

EARLY CHILDCARE  
PROGRAM



NCE  
EARLY CHILDCARE PROGRAM  
  
PARENT  
HANDBOOK



2019-2020

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement of Purpose	pg. 1
Administration and Staffing	pg. 2
Our Environment	pg. 2-3
Curriculum Goals	pg. 3-4
Special Programming	pg. 5
Progress Reports	pg. 5
Health and Safety Practices	pg. 5-6
Safety Drills	pg. 7
Transportation	pg. 7
Snow Days and Early Release Days	pg. 7
Communication	pg. 7-8
What You Need to Bring	pg. 8-9



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## **Welcome to the Needham Community Education Early Childcare Program.**

We are happy that you are part of our Little Rockets Family. This handbook is designed to provide information on our policies and procedures and to be a guide to our operations.

### **NCE Early Childcare Program Statement of Purpose**

The NCE Early Childcare Program is committed to providing a safe, enriching environment for the children of the faculty and staff of Needham Public Schools, Town of Needham employees and the community. We are dedicated to promoting a love of learning and a strong sense of community through our nurturing care and our developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices. In this way, we reflect the fundamental mission of the Needham Public Schools and share the core values of Scholarship, Citizenship, Community and Personal Growth as the foundation of educating our children.

Equally vital to the mission of the program is that our Little Rockets gain independence, feel secure, appreciated and above all else, feel respected for their individuality. The staff at the NCE Early Childcare Program is highly trained in the communication techniques and the developmentally appropriate practices that best serve the children's needs and promote these feelings of safety, equality, affection and regard.

Our Little Rockets mission is to serve children and their families through education, individualized care and peace of mind. Our program and its services are extended to all.

#### **Nondiscrimination Policy:**

The Needham Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, active military/veteran status, ancestry, genetic information or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, employment policies, and other administered programs and activities. In addition, students who are homeless or of limited English-speaking ability are protected from discrimination in accessing the course of study and other opportunities available through the schools.

## **Administration and Staffing**

The Needham Community Education Early Childcare Program (Little Rockets) is organized as a non-profit childcare center administered through the Needham Public Schools. The program Director is responsible for the daily operations of the center, including but not limited to, the support and leadership of the staff and parents, curriculum and safety. In the Director's absence, the Assistant Director or Lead Teacher will assume the management and administration of the daily operations. The Needham Community Education Department also supports the registration and accounting obligations of the program. The NCE Director oversees the program as a whole and supports our goal to offer the highest quality of care to our families.

Our staff consists of a Director, Teachers and Assistant Teachers who meet, and in most cases, exceed, the requirements for certification through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). Our staff has the formal education and relevant experience to care for children with professionalism and proficiency. They are committed to recognizing and providing for children's individual needs and differences. They hold certifications in CPR and First Aid and their suitability has been confirmed through CORI checks. All staff continue to hone their skills through regular professional development and enrichment opportunities to further their education and training.

Regular evaluations are conducted to ensure that the highest standards are being maintained at the center. Staff evaluations are conducted by the appropriate supervisor to promote and sustain quality care and practices. Child developmental evaluations are conducted by the staff responsible for the direct care of the child to confirm that developmental milestones are being achieved and that the child's needs are being met by the program. The center evaluations are conducted by the NCE Administration as well as our Little Rockets families to ensure that high quality care is provided and maintained.

## **Our Little Rockets Environment**

Here at our Great Plain Ave. location we are fortunate to have classrooms that are full of natural light and warm accents that aim to make our classrooms a home away from home for your Little Rocket. Both indoors and outdoors, we have toys and equipment that reflect the interests of the children and challenge them to explore the world around them. We ensure that we provide experiences that are accessible to children of all abilities, including those with special needs. We foster the student's growth and development through toys and equipment that encourage exploration, learning and social interaction. Our emphasis is on process over product and we are not afraid to get dirty, in fact we prefer to dig right in to play hard and play

messy! With this in mind, please dress your child in comfortable clothes that are able to get messy with food, paint, mud etc. We welcome your child to wear clothes that are already stained for the perfect “school-clothes fashion statement”. Please dress them in sturdy footwear that is appropriate for running and climbing indoors and outside. Rubber soled, closed-toe shoes are preferred.

Meal times at the Little Rockets is another opportunity for growth and learning. We emphasize healthy food choices and good eating habits, encourage self-help skills and take advantage of the social setting to reinforce appropriate group interactions, conduct and community building. The center supplies nutritious snacks for Toddlers, based on the Massachusetts Nutrition Standards, paying close attention to any relevant allergy concerns. Allergy information will be posted in your child’s classroom. Please avoid sending foods that may contain allergens that are a danger to your child’s classmate. The families of Toddlers each provide daily lunch, and breakfast if desired, for their own child while families of Infants provide all food and milk/formula that their child requires.

Diapering and Toileting are based on the individual needs of the child. In general, diapering of Infants is done every 1.5 - 2 hours or as needed. Diapering of Toddlers is every 2 - 2.5 hours or as needed. Parents provide an adequate supply of diapers, wipes and any creams or powders necessary. All should be clearly labeled with the child’s name. All diaper changes will be performed following the posted diapering procedure and will be recorded, indicating all relevant information.

Toilet Training will be implemented at the direction of the parent/guardian and/or child. The center staff will create a plan in cooperation with the family to create consistency and a low-pressure experience for the child.

### **Curriculum Goals**

We follow a monthly themed curriculum that incorporates indoor and outdoor learning opportunities and uses a multi-modal approach to exploring a topic. Interactions among children and our staff provide opportunities for children to develop positive relationships with peers, and others, characterized by warmth, personal respect, equality, individuality, positive support, and responsiveness. Our Little Rockets staff members facilitate interactions among children to provide opportunities for the development of physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth. We achieve this as we explore concepts in language arts, science, math, dramatic play, gross motor and fine motor development, community building and socialization.

At the NCE Early Childcare Program we take every opportunity to turn even the simplest of interactions with the children into learning opportunities, through our daily routines and curriculum. Our play-based activities and experiences encourage children to be actively involved in recreational and enrichment activities. They allow for a variety of interests and abilities and provide developmentally appropriate activities and materials. Our Little Rockets learn through individual and group exploration of materials in the learning environment, through planning and making decisions about their activities and through social interactions with peers and adults. We offer teacher directed activities balanced with child directed activities to foster the child's ability to control and develop portions of their own curriculum and daily routine.

We encourage participation and welcome visits from parents. Our goal is to create an inclusive community of support among parents, children and staff where all can share in rich and rewarding experiences and savor the joy of these precious years of a child's development. We welcome your family traditions and your input in creating our classroom environments and curriculum, and we emphasize regular communication with families through in a variety of written, verbal and electronic means. When your child is in our care you are welcome to drop in, anytime, to join us.

**Daily Schedule\***

7:00 – 9:00	Drop-off / Breakfast / Free Choice Time
9:00 - 9:15	Diapering / Toileting
9:15 – 9:45	Morning Snack
9:45 – 11:00	Circle Time / Morning Theme Activity
11:00 –12:00	Outside Time
12:00 –12:30	Lunch
12:30 –1:00	Diapering / Toileting / Storytime
1:00 – 2:30	Naptime (Diapering / Toileting as children wake)
2:30 - 3:00	Afternoon Snack
3:00 – 4:00	Afternoon Theme Activity / Free Choice / Pick-up

\* Our schedule is designed with flexibility in mind. We use the Daily Schedule as a guide but are apt to change things around as needed to respond to weather conditions, the energy of the children, or special circumstances.

## **Field Trips, Special Programing, Enrichment**

The Little Rockets soar to new heights in a variety of ways, including some extra special visits to and/or from area attractions. We anticipate touch a truck opportunities, community helpers visits and local walking field trips to enhance the educational experience and create awareness of the wonders of the world around us. We hope to incorporate other enrichment experiences such as exploring foreign language, music and movement and welcoming performers when appropriate and available.

## **Progress Reports and Parent Conferences**

The staff welcomes your input as we try to support your child's journey through the developmental milestones and age appropriate stages of their growth. We prepare written progress reports in the Fall and the Spring that we share with the parent/guardian. We offer parent-teacher conferences at those times but also make conferences available, at the request of the parent, anytime throughout the school year.

## **Health and Safety Practices**

Safety is paramount in our philosophy and practices. We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of children through our deliberate choices of program materials and curriculum subject matter, and through our delivery of care. In addition, we regularly educate our staff, children and families on the best practices concerning health and safety protocols, including protection from abuse and neglect.

We are required to maintain accurate and current health records in your child's file\*\* that will be kept confidential and in the Director's office. These forms will need to be updated annually per DEEC and DESE regulations.

Please provide:

- A copy of your child's updated immunization record
- A copy of the child's current physical exam, dated within 1 year from date of admission
- Lead screenings appropriate to the age of your child.
- Allergy information, health care concerns/special conditions that pertain to your child.

When children of any age are together they bring their individual charms and talents to the group, unfortunately, they also bring their germs. It is inevitable for some of those germs to spread to others, but with diligent efforts from the staff and the families, we can minimize the spread of contagious illnesses and promote healthy Little Rockets. Here are a few things we encourage parents and guardians to keep in mind.

Children with the following symptoms are expected to stay home, or if they develop the following symptoms while at school a judgement will be made by center administration as to when they need to be sent home.

- Fever of 100 F or higher: must be fever free for 24 hours, without medication, before returning.
- Diarrhea/Vomiting: must be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning.
- Strong Cold Symptoms: (Nasal discharge, persistent cough, sore throat, lethargy etc.) A person is generally contagious with a cold 1-2 days before their symptoms start, and could be contagious as long as their symptoms are present.
- Flu Symptoms: The contagious period for the flu begins about 1 day before symptoms start and can last as long as 5-7 days from when the person first felt sick.
- Undiagnosed rashes: A doctor's note or the resolution of the rash is required before the child should return.
- Conjunctivitis: must have 24 hours of prescription treatment, or a Dr.'s note to return
- Strep Throat: must have 24 hours on antibiotics before returning
- Head Lice: must be treated and checked by a NPS nurse before returning.

A child may have recovered from the more pronounced symptoms of a particular illness but consideration needs to be given to the child's overall strength and stamina. Please evaluate that child's wellness in terms of her or his ability to cope with a room full of other children and adults. Often that extra day of recuperation is necessary.

Children who are fighting off, or recovering from, illnesses are more likely to contract other illnesses, since their immune system is already working overtime and their defenses are weakened. In addition, the existing illness is likely to take longer to subside if the child is taxed by coming back to a group setting too soon. That child, and the condition of the center population as a whole, may be healthier in the long run, when children have a better chance of fighting off germs and not continuing the cycle of the illnesses. An extra day of recuperation can play a big part in making this possible.

*The question we would like parents to ask themselves when evaluating if your child should return to school after being sick is this: "Considering the symptoms my child is currently exhibiting - if it were another child at the center who had these symptoms would I want my child exposed?"*



## **Safety Drills**

Regular, periodic drills are performed to ensure the children and staff are prepared in the case of an emergency. During fire drills the staff will lead the children out the closest exit and all classes will meet in the playground area. Infants will be transported in the wooden evacuation crib out the ramp and to the playground. Our ALICE protocol for student safety will be practiced as well, with minimal attention given to the "why" and more focus on the "how".

## **Transportation**

Transportation to and from the center is the responsibility of the family. NCE Early Childcare Program does not provide transportation to students. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to ensure the safety of the child while traveling to or from the center, including the appropriate use of car seats, booster seats or bike helmets, where applicable, and safe practices when walking to the center. No child will be knowingly permitted to leave the center in an automobile without being securely belted into the appropriate car seat.

## **Snow Days / Delayed Openings / Early Release Days**

The NCE Early Childcare Program follows the NPS calendar and is closed for all holidays and vacations that the Needham Public Schools are closed. We also follow the NPS snow cancelation policy and the delayed opening or early release due to inclement weather.

For Early Release Days due to Professional Development we are open our regular hours. We are aware that some NPS staff have Faculty meetings and Department meetings that run later than 4:00pm. We are prepared to extend our closing hours to accommodate staff from these schools, however I ask that you are considerate of the ECP staff's time in arriving as soon as possible after your meeting has concluded.

## **Communication**

Staff and family communication is fundamental to the quality care that we are able to provide, especially for these little ones with limited language skills.

Our staff will check in with the families at the end of each day to share aspects of the child's experience at school. Infants will also receive a Daily Sheet that details the food the child ate, their naps, their diaper changes and comments about their day.

We encourage parents to share information about the child's time away from school, particularly when it is impacting the child's day at school. We understand the "tornado" that can occur someday while trying to get out of the house with children, so if you do not have time for a chat in the morning please try to send us a quick note. A blank Infant Daily Sheet can also be taken home, or printed at home, so that you can jot down pertinent information during your morning routine and just pass it to us at drop off.

We do not advocate cell phone use in the classroom, and have limited access to email during the course of the day so the best way to reach us at school is by landline. In general, we do not stop child activities for adult business when we are in the classroom. We try hard to show the children that they are the priority when at school. However, there are times when parents need to reach us for urgent matters. Please call us on the landline, 781-559-3384. If we do not pick up the first time you call, please call right back. Having the phone ring repeatedly will alert us to the fact that it is a parent trying to reach us and we will stop to answer the phone.

During naptime or afterhours is the best opportunity for staff to return emails. Please be patient with any delay in responding to your emailed communications.

### **What You Need to Bring:**

*Please label all of your child's items, Thank you!*

- ✓ Updated Immunization Record (each time the child receives a new immunization)
- ✓ Diapers
- ✓ Wipes
- ✓ Diaper Creams/Ointments
- ✓ Extra Set(s) of Clothes, appropriate for the season, to be stored in the cubby (i.e. shirt, pants, socks, underwear, sweatshirt, jacket)
- ✓ Lunch Daily (please pre-cut foods that may pose a choking hazard)
- ✓ (Breakfast if desired)
- ✓ Resting blanket
- ✓ Special soft toy for rest time\*

\*We welcome a labeled, soft toy, stuffed animal, etc. that the child can use as a comfort at naptime. This toy can remain in the cubby day after day and will not be shared.

We have a wide variety of toys at the center, so no need to bring toys from home. However, we understand that there are occasions when a child may "need" to bring a toy from home as a comfort or to facilitate a transition. Please limit this to one (labeled) toy at a time, that is safe and appropriate for the ages of the child's peers. The child will need to share this toy if it is going to be in the classroom. If they are unwilling or unable to share the toy with their peers, they will be able to keep it safe in their cubby.

Infant Special Circumstances:

- ✓ Extra clothes: Please send several sets of outfits, socks, onsies, and outer layers (sweater/ jacket) to be stored in the cubby.
- ✓ Meals: Please provide all the food and milk/formula the child needs for that day.
- ✓ Bottles: Please send the number of bottles needed for each feeding in a given day. We may not have the opportunity to wash a bottle between feedings.
- ✓ Sleeping: Please provide a sleep sack for resting. No resting toy/blanket will be placed with an Infant under the age of 12 months while sleeping in a crib, in accordance with the DEEC regulations.

Come soar with us, we are the Little Rockets!!

\*\*All information contained in a child's ECP file will be kept confidential, and will not be released to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child, without the written consent of the child's parent or pursuant to a court order. The Director must notify the parent in the event that the child's record is subpoenaed. Parents have access to their child's full record and can request copies. Furthermore, a child's parent has the right to add information, data or relevant materials to the child's record. Likewise, the parent has a right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record.