive Center of South Norwalk is to work in partnership with families, community organizations and industry leaders to provide access to information, resources and career pathways that will position families to improve outcomes for their children and themselves. We use a 2-Generation and collective impact approach towards tackling opportunity gaps that have hindered families for far too long. We accomplish this through six focus areas that guide our work: Technology, Prenatal Parent Support and Education, Mentoring, Counseling, Employment and Training.



## **BIC EDUCATION CENTER**

The BIC Education Center serves as an extension space of the Odyssey Family Executive Center of South Norwalk hosting meetings, workshops and training for parents, staff and community partners of the Family Executive Center and the Maritime Odyssey Preschool.

### **THE ODYSSEY CULTURAL INNOVATION LAB AT THE SONO COLLECTION**

The preschool offers early learning groups to families Mondays through Fridays at the SONO Collection. As leaders in the field of early childhood education, we understand the importance of fostering cultural and global awareness at a young age. Research has shown that a curriculum focused on global citizenship can contribute to countering negative conceptions of self in very young children. The Odyssey Cultural Innovation Lab will enhance their child's awareness of our global community. For two hours every day, children will learn about language, art, music, influential leaders, food, customs, clothing, dance and more from different countries and cultures. Two days a week their learning will incorporate hands-on art experiences and world drumming based on the country of study. Children will learn to respect both the unique qualities of different cultures along with the similarities between all cultures.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

**Monisha Gibson**, CEO/Director

**Johnathan Gibson**, COO

**Gayon Mills-Austin**, Director of Programs Odyssey Early Learning and Enrichment Programs

**Andrea Sewell**, Director of Early Learning

**Donald Austin**, Director of Enrollment and Recruiting

**Rosie Navarro**, Director of Culture and Compliance

**Prema Winn**, Executive Director of the Odyssey Family Executive Center of South Norwalk

### **CONSULTANTS**

Social Services Consultant- *Dr. Shirley Carlos (LCSW)*

Dental Consultant- *Dr. Carol Felder*

Educational Consultant- *Dr. Beatrice M. Krawiecki*

Nurse Consultant- *Liseth Perez R.N.*



## PARENT ORIENTATION

Parent orientation is offered to new, returning and transitioning families in our program. This is an occasion to gain a wealth of information relative to the following and more: Program Partnerships , Program Policies and Procedures, Field Trips, Transition into kindergarten, Curriculum, Health and Safety, Nutritious Meals, Tuition, Child Assessments and, Parent Advisory Board, Parent Handbook, Maritime Aquarium Memberships, Literacy Education and The Family Executive Center of South Norwalk.

## ROLE OF THE PARENT

Studies have proven that the more involved parents are in their children's education, the more successful their children are throughout school and beyond. Some of a child's most important cognitive development happens during their preschool years. By taking an active role in the early childhood education process, parents can help ensure that their child has all the support they need to develop to their full potential. Parent involvement helps extend teaching outside the classroom, creates a more positive experience for children and helps children perform better when they are in school.

Parent involvement in early childhood education can extend the experiences that a child has in the classroom to real-world activities that happen in the home. A parent who understands what their child is working on at preschool has a better sense of their child's competency and which areas they need to work on to improve confidence and ability.

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool strives to nurture the inherent potential of every child by uniting families, school, and communities. The program trains school staff to partner with families in support of children's education and well-being. By blending best practices in teacher training, and family and community engagement, the program creates a more welcoming environment for all families. Parents can always visit, observe and participate in their children's classroom or school activities.

We encourage parents to become actively engaged and your participation is eagerly welcomed in the programs. Your involvement can take many forms, and we hope that all parents will find meaningful ways to participate in their child's Laboratory experience.

### ***Some ways in which you may choose to participate include, but are not limited to:***

- Field trip chaperone
- Assistant teaching (occasionally or on a routine basis)
- Leading or assisting in special projects (carpentry, sewing, music, cooking, science experiments, cultural experiences, etc.)
- Construction or collection of materials for the program's use such as paint aprons, raw materials for art projects, dress-up clothes, dramatic play props, carpentry materials, etc.
- Attending or planning parent workshops
- Eating a morning snack, lunch, or afternoon snack with your child – The program must know 24 hours in advance if you will be eating lunch with your child.





Please note that it is a requirement of School Readiness and CDC for parents to attend a minimum of two workshops or activities each year. Childcare and light refreshments will almost always be provided at these workshops. Information about classroom or program activities will be posted on the Parent Board in your child's classroom , placed in your child's cubby or sent via email or text message.



## ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Teachers play an important role in building a child's success in their first years of school. They do more than facilitate arts and crafts projects throughout the day. They provide structure and help children grow in their reading and writing skills, teach science and help children understand themselves.

“There’s increasing evidence that children gain a lot from going to preschool,” says *Parents* advisor Kathleen McCartney, PhD, dean of Harvard Graduate School of Education (Parents.com, Why Preschool Matters). “At preschool, they become exposed to numbers, letters, and shapes. And, more important, they learn how to socialize — get along with other children, share, contribute to circle time.” But this doesn’t happen alone- it happens at the hands of preschool teachers.

Our teachers are trained in the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) best practices which promote:

- Equity for all children, through the setting of high, but appropriate, expectations
- High-quality early learning experiences, by providing clear goals and trajectories of learning
- Provision of individual support, based on each child’s growth and development
- Families’ understanding of what their children are learning and how they can support them
- Teachers’ understanding of age-appropriate content and approaches to children’s learning
- Communication across sectors, based upon these common goals for children.

To keep current with advancements or changes in the field of early childhood, every teacher is required to participate in at least 15 hours of professional development throughout the year. Teachers employ a philosophy of hands-on experiences for children as the best way for them to construct their own knowledge. Teachers act as facilitators in the classroom, encouraging each child to try a variety of activities and helping them develop the necessary skills to be successful in school and in the years to come.



## CURRICULUM

Both our toddler and preschool programs utilize curriculums which are closely aligned with the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS). The CT ELDS are used as the basis for planning learning experiences, observing and documenting child progress, and implementing teacher strategies.

### **Toddler Program**

The toddler program utilizes the The Creative Curriculum by Teaching Strategies Gold. The Creative Curriculum for Toddlers & Twos is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum designed to help teachers and implement developmentally appropriate practices and offer responsive daily routines and meaningful experiences that nurture learning and development.

The Creative Curriculum is a comprehensive collection of knowledge-building and daily practice resources that helps to provide responsive, intentional care to very young children. The three curriculum volumes that make up The Foundation contain everything our teachers need to know to build and implement a high-quality program, with a focus on responsive care and the routines and experiences that are so essential to the growth and development of children from birth to age 3. The Daily Resources are instructional tools that feature expanded and detailed guidance for providing intentional, responsive care and teaching during routines and learning experiences for very young children.

#### *Curriculum Objectives*

The research-based objectives are the heart of the curriculum and define the path teachers take with children. The objectives identify the behaviors, skills, and knowledge that are most important for school success. Even though school is a few years away for children in the toddler program, the foundation for future development and learning is established in these very important early years.

#### *Developmental Areas*

- *Social - Emotional*
- *Language*
- *Physical*
- *Cognitive*

#### *Content Areas*

- *Literacy*
- *Mathematics*
- *Science and Technology*



- *Social Studies*
- *The Arts*
- *English Language Acquisition*

## **Preschool Program**

The preschool program utilizes the Big Day for PreK curriculum. Big Day for PreK is a proven and effective comprehensive program that ensures kindergarten readiness by building the foundation for success in school and life. When children enter the prekindergarten classroom, they are ready to make friends, play, and learn. Every day is a big day in their world. Big Day for PreK embraces children’s natural curiosity and encourages them to explore and connect to the world around them. The curriculum incorporates the most current research on child development into a program that celebrates early learners and prepares children for success.

Big Day for PreK supports intentional and integrated prekindergarten instruction with the engaging tools that help children develop oral language, emergent literacy, and social-emotional skills. Based on years of research that demonstrate the importance of teacher-student interactions, immediate and regular access to the best literature available, and the need for social-emotional development instruction, Big Day for PreK offers teachers a thematic and integrated approach to guiding our youngest learners. Organized around eight themes that grow in scope as children become more aware of their surroundings, the program introduces children to math, literacy, science, and the arts in a way that feels like play and inspires joyful engagement.

### ***Big Day for PreK - Elements of Success***

- “Big Experiences” that engage children in playful, intentional learning and integrate social-emotional, academic, and physical development.
- Meaningful conversations with strategies that accelerate oral language development and vocabulary acquisition.
- Access to literature and nonfiction books in multiple media formats.
- Innovative technology for children, teachers, and families.
- Family experience through interactive resources, strategies and online communication.
- A comprehensive program with total equity in English and Spanish.



## SAMPLE OF DAILY SCHEDULE

Each class has a daily schedule that is posted inside the classroom, but the following are some components that will be incorporated into each day:

ACTIVITY	STAFF RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Arrival:</b> Wash Hands	
Choice Time/Indoor Explorations – children select from a variety of activity areas including: Art, House/Dramatic Play, Reading, Science, Math, Writing, Sand and Water Table, Games and Puzzles or Project work.	Supervise all areas, assist children with choices when necessary, discuss and motivate cooperation, creativity and peer interactions. Encourage children to help keep choice time areas organized and neat.
<b>Group Time</b> – large group activity which begins the day with introductory songs, events of the day, news, sharing and discussion of project work.	Participate in singing, focus children’s attention on teacher directing activity, and encourage participation of all children.
<b>Morning Snack</b> – nutritious snacks are provided for the children with milk and water.	Supervise hand-washing, wash tables with three step method before and after snack. Encourage self-help skills and assisting with clean up after snack. Sit with children at tables and encourage conversations.
<b>Outdoor Explorations</b> – Outdoor play on the playground with a wide variety of age appropriate equipment, games and materials.	Check that all children are appropriately dressed before going out. Check all equipment and toys prior to use. All areas of the playground must be supervised. Avoid personal conversations with other staff. All equipment must be stored in proper places.
<b>Family Circle</b> – Sing songs, discuss any social issues that need to be discussed, or read a book aloud to the children.	Encourage children to participate in singing and discussion. Help focus children on the story. Quietly redirect children and avoid calling out names. Sing along! Learn the songs, share a new song, play and instrument, or teach a finger play.
<b>Lunch</b> – Children will have lunch. They will be served family style if eating hot lunch at school or they will get out their lunch boxes if eating a cold lunch from home.	Supervise hand washing. Supervise and help as needed with lunch. Sit with children and engage children in conversations at the table. Assist with clean up after lunch. Staff offer alternative activity for those finished eating
<b>Nap Time</b> – Children will assist getting rest cots ready by putting on crib sheet, blanket, pillow and stuffed animal. Children will rest quietly on rest cots.	Help distribute rest cots, remembering to leave space between each child. Help settle children and avoid conversation. Staff offers alternative quiet activity for children who have rested after a certain period of time.
<b>Choice Time/Indoor Explorations</b> – children select from a variety of activity areas including: Art, House/Dramatic Play, Reading, Science, Math, Writing, Sand and Water Table, Games and Puzzles or Project work	Supervise all areas, assist children with choices when necessary, discuss and motivate cooperation, creativity and peer interactions. Encourage children to help keep choice time areas organized and neat.
<b>Afternoon Snack</b> – nutritious snacks are provided for the children with milk and water.	Supervise hand-washing, wash tables with three step method before and after snack. Encourage self-help skills and assisting with clean up after snack. Sit with children at tables and encourage conversations.
<b>Music and Movement</b> – Children will be given the opportunity to have a music and movement experience.	Participate in singing, focus children’s attention on teacher directing activity, and encourage participation of all children. Learn the songs, share a new song, play and instrument or teach a finger play.
<b>Outdoor Explorations</b> – Outdoor play on the playground with a wide variety of age appropriate equipment, games and materials.	Check that all children are appropriately dressed before going out. Check all equipment and toys prior to use. All areas of the playground must be supervised. Avoid personal conversations with other staff. All equipment must be stored in proper places.



## **NAP TIME**

Nap time is an important opportunity for growing, active children to rest and re-energize. This is also a time for teachers to regroup, clean, do paperwork, discuss the day's activities, and plan future lessons for the class.

All children rest in the afternoon. Children are asked to rest but are not required to sleep. Children are helped to relax by a variety of methods: darkened room, soft music or story tapes, rubbing backs, etc. Non-nappers are asked to rest quietly on their cot for 30 minutes. After that time, they may get up and participate in quiet activities. We will try to accommodate parent's requests to individualize children's rest routines. Please discuss specific accommodations with your child's teacher.

We ask that parents bring a small soft blanket, a crib sheet and a pillow or soft toy. We will send these items home weekly for the parent to launder and return to school the first day the child attends in the following week.

## **ODYSSEY VIRTUAL PRESCHOOL**

Instruction is delivered remotely through a virtual learning environment and e-learning students will have access to the same high-quality curriculum and assignments as our in-class students. Remote learners are able to interact with teachers in real time or parents can opt to receive videos and assignments through email to view at their convenience. Students will be given a schedule of classes and teachers will instruct learning activities and assign homework. Homework assignments will be collected and used to measure your child's progress. Parents can communicate and support children's work in this environment; in addition, if necessary, parents may contact their child's teacher or the Director of Early Learning via email.

### ***What you can expect from Odyssey Virtual Preschool?***

- Students will receive high-quality curriculum and assignments through a virtual learning environment.
- Students will be given a schedule of classes
- Students should login each day to check for assignments and instructions from the teacher.
- Teachers will post instructional videos and supplemental materials to support students' learning.
- Parents of children in the preschool program will be granted access to the Big Day for PreK Parent Portal.
- Students will have access to videos of teachers reading story books.
- Teachers will be available to monitor and respond to parents emails from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm every day regarding questions about assignments and instructional material.



## CHILD ASSESSMENTS

Quality preschool programs use developmental screenings and assessment tools to assess children's abilities in language, literacy, reasoning, gross motor, fine motor and personal/social development to determine quickly and efficiently the needs of your child. Teachers analyze the results and adjust their instruction accordingly in order to meet the developmental needs of children. At enrollment parents are required to grant the program permission for their child to be included in **ALL** assessments and screenings. The program utilizes the following assessments and screening:

- ***Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)***. ASQ provides reliable, accurate developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age 6. Drawing on parents' expert knowledge, ASQ has been specifically designed to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children—paving the way for meaningful next steps in learning, intervention, or monitoring.
- ***Preschool Early Learning Indicator (PELI)***. PELI is an assessment for 3- to 5-year-olds designed to measure pre-literacy and oral language skills.
- ***Observations and Portfolios***. During the preschool day teachers will utilize observations and interactions to gain knowledge about each child and their learning. Each observer will use guidelines on how to observe children and record their observations. Child Portfolios-tools may include checklists, social inventory, anecdotal records, self-reflections, progress reports, samples of work, drawings, paintings, writings, stories and photographs, etc. \*\*Parents are welcome to view their child's portfolio at any time.

## TRANSITIONING NEW CHILDREN

We prefer to have new children ease into the room and routine. If a child enters the program in the middle of the year, we recommend a few short visits, gradually lengthening the visit time, prior to full-day enrollment. This helps your child become familiar with the environment and also helps us get acquainted.

Each child is unique in his/her patterns and ease of adjustment to new situations. Be sure to talk with the staff daily during the transition phase. A consistent daily schedule (arrival and departure routines) also helps children adjust to a new routine and environment.

## SEPARATION

Children sometimes have difficulty separating upon arrival at school. This is typical behavior which, over time, should decrease as children become more secure in their new environment. Here are a few suggestions to help ease separation:

- Allow adequate time in the morning for arrival adjustment before needing to leave for work.
- While traveling, talk to your child about going to "school," their teacher, who will be there, etc. This prepares your child for what will occur. When you are rushed, children feel hurried and anxious.



- When you arrive, help your child get “settled in” by becoming involved in play.
- Once your child is playing comfortably, tell your child it’s time for you to go. (You might also try a two-minute warning ahead of time.) Please, do not leave without letting your child know. Children are establishing their sense of trust and need to see you go and see you return at the end of the day.
- Give hugs and kisses and reassure your child you will be back. It is helpful to give them an idea of your return by identifying a time of day you will be back (e.g. “I’ll see you after snack”).
- If there is still protest and difficulty, teachers are close by to help your child when you leave. Usually, children calm down and begin to play soon after you leave. Remember, even those children who are comfortable in play and in their environment need your attention, affection, and reassurance.
- Set daily routines for going to school.





## **COMMITMENT TO SERVING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool is committed to serving children with special needs. Teachers and families work together to make individual accommodations that provide ample access, participation and support to all children enrolled in the program. Of the numerous benefits to creating an inclusive preschool setting, one of great significance includes personal/social gains for children with special needs and ability to experience appropriate modeling of language and social exchanges. For our typically developing children it is an opportunity to increase acceptance and decrease fears of others who may be different from them. This too leads to gains in social/emotional and cognitive development. Families of children with special needs are also afforded an opportunity to be involved and gain a sense of belonging.

From time to time, teachers may observe and document that children are not developing at their age appropriate rate. Teachers will raise concerns they have regarding children's development to their team members and the Director of Early Learning. Concerns about children development will be conveyed to parents through phone calls and in-person conferences. Children who experience learning or developmental difficulties or delays may be referred, with parental permission, for evaluation and if eligible, services will be provided by the Local Education Authority (LEA), the Norwalk Public Schools and Birth -to- Three. The program will follow through to ensure that the required services are provided.

If a child has special needs or has an established Individual Education Plan (IEP), or is in the process of being evaluated, we will work with the family, the Board of Education and appropriate special education professionals, to help the child adapt to the classroom and prepare him/her kindergarten. With appropriate parental permission, our staff will communicate with all those involved in the child's education. Whenever possible, a staff member will attend Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings to better understand and to share information, pertaining to a child's progress. Our goal is for children to receive the services they need in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and to create an atmosphere in which children are accommodated in an inclusive setting that appropriately meets their needs. Children may receive services on site, have an aide from the public school shadow him/her, or they may receive special services from the LEA offsite and then return to the program for the remainder of the day.



## **TIME FOR KINDERGARTEN**

Towards the end of the school year the Director of Early Learning and an administrator of Norwalk Public Schools will coordinate with parents to facilitate the enrollment of children into kindergarten. Parents will be invited to kindergarten transition meetings and will receive tips to get both them and their child ready for kindergarten. Parents will also be given information about Norwalk Public Schools and elementary school options.

Kindergarten teachers often will visit and observe children in the preschool classroom or schedule children to visit their new classroom. Parents can partner with the program by participating in kindergarten transition experiences as they occur in the classroom.

### ***Kindergarten Registration***

Norwalk Public Schools **ONLY** accepts online registrations. Parents who need assistance in completing the registration process are encouraged to contact their child's teacher or schedule an appointment with the Director of Early Learning.

## **LITERACY ACTIVITIES**

The program is committed to working in partnership with families to enhance literacy experiences for children. Some of the ways in which this is done are: Family Literacy Night, mystery reader engagement opportunities and first Friday Reads. These activities are geared towards the enjoyment of the entire family and are fun and exciting. They promote a love of reading and learning. Additional literacy activities are provided during open house in September.

## **CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY**

The Maritime Odyssey CDC/SR program stresses the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity. Prior to admission to the program, parents are asked to complete a Home Language Survey and Cultural Questionnaire. Information from the survey and questionnaire is used to identify the needs of the family and provide resources or referrals for families. Classroom materials will reflect a wide range of cultures and languages and provide experiences that stimulate children's natural curiosity about the world around them while celebrating each child's own cultural experience. Parents are invited to share arts and crafts that represent their own family background. Please let your child's teachers know if you are able to volunteer your skills and your time to the classroom to aid in these efforts.



## COMMITTEES

### *Parent Advisory Board*

The goal of the Parent Advisory Board is to promote and maintain positive attitudes among the community, parents, students, faculty, staff and administrators while allowing for input and advice on school policy and procedures. Meetings are held at the school 4 times a year and more frequently when planning special events.

A maximum of 13 parents are permitted to sit on the board. Parents are encouraged to recruit each other and members cannot serve for more than three executive years. Events planned by the Parent Advisory Board include: Harvest Festival, Winter Celebration, International Night, Teachers Appreciation Week and fundraisers.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers in the classroom are welcomed. You, a grandparent, an uncle or aunt, or other significant family friends are welcome to come to the classroom and share special skills, interests and experiences with the children. Possibilities include but are not limited to:

- Read a book
- Tell a story
- Assist with a special art lesson in drawing, painting, sculpture (no arts/crafts project)
- Do some science or math experiments
- Show photos from a past trip
- Tell about your job, hobbies, etc.
- Cooking activities, holiday foods, ethnic recipes, healthy snacks
- Play an instrument, teach new songs
- Teach a dance or exercise program, yoga
- Share information about your culture/country, teach a language
- Talk about your favorite artists, musicians, bring examples of their work
- Gardening and planting

Classroom volunteer hours will be coordinated with the head teacher of the classroom. If you are interested in volunteering on a regular basis, please indicate that interest. Visitors are required to check in at the front desk.



## CELEBRATIONS

The program is respectful of all families' cultures. As such, parents are encouraged to bring their traditions to life in the classroom by sharing information on how they celebrate holidays in their respective culture. Teaching teams will then incorporate this into the curriculum and plan experiences that are developmentally appropriate.

### ***International Night***

Each year MOP hosts an International Night in celebration of the very diverse backgrounds of our families. Families come dressed in traditional attire and share native foods. This is an opportunity for Children and families to learn to both respect and appreciate the unique qualities of different cultures along with the similarities.

### ***Birthdays***

If you would like your child's birthday to be celebrated, you are welcome to bring a nutritious snack to share. Check with your child's teacher for suggestions on fun and nutritious snack ideas. Due to child care licensing regulations, all snacks must be pre-packaged. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher at least two days prior to the birthday.



## **ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The program has an evaluation process each year for families, staff and others to collect information on quality. For staff, an evaluation is done using NAEYC teacher surveys. Evaluation allows teachers to reflect and assess the effectiveness of the preschool program. Our program also has a Teacher Advisory Board, where teachers can reflect, share and present solutions to concerns and/or problems. According to the NAEYC, research clearly shows that a key step in raising the quality of early childhood programs is improving preparation and support for early childhood teachers. Faculty at colleges, universities and other institutions play a crucial role in the development and continuing education of early childhood professionals, who will help young children get a great start on learning. Maritime Odyssey Preschool teachers are required to have a professional development plan and continue their education to enhance the quality of the program and classroom experience for children.



## PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool is a state-licensed and funded School Readiness Program/Child Daycare Center. Children must attend school for a minimum of 6-hours each day. This is a requirement of School Readiness and the Office of Early Childhood.

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, which when followed, sets your child up for success. Attending school regularly and on time helps children feel better about school, and themselves. Your child can start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help your child do well in high school, college, and beyond.

#### *Please notify us if:*

- Your child is ill or will be absent. Kindly inform your child's teacher or the front desk a minimum of 24 hours prior to all scheduled doctor's appointments.
- Your child is absent for three or more consecutive days due to an illness. We will require a doctor's note stating that your child is able to return to school. Your child will not be allowed to return to school without a doctor's note.
- Your child will be absent for three or more consecutive days due to a non illness. You will need to write a letter prior to your child being absent stating the reason and dates of their absence.

### LATENESS POLICY

Learning starts promptly at 9:00 a.m. and we ask that you bring your child to their classroom by that time. Arriving late is highly disruptive as your child may need time to settle down. Being late can also affect the classroom as a whole if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children who are late get settled or catch up on what was already covered.

- Your child is allowed 5 occurrences of excused lateness per calendar month, but you must notify the front desk ahead of time when you are running late.
- Each time your child arrives after 9:30 a.m., they will be issued a Late Slip. After they have accumulated 5 Late Slips in the calendar month, on the 6th occurrence and each occurrence thereafter they will be excluded from the program for the day until a new month begins.

### ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The safety and security of the children is our number one priority and we have put several safeguards in place to keep track of every child while they are in our care. However, the best processes and systems will prove ineffective if they are not properly followed.

At enrollment your fingerprint will be captured into our biometric system. This system is a quick and reliable way to authenticate your identity when picking up your child. This system is not meant to be a replacement for your ID and **YOU SHOULD HAVE YOUR ID WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES WHEN IN THE BUILDING.** Parents are required to provide ID to any staff member upon request.



Please sign your child in at arrival and out at departure. Two fingerprint readers are conveniently located at the front desk. If the scanner does not read your fingerprint, kindly let the person at the front desk know. If you do not check-in, you will not be permitted to go beyond the front desk. As a backup, you will also be required to sign your child in and out on the classroom's Weekly Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheet. **\*\* Safety and security must be everyone's concern and it is important that you adhere to this policy.\*\***

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures (Daily Sign In/Out)**

Each day you are to sign your child in and out using the fingerprint readers located at the front desk **BEFORE** going to the classroom.

- You are to also sign your child in and out of the classroom on the Weekly Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheet.
- **Anyone dropping-off a child is to make sure that the teacher acknowledges the child's presence before leaving the classroom.**
- **At no time is a child to be left unattended anywhere in the building.**
- Arrival time is an opportunity for teaching staff to greet parents and briefly answer questions or address any concerns you may have regarding your child.
- Classrooms open as early as 7:30 a.m. and close promptly at 5:30 p.m.
- Children should be dropped off by 9:00 a.m.
- It is your responsibility to notify the front desk if you are going to arrive after 9:30 a.m. or if your child will be absent.
- If your child has a scheduled doctor's appointment and will be late or absent, please notify the program 24 hours prior to their appointment.
- **Please do not park in the fire lane.** For everyone's safety and security first responders and emergency vehicles must have quick access to the fire lanes.
- **PARENTS SHOULD NOT LEAVE CHILDREN UNATTENDED IN CARS WHILE DROPPING OFF AN ENROLLED CHILD. IF SO, THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF) WILL BE NOTIFIED AS THE MARITIME ODYSSEY PRESCHOOL STAFF ARE MANDATED REPORTERS.**



## PERSONS AUTHORIZED TO PICK-UP A CHILD/EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

Parents are required to list the names and telephone numbers of all persons authorized to pick-up their child in cases of emergencies. Children under the age of 13 are not allowed to pick-up a child, but children between the ages of 13 and 18 are allowed to but are required to show their school ID. Parents, and all persons authorized to pick-up their child, must be listed on this form and will be required to present identification upon request, before the child is released from the program. If a parent has full custodial rights of a child and does not wish for his/ her biological father/mother or legal guardian to pick-up the child, the parent will need to provide evidence by way of a court order. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure the accuracy of this list while a child is enrolled in the program. We recommend that parents review it periodically and immediately inform the program if they wish to make any changes.

**WE CANNOT** release a child from the program to any person who is not on the pick-up list. If the person attempting to pick-up a child is not on this list or if there are any questions, the parent will be contacted and the child will not be released from the program until the parent sends an authorization by email from the email address of record. The email needs to identify the name of the person to whom the parent is authorizing the program to release a child. The email authorization is **only** valid for the day it is received. If a parent wishes to add this person to your pick-up list, they will need to amend this form.

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool, its officers, agents and employees, cannot be held liable for claims, which may arise out of, or occur, in connection with a child being picked-up from the program by an authorized alternate person in the parent's absence.

### **LATE PICK-UP POLICY**

The program operates Mondays through Fridays, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Our staff members work very hard each and every day and want to feel confident that they can leave at 5:30 p.m. Many staff members have evening commitments and parents who arrive late often interfere with these plans.

At enrollment parents are informed of their child's schedule for drop-off and pick-up. Parents are required to follow this schedule. If a parent is unable to pick-up their child at the scheduled time, they are to notify the front desk that they or an authorized person from the list will be late.

We close promptly at 5:30 p.m. You will be considered late if you arrive after 5:30 p.m. to pick up your child. Two staff members, ages 18 years of age or older will remain at the program with your child at all times, until you or an authorized person from the pick-up list arrive. If your child is not picked-up by 5:30 p.m., we will attempt to reach you by phone, text or email. If we are unable to reach you, we will try to contact the other persons authorized to pick-up your child. **After 5:45 p.m., we reserve the right to contact the Norwalk Police Department if you do not pick-up your child, or if we are unable to contact you or any other person authorized to pick-up your child. Your child may be released into the custody of the police. You can arrange to pick him/her up by contacting the police at 203-854-3000.**





## HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

### *Early Childhood Assessment Record or Physical*

Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood (OEC) requires an annual physical examination for all children ages birth - 5, who attend a licensed preschool program, to be maintained on record. It is also required that all children have certain standard immunizations and a tuberculin clearance. **Before your child can enter the program**, he/she must have a current physical signed by his/her physician and dated within the past 12 months.

It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their child has an annual physical and is current with their immunizations. **A child will not be enrolled, or be allowed to continue to attend the program, without a current physical.**

For families who need assistance securing medical insurance, a medical home, on-going well-child care, immunizations, health, dental and nutritional screenings, our social worker and/or our local community health center partners will work with families to ensure that the appropriate referrals and resources are provided.



## HEALTH POLICIES

### CPR/FIRST AID TRAINING FOR STAFF

All teaching staff are trained in First Aid/CPR.

### CLASSROOM FIRST AID KITS

Each classroom will have a backpack of First Aid supplies. This pack is to be taken with the class whenever leaving the room for outdoor play or taking a field trip.

### MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION POLICY

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool has a policy regarding the administration of medication to ensure the health and well-being of all children needing medication during the school day. The Program **WILL NOT** administer medication to any child until all the requirements outlined in this policy have been met.

To ensure that this policy is followed accurately and safely, designated staff have been trained to administer medication to children. Staff members are compliant with NAEYC required trainings for Infant/Child CPR, including Rescue Breathing, Connecticut First Aid Training, and at least one (1) staff member is also certified in Medication Administration Module I (to administer oral, inhalants, and topical meds; as well as Module II (Emergency Epi-Pen administration).

If your child has an allergy, asthma or any other medical condition that requires or may require the program to administer medication during school hours, you **MUST** provide the following documents, which are to be signed and dated by your child's doctor:

1. Plan of Care
2. Administration of Medication Authorization

Please note that both the Plan of Care and the Administration of Medication Authorization are to be completed on specific forms approved by the OEC, and your child's doctor may not have them in their office. You can pick them up from the front desk, as they are readily available. These authorizations have an expiration period, typically of a year, so they must be renewed prior to expiration, for the program to remain in compliance. Please pay close attention to these dates and program notices. **If the forms expire your child will be excluded from the program until we receive the updated forms or a letter from your child's physician stating that he/she no longer needs to take the medication during school.**

If you wish to have us administer medication to your child, please inform the Director of Early Learning as well as your child's teacher.



## CHILD MEDICATION

1. Medications are to be delivered to the school by the parent.
2. If possible, please have the pharmacy fill two sets of medication, one for home and the other to be left at school.
3. No more than a thirty (30) day supply of medicine should be delivered to school.
4. Medications must be in an unopened condition, in its original packaging with the pharmacy label affixed and not expired. **Medication that is open or not in its original packaging, expired, or does not have a pharmacy label, will NOT be accepted or administered.**
5. You must pick up your child's medication upon his/her graduation or withdrawal from the program. The program will only hold on to medication for two weeks after your child's last day, at which time it will be safely discarded.



## FOOD ALLERGIES

Food allergies can be life threatening. The risk of accidental exposure to foods can be reduced in the school setting when parents, teachers and physicians work together to minimize risks and provide a safe educational environment for food-allergic students.

Some of our students have food allergies so the program has adopted a **“NUT FREE”** policy to reduce the risk of their exposure. Any exposure to peanuts or nuts through contact or ingestion can cause a severe or life-threatening allergic reaction which requires emergency medical treatment.

Please **do not** send any peanuts or products containing nuts for your child to eat during snack in the classroom. Kindly read the ingredients on product labels before sending it to school. Additionally, if your child has eaten peanut or product containing nuts prior to coming to school, please be sure his/her hands have been thoroughly washed before coming to school.

The program requires an individual Plan of Care if a child has a food allergy. The Plan of Care must specify **ALL ALLERGIES**, the symptoms the child exhibits when experiencing an allergic reaction, the medication to be administered, the dosage, and the interval between doses. Teachers will be trained on special diets, allergies and the health needs of the child.

It is the parent’s responsibility to keep the program updated of the health needs of their child during the time their child is enrolled in the program. Parents are to notify the program if there is a change in their child’s health needs. **OUR PRESCHOOL IS A NUT FREE ENVIRONMENT.**



## DAILY SNACKS

The program provides children in preschool with a nutritious morning and afternoon snack daily, but parents are required to provide their child with breakfast and lunch. The snack menu is posted in your child's classroom. Parents are permitted to send snacks to school with their child, but in an effort to provide students with the healthiest environment we can, and to adhere to the OEC's Nutrition Standards, we are encouraging parents to provide only healthy snacks for school snacks.

### *Some Healthy Snack Foods*

Cereal with milk	Low-fat cheese melted on a whole-grain tortilla	Fresh cut-up fruit with yogurt for dipping
Graham crackers and low-fat milk	Yogurt with whole grain cereal or fruit on top	Baked tortilla chips and salsa
Baked potato with cottage cheese or salsa	Vegetables and low-fat dip	Whole-grain crackers or toast with hummus
Fruit salad	Low-fat string cheese	Yogurt smoothie
100% juice	Banana	Apples, grapes, oranges (cut into halves)
Whole-grain muffins	Bagels	Goldfish

### **Lunch**

The State mandates that all lunches be packed in a lunchbox with an ice pack to prevent perishable foods from going bad. The Maritime Odyssey Preschool ***will not*** reheat lunches. If you would like your child to have a hot lunch, the program recommends that you heat the lunch at home and pack it in a heat holding container such as a thermos.



## CHILD ILLNESS/SICK POLICY

A child who is sick will not be able to perform well in school and is likely to spread the illness to other children and staff. We suggest making a plan for childcare ahead of time so you will not be caught without a comforting place for your child to stay if he/she is ill.

You will be contacted and are required to pick up your child if he/she becomes ill at school and is too sick to benefit, participate or is possibly contagious to other children. It is essential that you keep your emergency, cell phone, and/or daytime numbers current as we must be able to reach you in an emergency. In the event you cannot be reached we will contact the other individuals on the Emergency Contact List and the Child Enrollment and Emergency Contact Form. Please be sure that arrangements can be made to pick-up your child within one hour of notice. If your daytime or emergency phone number changes during the, please notify the front desk.

***If your child has any of the following symptoms he/she will be excluded from the program:***

- Fever greater than 100.4 degrees.
- Chills
- Questionable rash or sore.
- Discharge from the ears.
- Pinkeye-tears, redness of eyelid lining, irritation, followed by swelling or discharge of pus
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea: More than one (1) abnormally loose stool. Gray or white stool.
- Unusually dark, tea colored urine
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Headache or stiff neck
- Sore throat
- Uncontrollable or persistent coughing and runny nose.
- Any illness or injury that prevents him/her from participating comfortably in regular activities.
- He/she expresses feeling ill or is observed to be in discomfort over a period of time.
- Severe itching of the body or scalp, or scratching of the scalp. These may be symptoms of lice or scabies.



- An infected skin patch(es)-crusty, bright yellow, dry or gummy areas of the skin
- Unusual spots or rashes
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Ringworm or any other form of communicable disease.
- Any other condition deemed necessary by the Director/Teacher for the well-being of the affected child, and to minimize the risk of contagion to the student population.

If a child is sent home due to them exhibiting any of the above symptoms, they must have a doctor's note in order to return to school. If a child is prescribed medication, he/she **MUST** have taken the medication for at least a period of 24 hour before they can return to school. The child must be symptom free for a minimum of 24 hours before they can return to school.

**YOU MUST ARRANGE FOR YOUR CHILD TO BE PICKED UP WITHIN ONE HOUR OF BEING CONTACTED BY THE SCHOOL.**

## FLU POLICY

Influenza (“the flu”) is an infectious virus. When children are in a group with other children, they are more likely to get infectious viruses like influenza. The flu can cause serious illness that may result in hospitalization or worse. Children with certain underlying medical conditions are at an increased risk for flu complications, but most who get the flu are healthy children.

Connecticut mandates that all children under the age of 5 receive their yearly flu vaccination between August 1st and December 31st. You must provide us with evidence of your child having received their flu vaccine or an exemption by January 2nd, or they will be excluded from the program. Your child will not be allowed to attend until you provide us with evidence that they have received their flu vaccine or an exemption.

Children who are NOT ill or experiencing any of the following symptoms can safely come to school:

- Fever-greater than 100°F. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- Vomiting (even once)
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- General malaise or feelings of fatigue, discomfort, weakness or muscle aches
- Frequent congested (wet) or croup cough
- Lots of nasal congestion with frequent blowing of the nose.

If your child is exhibiting any of the above symptoms while they are in our care, we will isolate them from the other children and require that they be picked up within 1 hour of you being notified.



If there is a confirmed case of the flu we will notify you by email and/or by a letter in your child's mailbox. Kindly keep in mind that we may not always be made aware of all cases as some may go unreported.

if your child has a religious or medical exemption and there is a confirmed case of the flu, our recommendation is that your child be excluded from the program until they receive their flu vaccine or the school nurse determines that the danger of their exposure to the flu virus has ended, which is for a period of a minimum of two (2) weeks. However, the decision to send your child to school will be left solely at your discretion.

## **INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY**

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool (MOP) is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for the children, parents, visitors and staff. MOP strives, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Office of Early Childhood (OEC), the Department of Public Health (DPH) and other state and local officials, to maintain a balance between the need to educate all students, protect staff and student rights, to prevent the transmission of significant infectious diseases.

### **IF YOUR CHILD IS INFECTED, THEY SHOULD STAY HOME. TAKING AN INFECTED CHILD TO SCHOOL WILL SHUT DOWN THE ENTIRE SCHOOL DOWN.**

In the event the CDC identifies a virus that puts the public at risk, we will follow the lead of the OEC, DPH and other state and local officials to ensure all proper protections are put in place for the safety of the children, parents, visitors and staff. In order to stay informed, we will constantly listen to public messages and check the websites of the OEC, DPH and CDC often for updates.

Significant Infectious Disease shall be defined as an illness due to an infectious agent or its toxic products which is transmitted directly or indirectly to a person from an infected person or animal through the agency of an intermediate animal, host or vector, or through the inanimate environment. A list of infectious diseases can be obtained by visiting the CDC's website at [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov).

Any parent who knows or who has reason to believe that they or their child are infected with a significant infectious disease have an ethical and legal obligation to conduct themselves in accordance with such knowledge in order to protect themselves and others.

If your child is diagnosed with, exposed to, or shows signs of significant infectious diseases, whether symptomatic or not, you are expected to seek expert medical advice and are encouraged to advise local health authorities. MOP is required by law to notify the state health department of all cases of reportable infectious disease.

Due to the contagious nature of infectious diseases and the requirements imposed on MOP by law, it is necessary for the School to be aware of all persons diagnosed with, exposed to, or who exhibit symptoms of a significant infectious disease. If your child has been diagnosed, exposed to, or shows signs of significant infectious diseases, whether symptomatic or not, you are required to share that information





with the appropriate school administrator listed below. MOP also urges all parents to report their child's diagnosis of any other communicable infectious diseases, including conjunctivitis and infectious mononucleosis to the appropriate School administrator. Medical information relating to the communicable diseases of a child will be disclosed to responsible MOP officials only on a strictly limited need-to-know basis.

### ***Procedures for Students with a Significant Infectious Disease***

- The parent of a child who is diagnosed with, exposed to, or has cause to believe he or she has a significant infectious disease, or who is requesting special accommodations, should notify the Director of Enrollment who will inform Senior Management, as necessary.
- MOP will report all necessary information, as required by law, to the Norwalk Department of Health.
- If necessary, MOP will develop a plan and procedure for addressing the reported significant infectious disease in conjunction with and after consulting the Norwalk Department of Health.

Any restrictions applied to the use of school facilities or personal contact will be based on a case-by-case basis after consulting with the Norwalk Department of Health. MOP has the authority to restrict a child with a significant infectious disease from the program for the purpose of ensuring the well-being of all of its employees and students. If MOP, in consultation with the Norwalk Department of Health, determines that the significant infectious disease requires limited contact with others, some of the restrictions available are to prohibit attendance at class or functions until a diagnosis has been made and clearance given by a healthcare provider or the Norwalk Department of Health.

### **Confidentiality and Assurance against Retaliation**

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of information received as a part of this policy and to protect the privacy of all parties involved. Retaliation against staff who report concerns is strictly prohibited and may be grounds for disciplinary action.

### **Disciplinary Procedure**

Parents found in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the **Parental Actions For Child's Expulsion Policy** outlined in the Parent Handbook.



## **INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK PROCEDURES - Drop-Off and Pick- Up**

In the event the CDC determines that there is a viral outbreak that poses a significant threat to the public, we will follow our established infectious disease outbreak protocol, outlined below:

- There will be designated pick-up and drop-off times.
- Parents will not be permitted to drop off or pick-up outside of the designated times.
- Parents will not be permitted to enter the building.
- Childrens will be taken directly from cars or from parents outside of the building.
- The temperature of the child and anyone accompanying the child, will be taken and recorded.
- If the child, parent or anyone accompanying the child, has a temperature 100 degrees or greater, **the child will not be permitted to stay.**

**Teachers will only be outside during the following drop-off and pick-up times:**

### ***Drop off Window***

7:30 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

9:15 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.

### **Pick-up Window**

2:30 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.

3:30 p.m. – 3:40 p.m.

4:30 p.m. - 4:40 p.m.

5:25 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.



## **WITHDRAWAL/EXPULSION OF CHILDREN**

Parents/guardians are required to provide the program with 4 weeks written notice prior to withdrawing their child. Tuition and other fees will remain the responsibility of the parent during those 4 weeks and must be paid in full. Likewise, if possible, the program will provide the same courtesy if care for a child must be terminated for any reason. The program will work with all children and families to avoid a child's expulsion.

## **PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSION**

The safety and security of our students, parents, guardians, persons authorized to pick up and visitors, is our number one priority. As such, the use of profane, abusive or threatening language or intimidating behavior or action, of any kind, under any circumstances by a parent, guardian, person authorized to pick up or visitor, to any staff, child or other parent, guardian, person authorized to pick up or visitor, is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED** and is subject to swift consequential action, which may result in, but is not limited to, your child/children being suspended or expelled from the program.



## OUTDOOR PLAY

Outdoor play is an important part of the early childhood curriculum, and we consider the outdoors an extension of the indoor classroom. Toys, materials, and activities are also available outdoors to enhance the children's play experience. Typically, children go outside twice each day.

It is important for parents to provide the appropriate clothing and outerwear for the weather conditions (e.g., coat, snow pants, boots, gloves, etc.). During the cold weather months, the program has a few extra hats and mittens, but not enough for everyone.

Parents are encouraged to provide sunscreen (medication form must be signed for staff to apply sunscreen). Children are also encouraged to get plenty of drinks to replenish body fluids. Typically, the length of time spent outside is reduced and often the children wait to go outside until late in the day or early morning when the sun is less intense.

### *Outside Temperature Policy*

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool uses the following general guidelines when determining if the children and staff will go outside:

**Winter** – If temperatures fall below 32 degrees Fahrenheit wind chill, staff will keep children indoors. As temperatures approach 35oF wind chill, staff will call time and temperature to monitor the latest weather conditions. Staff will also check our playground wind factor and for snow accumulation and water puddles.

Typically, staff members wait until later in the day to take the children outside when temperatures are warmer. Children spend a shorter amount of time outside in cold temperatures and are monitored closely. Please make sure your children are dressed appropriately for outdoor play – boots, mittens, hats, warm coats, etc.

**Summer** – As temperatures/heat index approach 100 degrees Fahrenheit, staff will call “time and temperature” to monitor the latest temperature and weather conditions. Children often participate in water play activities outside in shady areas of the playground.

## CLOTHING

In order to foster independence and self-help skills, we ask that you send your child to school in clothes that he/she can manage independently. Active indoor and outdoor play is a regular part of our school day. Please dress your child in clothing that is suitable for running, climbing, and other vigorous activity, and that is appropriate for the weather. Because the children work with paint, clay and other messy materials, they should wear clothes that can be laundered easily.

### *We recommend:*

- Dressing children in sneakers or shoes with rubber soles. For children's safety flip flop or open toe shoes are not allowed.



- Two changes of clothes is essential for preschool messes and 3 sets for toddlers. The extra set of clothing will be stored in a Ziploc bag at school. Please be sure to mark your child's name on the outside of the bag as well as label the extra clothing.
- Do not put small hair clips and beads in your child's hair. They are prohibited as they pose a choking hazard.

## **TOYS FROM HOME**

Bringing toys from home is discouraged. Snuggle toys are not permitted for rest time, but we would prefer-unless otherwise specified for Friend of the Week or some other special occasion that all other toys be left at home. Our teachers cannot be responsible for toys and other items brought from home. If children bring toys from home, the teacher may ask the parent to take it back to the car with them or for it to be kept in their cubby for the day. Sharing of the item will be expected in the classroom so if this will be difficult for your child we ask that you help us avoid this by leaving toys from home at home. We welcome books and other special items that can be shared during group time or further learning experiences. Please be sure to mark all of these types of items with your family name. Check with your child's teacher about his/her policy of bringing things to the classroom.



## PARENT COMMUNICATION

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool values the importance of Parent - Teacher communication. Parents are encouraged to contact the front desk at 475-215-6100 if they would like to speak with their child's teacher. Calls will not be transferred to your child's classroom but a message will be relayed to the teacher, who will return your call as soon as possible. Parents can also schedule a meeting at any time with their child's teacher, Director, Director of Early Learning, and/or Director of Enrollment. Parent conferences are held twice per year. During parent conferences, parents are provided with written child assessments about their child's learning and development.

### *How is information disseminated?*

- **Procare** - Procare is a database management system that has the capability of communicating with families via text and email messaging.
- **Social Media and Program Website** - Our school's website address is [odysseyet.com](http://odysseyet.com) and our Facebook page, Maritime Odyssey Preschool, are updated frequently with important notices, upcoming events and emergency notices. Families are also able to view pictures and videos we may upload.
- **ZOOM** - Zoom is an online interactive video platform that allows for distance learning. Using a virtual classroom, our teachers are able to interact with students in real time. This experience can also be recorded for future playback or dissemination through email. We also use Zoom for teacher professional development and to host parent meetings.
- **ClassTag** - ClassTag is an online platform that allows the program and families to communicate via text and email messaging. Families are not required to download an app. ClassTag translates both outgoing and incoming messages to the preferred language of ClassTag recipient.
- **Direct Mail** - Our preschool will sometimes send letters through the US mail.
- **Student Mailbox or Student Backpack** - Parents are encouraged to check their child's classroom mailbox and backpack daily for classroom and program notices.
- **Robotalker** - a telephone call or text message from an automated source that delivers a prerecorded message to a large number of people.

In addition to the above methods of communication, notices will be posted throughout the building and on our parent notice board located in the front of the preschool.



## **PARENT AND TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Individual parent-teacher conferences will be offered at least twice during each school year. Conferences for the school year will be held in the fall and in the spring. During the conference, you will review and receive a copy of the Developmental Summary on your child.

Ongoing, informal communication of parent or teacher concerns and the sharing of special joys, sorrows, and accomplishments in the child's life are important. Please feel free to speak with your child's teacher during arrival/departure, or schedule a time to talk privately.



## **TOILETING POLICY - *Toddler Program***

Based on their age and developmental level, toddlers are not expected to be potty trained and will therefore require diapering assistance on an “as needed” basis. Diapering will be performed by our staff with dignity and respect for the child. Staff shall check the child’s diaper at least once every every 2 hours but is required by the OEC’s guidelines to change the diaper every 3 hours, or promptly if it is wet or soiled. If the child is asleep, their diaper must be checked when they awake. Parents are responsible for providing all of their child’s diapering supplies, such as diapers, wipes, creams and clothes. Your child’s teacher will notify you when supplies are running low.

***Diapering*** (Child’s diaper will be changed when wet or soiled and checked prior to end-of-day)

### ***Teachers will:***

1. First wash their hands.
2. Ensure that all necessary supplies will be easily accessible in the changing area.
3. Talk to the child about diapering.
4. Take the child to the changing area.
5. Wear Personal Protective Equipment, ie. gloves.
6. Place protective paper on the changing table.
7. Remove the soiled diaper from the child and dispose of it in the designated covered waste receptacle.
8. Clean the child using wipes. **Wipes cannot be used more than once. It is discarded after each wipe.**
9. Dispose of the soiled gloves and put on a new pair before putting the new diaper on the child.
10. Place the new diaper on the child
11. Make sure the child’s clothing is clean and dry. If it is soiled or wet, the teacher will change it and the soiled clothing will be sent home.
12. Transfer the child from the changing area.
13. Remove the protective paper and sanitize the changing table.
14. Wash both their hands and the child’s.

### ***Potty Training***





There are several views on when and how toilet training is done, and cultures approach it differently. Research indicates that young children cannot successfully learn and master how to use the toilet until they are physically, mentally, and emotionally ready. Most positive toilet learning will occur only after children show signs of being physically aware, have control of their bodily functions, and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process.

Successful potty training is directly correlated to effective parent-teacher communication. It is very important that parents and the teacher cooperate during this phase of the child's development. Our staff is committed to working with parents and children to ensure that toilet training is carried out in a manner that is consistent with best practices, the child's physical and emotional abilities, while addressing parents concerns.

***Strategies used when potty training a child:***

1. We will communicate with parents about any indicators suggesting that their child is ready to be potty trained..
2. Parents are asked to dress their child in clothing that can be undone and changed easily.
3. We start by reading potty books and talking about going potty in the big girl or big boy toilet during changing.
4. Parents are asked to transition their child from diapers to pull-ups.
5. We have them sit on the toilet during natural transition times (before and after meals, before and after naps, and diaper changes).
6. We practice with them getting their pants up and down on their own and hand washing.
7. We will monitor them closely for signs that they have to go or are going, and get them off to the potty right away.

***Success! A potty trained child is a child who is able to do the following independently or with some or little assistance:***

1. Communicate to the teachers that he/she needs to go to the restroom before they need to go.
2. Alert him/herself to stop what he/she is doing, to go and use the bathroom.
3. Pull down his/her clothes and get them back up without assistance.
4. Wipe him/herself after using the toilet with some assistance
5. Get on/off the toilet by him/herself.
6. Wash and dry hands.
7. Postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom or if we are away from the classroom.



8. Awaken during nap time should they need to use the bathroom.



## **TOILETING POLICY - *Preschool Program***

Children must be wearing underwear with very few accidents at the time of enrollment. A child wearing pull ups or having accidents daily would not be considered potty trained. The use of diapers and/or pull ups is strongly discouraged in the School Readiness Preschool Program. A child will not be considered toilet trained for our preschool program if the child continues to consistently have toileting accidents (excluding nap time accidents) after the first 6 weeks of school.

### ***Why do children have to be potty trained within the first 6 weeks of preschool?***

- There are strict standards for changing and disposing of wet or soiled diapers. Preschool classrooms are not equipped for diaper changing.
- When an adult is busy changing a child's diaper or soiled clothing, it is taking away from learning time for all students and it removes one adult from the direct supervision of and interaction with the rest of the class.

While we expect children to be toilet trained at the start of preschool, we understand that the time it takes each child to arrive at this milestone varies. Therefore, we have put the following classroom procedures in place so teachers can assist children who are experiencing difficulty:

- Parents are to dress their child in clothing that can be undone and changed easily.
- At the start of the school year frequent visits to the bathroom will be built into the daily schedule. Children will be encouraged to use the bathroom frequently throughout the day and will be praised for their efforts and accomplishments.
- Children will wash hands when entering the classroom and after using the toilet.
- Children will not be punished emotionally or physically for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.
- Parents are required to provide sufficient extra clothing for their child. Please remember to replenish the extra set of clothes the child wears home.
- Parents will be notified if a child has a toileting accident and does not have extra clothing.
- Parents can help their child gain independence by encouraging their child to get dressed by themselves at home.
- Parents will be kept informed of their child's progress on a regular basis.

Children are asked many times throughout the day and always before nap time if they need to use the bathroom. We do understand that even potty trained children will occasionally have toileting accidents. By definition, "accidents" are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. In these instances, the teachers will help children to change their clothes, encouraging independence as much as possible. A



teacher will assist children as needed, but they should be able to complete toileting activities independently. This is an issue which protects all concerned.

Parents may be called to pick up their child, if they have more than three accidents in one day. The teacher and the Director of Early Learning will work with parents, whose children have habitual nap time accidents, on an individual basis to develop strategies to assist the child in toilet training. This means that no child will not be suspended or expelled, solely for toileting issues.



## ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT REPORTING PROCEDURE

Teachers will complete and sign an Illness and Accident Report immediately after an accident resulting in an injury to a child. Teachers report the accident to the Director of Early Learning or another member of senior management, who will ensure MOP's accident and illness protocol is followed and sign the Illness and Accident report. Parents are required to sign the Illness and Accident report at pick-up and will be provided a copy of the signed form. The original will be maintained in the child's file.

### *Minor accidents and injuries*

- A trained member of staff will perform first aid immediately.
- An Illness and Accident Report will be completed immediately.

Parents will be asked to pick up their child if the Director of Early Learning or another member of senior management deems that their child's illness or injury is severe enough to warrant that he/she be sent home or taken to the doctor for further evaluation. It is the parent's responsibility to make appropriate arrangements to pick up their child if they are unable to.

### *DCF and OEC Self Reporting*

If a staff member is suspected or accused of child abuse or neglect MOP will adhere to the following protocol:

- MOP will immediately initiate an internal investigation. If the investigation deems the allegation or suspicion to have merit, MOP will take the following actions:
  - The employee is removed from the classroom immediately and will no longer have unsupervised or direct contact with children.
- MOP and its staff are mandated reporters and **ARE REQUIRED** to notify DCF and OEC within 12 hours of an accident or injury that is suspected to have occurred as a result of abuse or neglect by a staff member.

### *Serious Injury*

MOP will always call 911 if any staff, in their best judgement, determines that a child is in or is unsure if they are in a medical crisis. Some examples of serious or life threatening medical emergencies are:

- Child is unconscious, semi-conscious or unusually confused.
- Child's airway is blocked.
- Child is not breathing.
- Child is having difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or is choking.
- Child has no pulse.
- Child has bleeding that won't stop.
- Child is coughing up or vomiting blood.
- Child has been poisoned.



- Child has a seizure for the first time, a seizure that lasts more than 5 minutes, or an atypical seizure.
- Child has injuries to the head, neck or back.
- Child has sudden, severe pain anywhere in the body.
- Child's condition is limb-threatening (for example, severe eye injuries, amputations or other injuries that may leave the child permanently disabled unless he/she receives immediate care.)
- Child's condition could worsen or become life-threatening if emergency medical help is delayed.
- Child needs the skills or equipment of paramedics or emergency medical technicians.

***If a child has a medical emergency or suffers a serious injury, a trained staff member(s) will immediately take action by:***

- Calmly assessing the situation to determine if it is safe to approach the child.
- Assess the child's condition and commence First Aid.
- The other staff member will initiate a call to 911.  
The other staff member will then notify the front desk of the emergency.
- The Administrative Assistant will contact the parent immediately. If the parents/guardians is not reached immediately, calls are then placed to emergency contacts. Staff will continue to attempt to personally speak with the parents/guardians even if an emergency contact has been reached.
- The parents/guardians will be notified if the paramedics transport the child to Norwalk Hospital.
- A staff member will always accompany the child in the ambulance to the hospital.
- The other children in the classroom will be moved to another room and the school will be placed on "shelter in place" status in anticipation of the arrival of first responders.
- A staff member will make a copy of the child's medical records and emergency contact information available for the paramedics.
- A staff member will ensure that the fire lane is clear and await the arrival of the first responders.
- The above protocol for serious injuries will be followed in the event a child has a medical emergency while on a field trip except there will be no "Shelter in Place" directive given. MOP staff will take steps to remove the other children from the scene or shield their view.
- An Illness and Accident Report will be completed once the paramedics have taken control of the emergency.

### ***Dental Emergency Plan***

The following procedure will be followed if a child has a dental emergency:

***If a child has a displaced tooth:***

- a staff member will comfort the child by applying a cold compress to their face to minimize swelling.
- The parent will be contacted and advised to seek emergency dental care.
- An Illness and Accident Report will be completed and given to the Nurse Consultant and the child's parent. The original will be maintained in the child's file.

***If a child's tooth has been knocked out:***



- the tooth will be located, and
- if dirty it will be cleaned by gently rinsing with water.
- If the child is mature and calm, the tooth will be placed back in its socket and held in place by the child or,
- it will be placed in a glass of water or normal saline. MOP will try its best to prevent the tooth from drying out.
- A staff member will comfort the child by applying a cold compress to their face to minimize swelling.
- The parent will be contacted immediately and advised to seek emergency dental care **WITHIN 1 HOUR**. Should the parent be unavailable, emergency contacts will be contacted.
- MOP's Administrative Assistant or designee will contact the child's dentist for instructions on how to proceed. It is the parent's responsibility to keep the child's dentist's name and telephone number updated.
- If the child's dentist is unavailable, the program's dental consultant will be contacted for instructions on how to proceed.
- Parents/Guardians will be contacted by the Administrative Assistant to give notice of accident and dentist/physician instructions.
- In the event of a dental emergency MOP will follow the guidelines outlined in the Serious Injury Policy.
- An Illness and Accident Report will be completed and given to the Nurse Consultant and the child's parent. The original will be maintained in the child's file.



## DISCIPLINE POLICY

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior management of children. When children receive positive, nonviolent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief, the Maritime Odyssey Preschool uses a positive approach to discipline and practices the following discipline and behavior management techniques:

### *We Do*

- Closely observe and supervise children's activities and social interactions.
- Maintain age-appropriate expectations for children's behavior.
- Communicate to children using positive statements.
- Communicate with children on their level.
- Talk with children in a calm, quiet manner.
- Help children to appropriately identify and verbalize their feelings, frustrations and concerns.
- Explain unacceptable behavior to children.
- Give children attention and provide emotional support to achieve socially acceptable behavior.
- Praise and encourage the children.
- Reason with and set limits for the children.
- Establish simple rules, or expectations, for the classroom community and apply them consistently.
- Model appropriate behavior.
- Design the classroom environment to minimize conflicts.
- Provide alternatives and redirect children to acceptable activity.
- Give children opportunities to make choices and solve problems.
- Help children talk out problems and think of solutions.
- Listen to children and respect the children's needs, desires and feelings.
- Provide appropriate words and mediation to help solve disputes and conflicts.
- Use storybooks and discussion to work through common conflicts.

### *We Do Not*

- Inflict corporal punishment in any manner upon a child. (Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force to the body as a discipline measure. Physical force to the body includes, but is not limited to, spanking, hitting, shaking, biting, pinching, pushing, pulling, or slapping.)
- Use any strategy that hurts, shames, or belittles a child.
- Use any strategy that threatens, intimidates, or forces a child.
- Use food as a form of reward or punishment.
- Use or withhold physical activity as a punishment.
- Shame or punish a child if a bathroom accident occurs.
- Embarrass any child in front of others.
- Compare children.





- Place children in a locked and/or dark room.
- Leave any child alone, unattended or without supervision.
- Allow discipline of a child by other children.
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a child's parents, families, or ethnic groups.

***Challenging behavior is any behavior that***

- interferes with children's learning, development, and success at play,
- is harmful to the child, other children, or adults,
- or puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure.

***Steps We Will Take To Address Challenging Behavior***

- Discipline, i.e., guidance, will always be positive, productive and immediate when behavior is inappropriate.
- Children whose behavior endangers others will be supervised away from other children. This is not the same as the practice of using a "time out". An adult will help the child move away from a group situation. The child will then process the problem verbally with the staff member and any other concerned parties. An adult will stay close to any child who is emotionally out of control and needs private time to regain composure.
- Repeated challenging behavior will be documented using the program's Behavior Incident Report.
- Recurring challenging behavior will be referred to the Director of Early Learning.
- When a pattern of behavior persists that endangers self, others or property, or significantly disrupts the program, MOP will work with a child's family to find solutions, up to and including referral for outside services.
- A conference will be scheduled with parents to address their child's behavior.
- The Director Of Early Learning at his/her discretion may request the parent's permission to have their child evaluated for referral outside services.
- If the child's behavior is not corrected after the parent-teacher-director conference, he/she may be removed from the program for a certain number of days to be determined by the Director of Early Learning in conjunction with the Director. ***Please note that these days are treated as absences and tuition credit will NOT be given.***
- If a parent refuses to grant permission to the program to evaluate their child and his/her behavior consistently endangers him/herself or the safety of the children around him/her, then the Director has the right, after meeting with the parents and documenting behavior problems and interventions, to terminate child care services for that particular child. ***If this occurs there will be no refund on tuition.***



## GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT POLICY

Go immediately to the individual directly involved and state your grievance/complaint. Every effort should be made to resolve the issue at this first step. Usually, the first point of contact is the child's teacher. In the event the issue is not resolved, parents may contact the Director of Early Learning who try to resolve the complaint or escalate to the CEO for resolution. **Children may be removed from the program if parents threaten children, staff, other parents or visitors.** Parents always have the option of filing a complaint with the Connecticut Office of Early childhood. Parents are encouraged to make suggestions about policies and programs.



## FEE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The preschool is state-funded through School Readiness (SR) and Child Day Care (CDC) grants. Additionally, the program charges family fees in accordance with Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Administered State-Funded Program General Policy 14-02. Family fee is the unsubsidized amount of a family's contribution to the cost of care per child that is owed to a program. Family fees are an essential part of our program that permits us to provide additional services, enrichment opportunities, materials and so on for your children in their educational growth.

Family fees are based on gross family income and family size and are calculated using a sliding scale and range from a minimum of \$9 per week up to a maximum of \$255 per week.

Upon completion of family fee calculation parents are given a copy for their records. Families are instructed to notify a member of the administrative team when their work status or income changes. A re-verification of income will be completed annually, and/or, if there is a change in income or work status. The re-verification of income will be assessed by a member of the administrative team. A new fee schedule will be set and the family notified. Any family that does not report their income accurately or changes in their income or work status, will be assessed at the maximum rate of \$255 or they will be withdrawn from the program.

Families whose income is greater than 100% of the State Median Income (SMI) will be assessed at the maximum rate of \$255. ***Our CDC funded toddler program strictly prohibits us from enrolling families whose income is greater than 75% of the SMI.***

All children entering into a full-day/full-year program funded by the Department of Education and/or the State Department of Early Childhood are encouraged to apply to Care 4 Kids. This is a state subsidy, which assists parents in paying child care fees. The administrative team will assist you in completing and submitting the Care 4 Kids Application.

When submitting your application for enrollment, you are required to provide with the following:

Two (2) proofs of income:

- Recent and consecutive pay stubs covering a one (1) month period (4 if you get paid weekly, 2 if you are paid bi-weekly)
- W-2 forms from the current year
- Filed Tax Return from the previous year
- A notarized letter stating the weekly income of all adults in the household.
- A letter from your employer verifying your annual income
- workmen's compensation
- Social Security income.

### ***Waitlist and Program Registration Fees and Tuition***



A processing fee of \$10 is due when a Waitlist application is submitted and a fee of \$25 is due at registration. ***BOTH OF THESE FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE.***

Tuition is billed every Friday for the upcoming week and payment is due at that time. The program accepts credit cards, money orders and cash as forms of payment. The program does not accept personal checks. Payments are to be placed in the on-site safe located at the front desk. Parents can also pay online through Tuition Express or arrange to have payments taken from their credit card or bank account automatically.

**Families are required to pay fifty two weeks** of fees per year regardless of the child's absence. Once your family fee is calculated you will be informed of the weekly fee amount. The program follows the policies established by the Office of Early Childhood.

### **TUITION DELINQUENCY**

Invoices are emailed to families weekly and payment is due every Friday for the upcoming week. ***Payments are considered late 1 day after the due date as there is no grace period.*** Past due letters will be emailed to those families who are delinquent with payments. P no as due balances **MUST** be paid in order for the child to enter the program in the new month. In the event that a payment plan has been established or full payment has been made, the child will be allowed to return to the program. No fees will be waived. Notification will be sent to families who do not adhere to the above policy. Preschool services will be suspended and/or terminated immediately.



## **SAFETY**

To ensure the most optimal learning environment for children the Maritime Odyssey Preschool is licensed by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, inspected by the Norwalk Department of Health and accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The program also receives annual inspections by the Office of Early Childhood, Norwalk Fire Marshall's Office and Health and Sanitation inspections by the Norwalk Department of Health.

These inspections ensure that all fire, health, and safety regulations are met and that the program adheres to high quality standards regarding teacher requirements, adult/child ratios, curriculum, nutrition, and other administrative practices.

Regular maintenance of the facility and the equipment is performed by the program custodian. The program makes every effort to ensure the safety of students from environmental hazards and pollution through the use of environmental friendly supplies and the spraying for insects is not done when students are present and is done in a timely manner that no students will be in the area immediately after treatment. All chemicals and cleaning agents are kept in locked cabinets or closets.

### ***General Safety Practices***

- Background screenings are conducted for all staff.
- Teachers and students are required to have a TB test and a health form on file.
- All staff members are mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse/neglect.
- Children are supervised at all times and appropriate child/staff ratios are maintained.
- Authorized pick-up information is on file and in the emergency directory.
- If we are not familiar with the authorized pick-up person we will ask to see identification and will match the person's ID with the emergency directory information provided by the parent(s).
- Each room is equipped with a first-aid kit.
- Teachers take roll and monitor the number of children in their care.
- Teachers move throughout the playground to ensure adequate and appropriate supervision.
- The playground is monitored closely for safety and improvements.
- Staff is trained in CPR, First Aid, and Choke Saving/Rescue Breathing.
- Medicines are stored out of children's reach and administered only with written permission of parent/guardian.
- Individuals who serve food wear gloves when handling ready-to-eat foods.
- Cleaning supplies are stored out of children's reach.
- Teachers fill out documentation for accidents, incidents, and health-related situations. Parents receive copies of accident/incident forms.
- Teachers follow universal precautions for blood-related accidents and incidents.
- Choke tubes available to test if toys are too small.
- Latex "free" gloves are available in each room for emergencies. •
- Toys are checked frequently and broken toys are discarded.
- Emergency numbers are included in first aid kits for walking and field trips.
- Parents are informed in advance of all field trips.
- Children are dressed in color coded t-shirts so they are easily identifiable.



- Teacher-child ratio is adjusted for field trips to ensure that there is a higher ratio of adults to children.
- On field trips children must stay where teachers can see them at all times and vice versa.
- Health and safety information is incorporated into the curriculum and taught to children on a regular basis.
- Parents need to personally escort their child while entering and exiting the building.
- Children are NOT allowed to run or play in the parking lot.
- Please ensure that entry doors are completely closed upon entering and exiting.



## INCLEMENT WEATHER

Listen to the local radio stations or TV stations for weather conditions or other emergencies, which may cause program closings or delays.

### *Policy Guidelines for Inclement Weather*

The program follows the inclement weather policy of Norwalk Public Schools. So, if Norwalk Public Schools are closed, have a delay or early dismissal, the preschool will also. Parents will be notified of closures, delays and early dismissal via Robocalls, text messaging and email. Closures will also be broadcasted on News12, posted on our webpage [odysseyct.com](http://odysseyct.com) and on the Norwalk Public Schools webpage at [norwalkps.org](http://norwalkps.org). If we must close the preschool before the end of the day due to inclement weather or other emergency, we will call each parent to make arrangements for children to be picked up. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure that we have current contact information on file.



## **NO SMOKING POLICY**

**THE MARITIME ODYSSEY PRESCHOOL BUILDING IS SMOKE FREE. Smoking is not permitted on the grounds of Nathaniel Ely School.**





## SCHOOL SECURITY AND SAFETY PLAN

The Maritime Odyssey Preschool is committed to the safety and security of students, faculty, staff, contractors and visitors in its building. In order to maximize safety and security at all times, the program has implemented guidelines to be followed in the event an emergency should occur. These guidelines are based on recommendations from Connecticut General Statutes and the CT Office of Early Childhood. We are confident that the program is equipped and ready to handle a disaster if one should occur.

This comprehensive **Emergency Plan** outlines the program's approach to emergency management and operations before, during, and after the following emergencies: severe weather, earthquake, fire, intruder and police activity in the surrounding community. It has been developed to serve as a blueprint for informing staff, students, and visitors on how to respond during an emergency situation.

Each staff member is assigned a task that they will carry out in case of an emergency. These include: First Aid, Safety & Security, Search and Rescue, Command Center, Student Release and Volunteer Organizer. However, it is imperative that parents have an understanding of the plan and our strategy for releasing students to parents. It is also important that each family is prepared at home so that as a community, we will be able to handle the situation.

### ***This plan exists to:***

- Protect lives and property
- Respond to emergencies promptly and properly
- Coordinate with local emergency operations and community resources.

### ***The goals of the Maritime Odyssey Preschool Emergency Preparedness Plan are to:***

- Ensure the physical and psychological safety and supervision of students, faculty, staff and visitors to the school if an emergency occurs during school hours.
- Restore normal services as quickly as possible.
- Coordinate the use of school personnel and facilities. Arrange for a calm and efficient plan for parents to retrieve their children from school, if necessary.

### ***Below are some important things that parents should know if there is a disaster during school hours:***

- In the event of an emergency **DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL**. An instant alert system also known as Robotalker will communicate to parents/guardians.
- Each emergency presents a unique set of variables, which will be evaluated prior to a decision to use Robotalker. Those variables include nature of emergency, time of emergency, estimated duration of emergency, impact on immediate safety of students, direction given by law enforcement and emergency services agencies, and others. The program's highest priority is to first evaluate and respond to the emergency and ensure the immediate safety of students; and then to notify parents/guardians if the individual emergency dictates.



- Robotalker's accuracy is dependent on making sure all information is up-to-date in the school's records. It is important to keep your contact information up-to-date at all times, even changes in email addresses.
- When you receive a message from Robotalker, please regard it as very important. The caller id will be the program's main number (475) 215-6100. Don't hang up. If you pick up the voicemail at a later date, listen to the entire message. Do not call the school. If it is an emergency notification, it will include instructions.

### **STUDENT RELEASE GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

#### ***Do not drive into the school parking lot.***

The parking lot must be clear of cars to allow for emergency vehicles. Park your car safely nearby and walk to school. Do not leave your car in the street where it will block other cars or emergency vehicles.

#### ***Bring Identification***

You must bring Picture ID to identify yourself for release of any student to your care. Do not attempt to remove your child or any other child from school without having signed the emergency release form at the Student Release area.



## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

### *Fire, Lock Down, Lock Out and Shelter In Place Drills*

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Licensing Division requires that the program conduct monthly drills so children can become familiar with emergency procedures in a non-frightening manner.

During fire drills, staff and children practice evacuating the building within 3 minutes or less. Evacuation procedures are posted in every classroom on exit doors. In the event of a fire, evacuation from the building will be through the closest exit. Staff will immediately lead children out the classroom through the fire exit and the group will walk safely away from the building to the designated meeting area. Children will line up and teachers will take names to face attendance. Teachers will take the first aid bag, walkie-talkie, cell phone and emergency contact information with them. During Lock Down, Lock Out and Shelter In Place Drills the children will practice remaining quiet and evacuating to the inner most areas of the building, away from windows and doors.

### *Serious Weather Emergencies*

In the event of serious weather emergencies, such as tornadoes or hurricanes, children and staff will remain indoors away from windows and doors. Staff trained in first aid will be on hand to administer first aid as needed, until emergency personnel can arrive. Parents will be notified after the immediate danger has passed.

### *Major Earthquake*

If the building is unsafe to re-enter, CHILDREN WILL REMAIN UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF SCHOOL AUTHORITIES until parents or designated responsible adults can pick them up. A Robotalker call will communicate to parents/guardians. Students will only be released to parents or guardians as listed on their emergency pick-up form.



## **DCF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT MANDATED REPORTING PROCEDURE**

All staff members employed by The Maritime Odyssey Preschool are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Mandated reporters are required to report when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected, or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm by a person responsible for the child's health, welfare, or care, or by a person given access to the child by a responsible person.

(Connecticut General Statutes 17a-101a) Child abuse is defined as a child who has had non-accidental physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him/her, or who has injuries which are at variance with the history given of 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. (CGS 46b-120) Child neglect is defined as a child who has been abandoned, is being denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally, or morally, or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances, or associations injurious to his well-being. (CGS 46b-120)

### ***Internal Allegations/Investigation***

Situations may occur in which a family alleges that the program has not kept a child safe from abuse and/or neglect. Be advised that this allegation results in an investigation by the State Department of Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Licensing Investigation Unit, and/or the Norwalk Police Department. When the Program Director or designee is made aware by the family, the Norwalk Police Department and/or the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Licensing Investigation Unit of the allegation, the following steps will be taken immediately:

1. The CEO, Director of Programs and Director of Early Learning and the Department of Children and Families and the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) are notified within 12 hours.
2. Each staff person who has had contact with the child on the day of the alleged incident is advised of the allegations and are asked to write a statement regarding the events of the day in question focusing on: the particular child's participation, mood, and activity level. The statement includes documentation of bruise marks where visible upon arrival and/or departure.
3. The CEO, Director of Programs and Director of Early Learning obtains the staff statements along with copies of the staff time cards, classroom attendance record, arrival/departure book, and the visitor's log, if appropriate.
4. Staff members do not talk about the case unless authorized.
5. The Care Line is called by the program within 12 hours of the allegation being made.
6. The OEC is called by the senior manager on duty immediately to report the incident.



## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

### ***CHILDREN'S RECORDS***

Information contained in classroom and family files are confidential. It is only available to those persons at the preschool who have direct involvement with the child's growth and development. Only authorized personnel may transfer any personal information, educational, or social service records between centers. Records are only released to outside agencies or educational programs with parent's permission.

As the child's parent or legal guardian, you may request to see the contents of your child or family file. This can be arranged by contacting the Director of Early Learning. Parents, through a written request, have a copy of children's records sent to the local education agency/otherwise, at no cost. It is important to note that information will not be given to anyone calling the program regarding a parent or child.

Periodically classroom and family files are monitored by funding sources or the Director of Early Learning while conducting classroom audits. However, the files are never removed from the program. Instead, files remain on Center.

Failure to follow all of the above mentioned without prior authorization will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.



## PARENTS'/GUARDIANS' RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITIES

### *Parents Rights*

- To be treated with respect and to be recognized as my child's first teacher.
- To be greeted upon arrival and before departure.
- Guidance and support provided from the administrative team and teachers.
- To be informed of my child's progress.
- To participate in the program, including involvement in shared decision making.

### *Parents Responsibilities*

- To accept the Maritime Odyssey Preschool program as an opportunity through which I may improve quality of life for me, my child, and family.
- To work with teachers, staff, and other families in a cooperative way.
- To be open to new ideas and experiences that may benefit my child and me.
- To remain actively involved by participating in classroom/program activities while reinforcing learning at home.
- To help improve the quality of our program by offering my opinions, constructive criticism, and suggestions.
- To ask questions when I am unsure.



## **PARKING**

Parents are to park on lower-level when dropping off or picking up children. Please park in designated parking spaces or in the parent drop off/pick up zone. No parking is allowed in the “FIRE LANE” which is along the yellow curb in front of the building. This is for emergency vehicles only. No parking is allowed on the upper level in the Norwalk Grassroots Tennis Program parking lot.

Handicapped parking spaces are reserved for cars with handicapped decals only. Please be kind and abide by all handicap parking laws and restrictions.

***Parents must hold on to their child’s hand at all times while in the parking lot.***



## **CLOSING STATEMENT**

A strong home and school environment is essential when building a good environment for young children. All of our staff will try to do our very best to keep you informed and involved in our preschool program. Clearly, ongoing communication and support from both families and staff make the connection between home and school a two-way street. Please share with us information about your child and report any changes, especially during a major crisis. Anything you share with us will be held in confidence. We hope to nurture mutual trust and respect at every opportunity. There will be many ways for parents to become involved in the Maritime Odyssey Preschool. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.





## PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a parent of a child enrolled at The Maritime Odyssey Preschool, I promise to abide by all the policies of the program contained in this handbook.

- I have received and read a copy of The Maritime Odyssey Preschool Parent Handbook. I understand that these policies and rules are subject to change at any time. I understand that this handbook replaces all other previous handbooks for The Maritime Odyssey Preschool and will remain in effect until the next revision or addendum.
- I understand that photographing and or videoing of staff and or other children is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED**.
- I understand that if I fail to comply with the policies and procedures listed in this handbook my child may be temporarily excluded from the program.
- I agree that bringing my child on time every day to the program is essential to growth and development. Therefore, I will make every attempt to ensure that my child's attendance is not an issue.
- I am aware of who is responsible for my child while enrolled in The Maritime Odyssey Preschool. As such, I will first speak with that individual regarding any concerns I may have in resolving any issues that may arise.
- I understand that I must keep the program accurately informed and updated on all relevant information (emergency contact, pick-up/drop-off authorization, family income, health/medical status, etc.)

Parent/Guardian #1 PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #1 SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #2 PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #2 SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**THANKS IN ADVANCE FOR ADHERING TO THESE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.**

**(PLEASE PRINT AND SIGN THIS PAGE AND RETURN TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER.)**

