



The Children's Community School
FAMILY HANDBOOK

2019–20

updated August 2019

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I. General Information

Guide to the Family Handbook

This handbook is a record of and a guide to the policies, practices, and procedures of the Children’s Community School, intended for its families. Families who find items in the handbook that do not reflect current practices, or who notice important information that is missing from the handbook, should bring their thoughts to the administration so that the handbook can be as useful as possible to everyone.

Sections with an asterisk (*) in their title contain significant changes from last year’s handbook.

Contact Information

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Philadelphia, PA 19143
(215) 724-1740

<http://childrenscommunityschool.org>
info@childrenscommunityschool.org

Legal address: 4700 Kingsessing Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19143

2019–20 Staff

Director: Jarrod Green

Business Manager: Stephanie Bonham

Curriculum Coordinator: Carrie Fafarman

Administrative Assistant: TBD

Redbud Teachers: Laura Graham, Naima Brown, Tyler Colvard, Seth Chernyak

Oak Teachers: Katelyn Bobek, Maddie Hopfield, Alex Chaballier

Juneberry Teachers: Octavia Lewis, Lee Fogel

Magnolia Teachers: Rachel Ford, Patricia Houston

Forest Friends Teachers: Charlie Levenhagen, Boothe Carlson, Alicia Applegate, TBD

Literacy Specialist: Marcy Morgan

Board of Directors: See up-to-date list on CCS website, under “staff”

Nonprofit Status and Structure

CCS is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit. Among other things, that means that we are governed by a board of directors. For more information about the operation of CCS as a non-profit, see “Bylaws of the Children’s Community School.”

Founding and Inspiration

The Children’s Community School was dreamed up by Traci Childress and Merryl Gladstone in the fall of 2009 under the trees of Bartram’s Garden. While their children played, Traci and Merryl talked about their visions for a school. Together they began to dream one up with all of the elements they envisioned: a progressive, child-lead program that integrated mindfulness.

Of course, a dream can not take root on its own; families and leaders in the West Philadelphia community came together to support Traci and Merryl’s effort. Ed Fell introduced them to The Calvary Center for Culture and Community, whose board, with Rich Kirk at its head, opened its doors and extended its nonprofit status to provide a home for CCS, both physically and as a fiscal agent. Paul Kuhn and Duke Campbell helped to ready and renovate the space with many family members, and in fall of 2010 CCS opened its doors.

Our founding story, of a school born out of a dream, is a thread found in our philosophy and curriculum today. This dream of a progressive community preschool in West Philadelphia was nurtured by community support and teacher investment and fully brought to life by the children who infuse the school with joy and enrich it with their dreams. This cycle of dreaming, collaborating, exploring, reflecting, and dreaming again is the learning cycle, for the whole community at CCS—adults and children together. We look forward to growing and dreaming with the Philadelphia community!

Mission Statement *

The mission of the Children’s Community School is to create a collaborative community of young children, families, and educators that honors and empowers children to be active agents in their learning and lives.

Core Values *

Note: This is a draft of the updated Core Values statement as of June 2019; when ratified by the Board of Directors the most up-to-date version will be added to our website.

In all our work, the Children’s Community School seeks to fulfill eight intersecting core values that support the development of each child, each adult, and the community as a whole.

1. **LIFELONG LEARNING**—We view children and adults as lifelong learners who construct knowledge, seek answers, take risks, reflect on their own experiences, and approach learning with action and commitment. We honor where each learner is in their learning process, recognizing that present learning is linked to both past and future experiences. We work to provide children in particular with skills, attitudes, and understanding that will serve them in a lifetime of joyful learning, both in school settings and beyond.
2. **MINDFULNESS**—We believe that by cultivating an awareness of our bodies, minds, and emotions, we become more grounded in ourselves and better able to connect with others. We work to support all individuals to recognize and affirm their own feelings; to notice how their words and actions impact others; and to respect their own and others’ needs for both connection

and solitude. We recognize that play and discovery are intertwined with our ability to be present and connected.

3. **COMMUNITY**—We believe that communities are composed of honored individuals seeking relationships with one another, and that relationships rely equally on active and receptive practices. We seek to build community by practicing empathy and respect for all people, and by infusing our culture with the expectation of mutual care. We create opportunities for each individual to contribute meaningfully to community life, and we forge connections through experiences of shared play and collective joy. We demonstrate solidarity with people in and out of our communities working for justice.
4. **INQUIRY**—We believe that learning is fueled by curiosity about ourselves, our communities, and our world. We encourage children and adults to discover and pursue what sparks their personal interest and joy, and to contribute their passion and knowledge to their communities. We create opportunities for asking questions and seeking answers together, and we cultivate flexible thinkers who value contradictions and multiple points of view. We believe that learning is most powerful in the context of a rich and varied environment that encourages play and collaboration.
5. **JUSTICE**—By encouraging each child and adult to be responsive to the needs of others and to take active steps in seeking fairness, we build a stronger school, a deeper community, and a better society. We recognize the reality that CCS, like any institution in an unjust society, will in some ways reinforce injustice, and we respond by nurturing activists and stewards who will actively oppose oppression. We acknowledge that justice is not a state but an ongoing process; as a private institution we must identify our particular role in creating a welcoming and equitable place, and take actions to build an ever more inclusive community, with particular attention to race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, class, and disability. We believe that each individual is responsible for working to create a more just world, and that those with greater privilege in their positions, identities, and experiences bear greater responsibility for that work.
6. **COLLABORATION AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES**—In an environment comprising a variety of power relationships—teachers and students, caregivers and children, employers and employees, and so on—we seek to create structures in which those with power are accountable to those over whom they hold power. We promote transparent and collaborative decision-making, in which individuals make meaningful contributions to decisions that impact them, while seeking a division of labor that equitably responds to the needs of people in different positions. We teach and support honest conversation, respectful engagement in disagreement, and continued participation in a democratic process. We value and encourage the sharing of one’s self while hearing and attending to the voices of others. We seek to nurture leadership skills in all people.
7. **SAFETY, CARE, AND COMPASSION**—By taking care of ourselves, of others, and of our space, we create a safer environment where children and adults have the resources and support they need to allow deep exploration and learning. We recognize that each individual’s body, mind, and emotions are worthy of attention and caretaking. By reaching out to others with compassion and empathy, we cultivate relationships that encourage inclusivity and connection.
8. **HONORING AND CELEBRATING EACH INDIVIDUAL**—We acknowledge and respond to the individual needs and strengths of all people in our community. We value each person’s feelings and ideas, while recognizing the importance of clear and compassionate boundaries,

especially for children. We recognize that every individual is a unique and complex combination of mind, body, and emotions, and believe that celebrating and honoring individuality builds and strengthens our community.

These core values not only apply *to* our staff, but are primarily implemented *by* our staff. Thus, CCS is committed to building community among staff members, involving staff deeply in the life of the school, providing ongoing professional development and opportunities for growth, and affirming and enhancing their quality of life. By supporting staff in these ways, we enable them to be the best caregivers possible for children and families. CCS's ability to function and implement our mission also depends on our relationships with a wide variety of non-staff professionals (substitute teachers, service providers for children with special needs, cleaning staff, handyworkers, etc.), and we work to ensure that our core values are reflected in our interactions with these professionals.

Social Justice

The Children's Community School is working to promote the values of economic and racial justice.

We recognize that there are structural inequalities in our society that systemically disadvantage people of color, poor people, and people with other marginalized identities. We further recognize that institutions such as schools are complicit in these inequalities, and that it is therefore our responsibility to work to actively resist injustice and to create a school where everyone is welcomed, valued, and safe.

Since the fall of 2014 CCS has worked consciously to make our school a community that actively fights racism and discrimination of all kinds, both in our classrooms and as an institution. We expect that this work will continue for the lifetime of the school; it is not a project that we can ever finish, but rather a developing perspective and an approach that will build and grow over time.

Social justice is not a new value for CCS. Since the school's founding in 2009, values related to social justice have informed both classroom practice and institutional choices. As we move into the next phase of our school's life, we are re-energizing and recommitting to values that have been a part of us from the beginning.

It is important that CCS name the value of social justice to our work. It is also important that we not overstate our accomplishments in this area. The naming of the work is only one of many steps in the work itself. CCS is not, and does not claim to be, expert in social justice classroom practice or institutional practice. We are learners in this important area.

What will success look like?

CCS is in the early stages of long-term work toward social justice. We are driven by a vision of what we want this work to look like at our school. While we know that many of these goals are a long way off, they provide us with direction and intention.

Goal: Barrier-free access for families, leading to a diverse and representative school community

- Any family in the neighborhood that wants to attend CCS has equal access to CCS.
- Our school community is racially and economically diverse, and reflects the diversity of the neighborhood and community in which we are located. People of color are well represented among families, school staff, and leadership.
- Multiple funding streams (federal, state, grants, donations, tuition) allow equitable access to all families, regardless of financial situation.

Goal: Deep community relationships

- The school has strong relationships with multiple communities in our neighborhood.
- Within our school, families feel a strong sense of connection to each other and to the staff. There is a wide variety of opportunities to build these connections throughout the year.
- Families in our school community work together on projects connected to racial and economic justice, and have a culture in which conversations around topics of social justice are comfortable and expected.

Goal: Clarity and integration of social justice into our work

- Our commitment to racial and economic justice is integrated into every aspect of our school—our foundational documents (mission, vision, values), our self-image, our classroom practice and language, our institutional policies and practices.
- Social justice is an integral part of our curriculum and classroom practice. Racial and economic justice, as well as identity development and exploration, are coordinated and integrated into our curriculum at a whole-school level. Children in our school feel comfortable naming and having conversations around issues of race, class, gender, etc., as well as social justice, at developmentally appropriate levels.

Goal: Ongoing education and professional development around social justice

- Our staff engages in ongoing professional development around racial and economic justice.

What are we bringing to this work?

- A school culture of community-building, positive relationships, and mutual support
- A school culture of ongoing personal and professional growth and change
- A school culture of active listening and critical thinking
- A school culture and practice of reflection, perspective-taking, and empathy
- A school culture and practice of respect for individuals' ideas, perspectives, needs, and strengths

Gender Inclusion Policy *

All children, families, and staff at CCS have the right to feel seen, welcomed, valued, and understood at our school. CCS has created a statement to describe the policies and practices we use to help all children build positive gender identities, and to ensure safety, equity, and justice in the context of gender, especially knowing that our community includes LGBTQIA+ children and adults. The Gender Inclusion Policy should be read by all staff and families, and can be found on our website and as a [google doc](#).

Diversity, Inclusion, and Non-Discrimination Statement

At CCS we work to create a diverse community of children, families, and staff. We believe that by developing meaningful relationships across lines of difference, we gain access to different models of learning, thinking, and being that can inform our identities and build bridges between us and others. Interactions with a wide range of people teach us that the world is an exciting place, rich with possibilities, in which we can be honored for our own unique qualities while celebrating the qualities of those who are different from us. We invite children, families, and educators to explore and engage our whole selves in a caring environment that welcomes complexity.

CCS works to create the most diverse learning community that we can. We endeavour to create a school that is accessible to all families who want their children to learn with us, regardless of race, income, or

family structure. We endeavour to hire teachers of the highest quality who bring diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences to their teaching. We aim for our school community to reflect the diversity in our local community. We recognize diversity as one of many parts of our work toward social justice. Our commitment to this work is long-term; it is part of a larger, ongoing process towards building a better society.

The Children's Community School is an equal opportunity child care provider and an equal opportunity employer. Admissions, the provisions of services, and referrals of clients shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, or sex. Additionally, our policies, procedures, and practices are designed to prohibit discrimination on the basis of family structure, sex, gender, or sexuality.

II. Administration and Logistics

Program

The core program of the Children’s Community School is a preschool for children ages 18 months through 5 years. We are open 8:00–6:00 Monday through Friday, September through June (see the [CCS Academic Calendar](#) on our website). We offer 2-day (Monday and Tuesday), 3-day (Wednesday through Friday), and 5-day enrollment, with pick-up times at 12:30, 3:00, and 6:00. The school day begins at 8:30, but early drop off starting at 8:00 is available free to all enrolled children on a first-come, first-served basis.

We also related programs such as a summer camp and “vacation care” on days when the preschool is closed, as well as renting our space to outside groups. Details of these programs can be found on our website. The rest of this handbook is concerned primarily with the preschool program.

Application & Enrollment

See <http://www.childrenscommunityschool.org/program/> for full policies on the application and enrollment process.

Deposits, Fees & Credits

These policies are also detailed in the enrollment contract. In any discrepancy between the signed enrollment agreement (in TADS) and what is listed in the handbook, the signed agreement takes precedence.

- **SECURITY DEPOSITS:** Upon initial enrollment, each child's family pays a security deposit of \$400 per child. Security deposits are returned by August 15th of the academic year in which your child is withdrawn, regardless of your withdrawal date.
- **FIRST PAYMENT:** Each year at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment, families secure their spot with a first payment towards each child's annual tuition. The first payment amount varies by program and is approximately 1/11th of your annual tuition.
- **AFTERCARE & SPECIAL FEES:** Fees for services in addition to your enrolled program will be assessed and invoiced through TADS on a monthly basis. This is including, but not limited to: aftercare, aftercare drop-ins and any special add-on classes. One week’s notice is required to receive a refund for scheduled afternoon drop ins.
- **TUITION DUE DATES & LATE PAYMENTS:** Upon enrolling with TADS, families select a due date of the 1st, 5th or 10th of the month on months in which payments are due. The months in which payments are due depends on your choice of payment plan - 1 payment (due July), 2 payments (due July and January) or monthly payments (10 monthly payments starting in July and ending in April). There is a \$45 annual fee to enroll in the monthly payment plan. There is a \$35 charge for all late payments. Should your debt to CCS exceed your security deposit, your child will be considered to be withdrawn from the program.
- **CREDIT CARD FEE:** TADS issues a 3% convenience charge for all payments made with a credit

card. It is advised that all families make payments by electronic bank transfer or check to avoid this charge.

- PROGRAM CHANGE FEE: There is a program change fee of \$125 for any program changes after initial enrollment (i.e. from 3 day to 2 day program or Long Day to Short Day program). In order to change programs, there must be another child to take your child’s place.
- EARLY WITHDRAWAL: Enrollment is a year long commitment. If a child leaves the program mid-year, tuition can only be refunded if the spot is filled by another child. In these cases, a \$250 administrative fee will be deducted from the security deposit and the remaining deposit and tuition may be returned.
 - Note that scheduled afternoon drop-ins must be cancelled with seven days’ notice in order to receive a refund.
- FINANCIAL AID: Any financial aid is applied as a credit towards the family’s full annual tuition, as invoiced through TADS.

Non-Discrimination in Services

Note: The language and information in this section is required by Licensing, and must be updated annually to reflect the language from the most recent Civil Rights Memos. The philosophy underlying our non-discrimination policy is detailed in the “Social Justice” section, above.

Admissions, the provisions of services and referrals of clients shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age or sex.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign, the provision of aides, and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any individual/client/patient/student (and/or their guardian) who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination with:

Children’s Community School 4700 Kingsessing Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19143	
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Bureau of Equal Opportunity Rm 225, Health & Welfare Building PO Box 2675 Harrisburg, PA 17105	PA Human Relations Commission Philadelphia Regional Office 110 N. 8th Street Suite 501 Philadelphia, PA 19107

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Dept. of Human Services Bureau of Equal Opportunity Southeast Regional Office 801 Market Street, Suite 5034 Philadelphia, PA 19107	US Department of Health & Human Services Office for Civil Rights Suite 372, Public Ledger Building 150 South Independence Mall West Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111
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Snow Day Policy

Closures for snow days have significant impacts on families and staff, and we make each decision with care. In deciding whether to close to school on account of weather, we typically follow the school district’s lead. We also take into consideration weather conditions, road conditions, and the ability of staff and families to safely reach school and return home again. In terms of the timing of decisions, we try to strike a balance between announcing a closure early enough for families to make plans for other care and waiting long enough to be sure we are not closing unnecessarily.

We will allow 3 days of cancellations due to weather per year without make-ups. If there are more than 3 cancellations we will try to schedule make-up days to benefit the particular program affected by cancellations (i.e., the 2-day or 3-day program), but this is not always possible. The first several days of Spring Break are designated “Snow Make-Up Days,” that we may choose to remain open if necessary.

Text Messages for Emergencies and School Closures

CCS uses a text messaging service (“Remind”) to contact staff and families during emergencies, and for notifications of weather-related closures. We request that all staff and families subscribe to this free service, which will not share phone numbers with any other organization and will not be used for anything except the described purposes. Anyone can subscribe to CCS’s emergency texts at <https://www.remind.com/join/ccsalert>.

Children’s Records and Confidentiality

CCS maintains a variety of confidential records on each child, including legal records, observations, assessments, photos, and videos. Before any records are released to anyone outside the family (e.g., sending Narratives to private schools that children are applying to), families must sign a release form.

Child Files

As required by Pennsylvania law and NAEYC accreditation, children’s files (hard copies) are kept in a secure drawer in the school office accessible to school staff only, and kept securely online. Children’s legal guardians may also access their child’s files upon written or verbal request. We are required to have the following forms for each child upon beginning school with us:

- **Application and Enrollment Agreement:** The application includes identification and signature of the child’s legal guardian as well as admissions date (per NAEYC 7.A.05).
- **Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form:** We use the form provided by the state. A copy is in google docs as “State Emergency Contact Form.” This form must be updated (or confirmed no updates needed) at least every six months. Among other information, this form

includes who is legally responsible for the child and the child's health insurance information.

- **Health Reports and Vaccinations:** CCS keeps records of annual medical examinations and vaccinations on file for each child. Licensing requires that all children attending the school have an up-to-date health form that documents an annual exam and the health of each child.
 - **Health Report:** We require an official form (provided by the doctor's office or our own form) signed by a physician within 30 days of the first day of attendance at school. Children under 2 must have the report dated no more than six months before starting school; children 2 and older no more than one year before starting school.
 - If a child has a chronic health condition (including allergies), the family will provide an **Action Plan**, to be kept in the child's files. See "Chronic Conditions, Allergies, and Medications" for more information.
 - **Vaccination Record:** Families must provide a signed record from their healthcare provider indicating the up-to-date vaccine status of their child.
 - See "Health Examinations and Vaccinations" below for more details on related policies

Other records we keep on children, in hard or electronic form, include:

- Narratives and other assessments
- Observation notes, photos, video recordings, and artwork
- Medicine Administration Consent (see "Medication Policies" below)
- Incident reports (see "Incident Reports" below)

Publicly Shared Records

CCS maintains a public blog and a public Facebook page, on which we share (among other things) goings-on in the classrooms. As a part of these public documents, we share photos from the classroom, transcriptions of children's conversations, photos of children's artwork, and notes on what has happened at school. In these public forums, children's private information is not shared:

- Photos may not show children's faces—faces may be cropped out or blurred beyond recognition.
- No documents may share children's names—We change or omit names in transcripts; we are particularly careful of photos of children's artwork, where names are often written in corners.

If there is a compelling reason to share a photo including a child's face, we must receive written permission from the child's family in advance.

III. Health and Safety

CCS takes children’s health very seriously. We strive always to keep children safe from injury and disease. At the same time, we recognize that all children sometimes get hurt or sick in the normal course of development. We believe a healthy child is a child who can recover from life’s inevitable setbacks. To that end, we take specific steps to prevent and reduce illness; to prevent and reduce injury; and to foster and increase children’s resilience.

To prevent and reduce illness, we...

- Insist children stay home when sick (see below)
- Instruct children in good hygiene practices (including hand-washing, dish-washing, etc.)
- Clean and sanitize the school environment (including washing tables after eating, periodically washing towels and soft toys, etc.)
- Disallow sharing of likely germ vectors (food, hand towels, toys that get chewed on, etc.)

To prevent and reduce injury, we...

- Provide a safe physical environment with age-appropriate choices for physical play
- Actively supervise children at all times
- Stop behaviors that could result in serious physical harm
- Support children’s gross-motor development
- Instruct children in good safety practices (wearing helmets on bikes, assessing landing-zones when jumping, “look before you leap,” reflecting on experiences and making plans for safety, etc.)

To foster and increase children’s resilience, we...

- Support children’s self-care and recovery skills
- Support children’s skills in caring for each other
- Encourage children to learn from mistakes, and to make active choices about risk-taking
- Encourage children to take appropriate, well-considered physical risks

Illness Exclusion Policy *

In accordance with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, children who become ill at school should be sent home if the illness (a) prevents the child from participating comfortably in all activities, (b) results in a need for care that is greater than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, or (c) poses a risk of spread of harmful disease to others (AAP 2013).

More specifically, a child should be kept or sent home if they display any of the following:

- Fever (a temperature higher than 100.4° F) with other symptoms—see note below
- Weeping rash, or any rash at the same time as a fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (watery or unformed stools more than once in a school day or more than twice in 24

hours)

- Pink eye (conjunctivitis) that includes crusting, mucous discharge, or frequent eye-rubbing
- Severe congestion causing difficulty breathing, with or without a persistent cough
- Congestion or nasal discharge that interrupts child's participation in activities and/or requires continual intervention/care from the staff throughout the day
- Negative mood inconsistent with the child's usual temperament, such as significant lethargy, irritability, or persistent crying
- Symptoms that prevent them from participating in the school day (for instance, falling asleep outside of nap time)

If a child develops any of these symptoms while at school, the family will be called immediately and required to pick up the child as soon as possible; the child will wait in the office until the family arrives. (A possible exception is made for vomiting, if staff have a strong suspicion that the vomiting was caused by physical stimulation such as gagging or spinning, and the child shows no other symptoms. In this case the family will still be immediately informed, and told that if the vomiting happens again or any other symptoms develop they will need to pick up the child.)

A Note on Fever: Per the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, a child will not be excluded from school due to fever alone. A child with fever but no other symptoms is unlikely to communicate illness to others. If the child is behaving and participating in school activities normally and shows no other symptoms, a fever is not a reason to keep them out of school. If a child has a fever but no other symptoms, staff will notify the family but not require an early pick-up, and will continue to closely monitor the child until the fever resolves or the child needs to be sent home because other symptoms have developed.

We ask that families inform school staff as soon as possible if their child is being kept home for any health reason, so that staff can be alert for symptoms in other children, take appropriate precautions to prevent spread, and notify other families if applicable (notifications to families will not include the affected child's name).

Families must inform school staff if their child has been diagnosed with a vaccine-preventable communicable disease (for instance diphtheria, hepatitis, measles, mumps, rubella, polio, rotavirus, pertussis, varicella/chicken pox), a disease that requires health department notification (norovirus, salmonella, E coli, shigella, hepatitis A), or tuberculosis (TB). After these diseases, a child will need a doctor's note to return to school.

Returning to School After an Illness *

A child is well enough to return to school after an illness if:

- They are well enough to participate in all school activities;
- They have been free of fever (without fever-reducing medications—see note below), vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours;
- Congestion/nasal discharge does not interfere with child's ability to participate in activities and does not require staff members' frequent intervention to limit spread to others; AND
- All other symptoms above are resolved.

A Note on Fever: While fever without other symptoms is not a reason to send a child home from school, a fever associated with other symptoms must be resolved before the child *returns* to school (per the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics).

CCS does not typically require a doctor's note for a child to return to school after an illness; the exceptions are listed above, with diseases that CCS staff must be informed about. *CCS staff will take doctors' opinions seriously, but retain the right to decide if a child is too unwell to be at school.*

Upon a child's return to school after an illness, the family may not leave until they have checked in with a teacher about the child's health and symptoms, and the teacher has performed a quick health check.

Returning to School after Particular Illnesses

- **Hand Foot and Mouth:** A child can return to school two days after the rash has appeared and 24 hours after a fever has concluded, as long as they feel well enough to participate in the school day and have no open sores.
- **Pink Eye:** Children who've had pink eye may return to school if they've been on antibiotics for 24 hours, OR if they've been free of discharge for 24 hours and the itching has subsided enough that eye-rubbing is infrequent.
- **Strep Throat:** Children who've had strep may return to school if they've been on antibiotics for 24 hours, have been fever-free for 24 hours, and are feeling well enough to participate in normal school activities (including normal eating). (In rare cases, 24 hours of antibiotics will not be required if other two conditions are met; check with director.)

Lice Policy *

Per the [recommendations](#) of the American Academy of Pediatrics (2018 Red Book), because head lice have low transmissibility in classroom environments, children will not be excluded or sent home because of head lice. (This is a change in policy as of August 2019.)

Terms and information:

- **Lice—Head lice** are tiny, dark colored insects that live on the scalp and feed on blood, which typically cause itching on the scalp. While annoying, lice are not dangerous and do not pose a broader health risk. Lice are not a sign of poor hygiene—in fact, lice prefer clean hair to dirty. Lice crawl, but do not jump. They are usually very difficult to see.
- **Live eggs/live nits—Eggs** attached firmly to a hair with a live louse inside, within ¼” of the scalp. Eggs can only be confirmed to be live under a microscope. Live eggs are very difficult to eliminate, but pose no immediate risk of transmission, as they cannot leave the hair they are on.
- **Egg cases—Empty eggs**, more than ¼” from the scalp. Easier to see than live eggs (and often mistaken for live eggs), but pose no risk of spreading infestation.

When we know a child has live lice or eggs:

- The child's family will be immediately informed; families are expected to treat (see treatment details below). If staff are aware of a child with live lice for more than two consecutive days, the director will meet with the family to discuss treatment plans.
- All families in the child's classroom will be notified of the lice exposure, and asked to be on the lookout for symptoms and to let us know if they notice lice on their child. Families will be

notified weekly as long as we know live lice are present at school.

- CCS staff will perform head checks of children who show symptoms, to monitor the status of lice at school and inform families.
- Staff in classrooms where there are known to be live lice will take the following steps:
 - Removing and/or periodically sanitizing (45min in a hot dryer) materials that pose a particular risk of lice transmission (e.g., pillows, dress-up hats)
 - Monitoring storage spaces for children’s belongings and working to keep likely transmission vectors (hats, scarves, jackets) from touching while stored
 - Sanitizing nap mats daily after use, and storing affected children’s nap materials (blankets, stuffies) separately from other children’s (or sanitizing daily in a hot dryer)
 - Taking extra care that children’s heads are at least three feet apart during nap/rest times
 - Discouraging direct head-to-head contact between children

Live lice are often fairly easy to eliminate with commercially available shampoos, but live eggs/nits can be difficult, and many commonly sold treatments are not effective. CCS recommends the following treatments:

- Sklice—A shampoo that contains a pesticide that effectively kills both live lice and eggs, and requires only ten minutes to administer. It requires a prescription. The price varies widely, depending on your insurance. It’s free with Medicaid; there’s a coupon on the website for a \$30 price with some insurances. Information available at sklice.com.
- The Nuvo Method—A pesticide-free, non-toxic method. It requires meticulous application, eight continuous hours on the head, and repeated treatments; CCS recommends careful consideration and planning before choosing this method. Information available at nuvoforheadlice.com. Assuming you already own a hair dryer, this method only costs about \$15.
- Hair Heroes—A locally-owned business that sends experts to your home to pick lice out of the hair of a whole family. Information available at hair-heroes.net. Their service costs a minimum of \$125.

Disease Reporting

By law, staff is required to report to the Pennsylvania Health Department any knowledge of the following diseases in the school: Norovirus, Salmonella, E coli, Shigella, Hepatitis A.

Health Examinations and Vaccinations

CCS keeps records of annual medical examinations and vaccinations on file for each child. State licensing requires that all children attending the school have an up-to-date health form that documents an annual exam and the health of each child.

Health Report

We require an official form (provided by the doctor’s office or our own form) signed by a physician within 30 days of the first day of attendance at school. Children under 2 must have the report dated no more than six months before starting school; children 2 and older no more than one year before starting school.

When a child is overdue for any routine health services, families provide evidence of an appointment for

those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program. This report must also include signed authorization from a guardian for the physician to share health records with the school.

Families should follow up with their physical for any abnormal screening results. If the health report indicates any abnormal screening results, CCS administration may follow up with the family to ensure that the child is receiving the care needed.

If a child has a chronic health condition (including allergies), the family will provide an **Action Plan**, to be kept in the child's files. See "Chronic Conditions, Allergies, and Medications" for more information.

Vaccinations *

Updated August 9, 2019, per new regulations from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

Families must provide a signed record from their healthcare provider indicating the up-to-date vaccine status of their child, per [the schedule recommended by the CDC](#). Per Philadelphia Department of Public Health regulations, all children attending group childcare must receive and provide documentation of an influenza vaccine between August and December of each year.

Vaccine exemptions are provided for reasons of medical necessity only, with documentation from the child's physician attached to the child's health form. If a vaccine-preventable disease to which an unvaccinated child is susceptible occurs in the program (i.e., in the household of an enrolled family or staff member), the family of the unvaccinated child will be contacted immediately to exclude the child from school; the child will remain out of school until the threat of infection has passed.

If an enrolled (non-exempt) child falls behind on their required vaccinations, they will not be eligible to reenroll for the following year until they are up to date. (An exception to the vaccination requirement was made for some families who were enrolled before fall of 2017, under an earlier vaccination policy; the policy was updated summer 2017.)

Injuries

All CCS staff receives First Aid and CPR training. In case of any injury, staff will provide first aid to the best of their ability and according to their training.

Confidential information about a child may not be shared with any other family. In particular, in situations where one child injures another, the name of the injuring child will not be shared with the family of the injured child. In situations where the family of the injured family already knows the name of the injuring child (for instance, when their child tells them who did it) staff may acknowledge what the family already knows, but will take care not to share additional confidential information.

Incident Reports for Injuries

Staff will fill out an incident report for any injury that leaves more than a small mark on a child's body; any injury that requires more than routine first aid; any injury to a child's head, neck, face, or crotch; or other medical events (e.g., allergic reactions, nose-bleeds). Incident reports contain details of the injury

and staff's response (but do not include names of other involved children). The staff member who attended to the incident will complete the incident report, and if possible that staff member will personally share the report with the child's family at pick-up time. Incident reports must be signed by a legal guardian, the staff member who filled out the report, and a director.

Phone Calls

If an injury is serious, staff should use their judgment about whether the family should be notified before pick-up time via telephone call. In general, families should receive a phone call for any injury that leaves a visible mark on a child's face, any injury that required more than routine first aid (e.g., band-aid or brief ice pack), or any injury from a bite.

Chronic Conditions, Allergies, and Medications

Any chronic health condition that may require treatment by teachers (e.g. epilepsy, serious allergies, asthma, etc.) must be documented at school. At the start of the year families must provide CCS with an "Action Plan" document from the child's doctor, dated no more than 6 months prior to the start of the school year, detailing as much of the condition as is relevant for teachers to know. In particular, the document should specifically describe symptoms to watch for and include a detailed action plan for exactly what steps teachers should take in what situations. Copies of this document will be kept both in the child's file in the office and in a secure location in the child's classroom.

CCS maintains lists in each classroom, as well as the kitchen, of all children at school with food allergies. These lists are posted visibly so that staff may refer to them quickly. Families must sign a consent form (to be kept in the child's file) for this information about their child to be posted. For more information on food allergies, see "Food Allergies" section.

Medication Policy

All medications are stored in a locked container, except for (a) medications which by a physician's order must be readily available at all times and (b) diaper cream; these medications must remain inaccessible to children and must be stored in a safe manner that allows adults to quickly access them. Medication may not be stored in an insecure location—for instance, the child's cubby or backpack. Children may not take medication without the supervision of a staff member.

To administer over-the-counter medication, the school needs a doctor's note (except non-prescription diaper cream). To administer prescription medication, the medication needs to be in its original container and the school needs a copy of the prescription indicating dose and frequency (a prescription attached to the bottle is acceptable).

Each classroom maintains a Medication Log for each medication. The Medication Log includes general info about the medication and its administration, including a family signature giving permission to administer medication. The Medication Log contains the proper steps for verifying medication administration, so must be used every time to record the date, time, dosage, and administering staff member. The log is moved to the child's file in the office when the medication will no longer be needed.

Emergency Medical Attention and Transportation *

Note: Some of the language and policies in this section are dictated by Licensing.

In case of a medical or dental emergency for children or adults, staff will:

1. **Call 911 first.**
2. Notify CPR/First Aid trained staff immediately, and assist that staff to the best of your ability.
3. Call the family or emergency contact, and let them know whether to come to school or meet us at the hospital.

Note: Only families may authorize medical treatment for children; CCS staff may not.

If someone must be transported to the hospital before family can arrive:

- If necessary, an ambulance will take children to the emergency room of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP, at 24th and Civic Center Blvd.), or take adults to the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP, at 3400 Spruce St. at 34th).
- A staff member will travel with the injured/sick person in the ambulance and stay with them at the hospital until the family arrives.
 - The staff member traveling in the ambulance will be the first person available in the following list: the director; the curriculum coordinator; the business manager; the most senior teacher from the child's classroom. The person next highest on the list will be in charge of the school while the others are gone.
- A staff member should retrieve the child or staff member's file from the office; the file contains emergency contact info, insurance info, and medical forms. Ideally this file will travel in the ambulance; if needed another staff member will arrange for important info to be sent.
 - Children with any medical needs that would be relevant in an emergency (such as asthma, allergies, seizure disorders, etc.) have an Emergency Action Plan in their files.

At all times CCS has at least one staff member on-site with First Aid and CPR training. At the start of each year we provide teachers with First Aid and CPR training as necessary.

Risk Assessment Policy and Procedure

At CCS we recognize the value of physical risk-taking to children's learning and development. Materials that encourage risk-taking (such as gross motor equipment, toys, tools, etc.) can build many important skills. *Unmitigated* risk, on the other hand, is not good for children and can easily result in serious harm. Children benefit the most from materials and situations that have carefully considered by attentive adults to weigh the benefits and risks.

Families who are curious about the details of our risk assessment procedure are encouraged to speak with the director.

Health and Safety Hazards

We prohibit hazards to children's and adults' health and safety on all school property, including outdoor spaces. Smoking is prohibited on campus. Firearms may not be brought onto campus.

We take care to ensure that the physical environment minimizes the risk of injuries, such as tripping/slipping, burns, shocks. All staff should be diligent in cleaning up spills, and carefully monitor slippery areas on rainy days (such as the entry way).

Weather and Environmental Hazard Policies *

- **Hot and Cold Weather**
 - When the wind-chill or “RealFeel” is below 20°F or above 100°F, children will not play outside for extended periods (though brief activities are permitted).
 - When the wind-chill or “RealFeel” is between 30°F and 90°F, children will go outside on their regular schedules (though teachers may choose to shorten outside time if many children are uncomfortable).
 - Between “RealFeels” of 20–30° or 90–100°, teachers use their discretion, or allow children choice about going outside.
 - When the temperature is below 45°F or above 75°F teachers closely monitor children's health, temperature, and hydration.
- **Rain, Snow, and Storms**
 - Children will go outside as scheduled in periods of snow or light rain, or when there is snow on the ground. At these times teachers closely monitor children’s health and the safety of the environment, and may choose to shorten outside time. Children will not play outside during periods when lightning is visible.
- **Air Quality and Pollution**
 - Children do not play outdoors when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is above 300 (i.e., “Hazardous”) (see <http://www.phila.gov/aqi/>).
- **Chemical and Other Environmental Hazards**
 - CCS complies with all public health requirements and licensing requirements for hazards such as lead and asbestos.

Shoes-On Policy *

In compliance with fire code, all children must wear shoes at school at all times. CCS allows the following exceptions:

- During nap time, with shoes stored immediately next to the child’s nap mat and put back on when the child wakes
- During supervised art or sensory activities that involve bare feet, with shoes to be put on immediately on completion of the activity

CPR, First Aid, and Fire Safety Training

A teacher who has current CPR and first aid training and certification must be present with each class at all times. We offer CPR and First Aid training to all teachers; these trainings typically occur during August orientation. All teachers are legally required train in Fire Safety. Documentation of all certifications are kept in staff files.

Fire Drills

A fire drill shall be held at least every 60 days. Evacuation routes are posted. Evacuation plans provide for removal of all persons from the facility in a single trip.

Shelter-in-Place Drills

Shelter-in-Place is the procedure to use when there is an environmental danger outside the building, such as a toxic spill. Drills will be held at least twice per school year.

Arrival, Departure, and Transportation

Arrival and Drop-Off

- **All adults dropping off children must sign them in. Teachers must ensure that all families sign in.** When arrival time is over, the teacher responsible for the sign-in sheet checks it against children who are present; any child who is present but not signed in should be signed in by the teacher. **It is imperative for safety that the sign-in sheet accounts for all children accurately.**

Departure and Pick-Up

- **All adults picking up children must sign them out. Teachers must ensure that all children are signed before leaving.** When pick-up time is done, the teacher responsible for the sign-in sheet checks it against children who are present. If there are children who have been picked up that the teacher is 100% certain were picked up by an authorized adult (i.e., the teacher personally witnessed the pick-up), the teacher may sign the child out (but also remind the family the next day to sign out). **It is imperative for safety that the sign-in sheet accounts for all children accurately.**
- If a child is enrolled until 12:30, their adult is expected to arrive for pick up between 12:25 and 12:35. If a child is enrolled until 3:00 their adult is expected to arrive no later than 3:00, and if they are enrolled until 6:00 their adult is expected to arrive no later than 6:00. Adults should sign children out immediately upon arrival, and the children are considered to be in their care (and not directly supervised by CCS staff) at that time. At 12:30 and 3:00 children who have been signed out are welcome to stay and play in common areas for 10 minutes (under the supervision of their adults); staying longer than that becomes a supervision and logistics challenge for staff. Children who have not been picked up by the appropriate time may be signed into Forest Friends, or may be taken to wait in the office, depending on group sizes and ratios; families may be charged for the extra time their child is at school.
- Families who are running late to pick up should call the school, so that staff can make plans for supervision. Families who pick up children late more than twice in a month will need to have a conversation with the director about the impact of their lateness on the program, and make a plan together to address the problem.
- Children may be released only to adults listed on the Approved Pick Up form in their file, which is collected before the first day of school (but may be amended by the family at any time). If someone picking up a child is not personally known to the teacher, the teacher must ask for

photo ID and check it against the Approved Pick Up List. If that person is not on the list, teachers may NOT release the child until verbal approval from a parent, guardian, or someone else on the child’s list is obtained (in the busy time at pick up, teachers can ask a director for help with this phone call if necessary). In this case, teachers should ask the family if the person picking up should be added to the list.

Transportation and Field Trips

- When traveling with children outside of school property, teachers take extra care to insure safety and supervision of children. Teachers on field trips know the number of children at all times, and perform head counts every few minutes.
- Teachers explicitly teach safe behavior as pedestrians, bus passengers, etc.
- Field trips that involve riding public transportation must have more than one adult supervising, unless there are three or fewer children.
- When boarding public transportation, one adult stands in the doorway, counting children, only allowing the door to close once all children are confirmed boarded. When exiting public transportation, one teacher gathers children in a nearby safe spot, doing a head-count; the other teacher stands in the doorway, only allowing it to close once the head-count teacher confirms that everyone is accounted for (e.g., “Okay, I have ten children!”).
- See “Field Trips” section of the Handbook for more guidance on supervision of field trips.

Related Concerns for Children with Disabilities, Medical Conditions, or Other Needs

Teachers take special care to plan for and communicate about the needs of children with disabilities, medical conditions, or other particular needs during arrival, departure, and transportation. For instance,

- Teachers and families create systems together to exchange logistical information about service providers.
- Teachers and families create systems to ensure the medication is exchanged properly.
- Teachers create explicit plans to meet the needs of children on field trips.

Cleaning

Classrooms are the physical space that nurtures learning. Rooms must be kept clean and organized to allow for purposeful play and to maintain the health of the children.

The entire school is cleaned by an outside contractor twice a week outside school hours, with practices according to NAEYC’s [“Cleaning and Sanitation and Frequency Table,”](#) including washing floors, tables, carpets, etc.

Toileting

Children at CCS are not required to be potty trained. Teachers will support children (and their families) as they work on their toileting skills as needed.

When talking about toileting with children, we use accurate language (e.g., “penis” or “poop” instead of

“wee wee” or “doo doo”). We invite children to listen to their bodies and notice what they are feeling. If a child is reluctant to go to the bathroom, we ask them to give it a try, reminding them that they do not have to pee or poop, but it’s important to try.

Diapering and Accidents

- CCS does not accommodate cloth diapers.
- Children’s diapers will be changed or checked at least every 2 hours. Diapers are also checked when a child wakes from a nap. Wet or dirty diapers will be changed within 5 minutes of a teacher noticing.
- Families of children who wear diapers are asked to provide their child’s classroom with an unopened package of diapers and a package of wipes at the beginning of the school year. Teachers will ask for replacements as needed throughout the year. Any diaper of suitable size will be used for any child, unless there is a medical reason to use a particular brand.

Food

Food is an important part of caring for young children. While the main purpose of eating is health and nutrition, social and emotional development are nearly as important. All interactions with food at school (snack, meals, cooking, shopping, etc.) should be viewed as opportunities for building skills like body awareness, self-help, and self-regulation, and as context for building relationships and community. Specifically:

- Children are strongly encouraged to sit while eating, and to stay and be present with other children and adults even after they finish eating. Children are encouraged to use eating as a time for social connections. When possible, snacks are served “family style,” to promote interactions, sharing, and helping skills.
- Children are supported in building skills for feeding themselves.
- Children are encouraged to listen to their own bodies’ signals regarding hunger and fullness, as well as to notice the impact foods have on how they feel.
- Children are encouraged to be aware of different kinds of foods; to try new foods they are unfamiliar with multiple times over multiple days; and to appreciate fresh fruits and vegetables, whole foods, and freshly prepared foods.
- As often as possible, children are provided opportunities to help prepare meals (for instance, participating in cooking, setting the table, serving food, and cleaning up afterwards).
- Food is never offered as a reward or punishment. (The only exception is if positive reinforcement with food is part of a Positive Behavior Support Plan for a child with an IEP, and the plan is implemented under the supervision of the child’s service providers.)

CCS provides morning and afternoon snacks every day; children bring a packed lunch from home every day.

Policies for Food from Home

- Children may not share food from home with each other.
- In the event that teachers or directors feel that a child’s lunch does not meet a child’s needs (e.g., a child is still hungry after they’ve eaten what is from home), teachers may supplement using foods from our snack supply; such supplementation must be communicated to the family. If

teachers feel a child's lunches regularly do not meet the child's needs, the teachers and a director will make a plan to problem-solve with the family, paying particular attention to the delicate interactions of culture and economics that often are a part of food decisions.

- If a child has an allergy to an ingredient often present in CCS snacks, families are asked to provide snack alternatives (see Food Allergies, below).
- Families are asked not to send common choking hazards for children younger than 4 years old (hot dogs, whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of nut butter, raw carrots larger than 1/2", meat larger than 1/2").

What We Serve for Snack

- Snacks provided at school include at least two food groups (e.g., pretzels and fresh fruit, or rice cakes and sunflower butter).
- Snacks include fresh produce as often as possible, and often includes freshly prepared foods (e.g. baked pumpkin seeds or fresh-cooked whole grains).
- We sometimes serve dairy products, including cheese and whole-milk yogurt.
- We do not serve meat at school, but we do include non-meat proteins on a regular basis.
- We encourage teachers to plan cooking activities as a part of the snack program.
- We do not serve common choking hazards to children younger than 4 years old (whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of nut butter, raw carrots larger than 1/2"). For children under 3 years old, teachers attend to children's individual chewing and swallowing capabilities, and cut food into 1/2" pieces when in doubt.

Prevention of Body Shaming

We exist within a culture that causes most people to hold negative opinions of their bodies—negative opinions that cause measurable harm to both physical and mental health. These influences begin during infancy, and have disproportional effects on girls and women. CCS attempts to interrupt our culture's body-shaming influences, especially in the context of food and feeding. We help children develop positive feelings and awareness about their own bodies with practices such as the following:

- Staff promote children's self-awareness of bodily sensations connected to food and eating, and help children attend to their own feelings of hunger and fullness, and of how different foods make different parts of their bodies feel (e.g., mouth, stomach, muscles, brain).
- Staff avoid comments about bodies' sizes and shapes—including comments about children, comments about adults, and comments about oneself. (The exception is general comments about children's growth: "Look how much you're growing!" "You're getting taller!")
- Staff will avoid (and help children avoid) discussing food and eating in terms connected with morals or virtues (for instance, "good foods," "bad foods," "junk food"). Staff also avoid any language that implies any foods are rewards for virtuous behavior or punishment for bad behavior, or are exchanges for physical activity.

Documenting Snack

Each day a teacher from each team determines what the day's snack will be. Teachers post the day's snack menu before arrival each day in each classroom in a place where families can see.

Beverages

The only beverage CCS regularly serves to children is water. "Special occasion" beverages might include

things the children help prepare, such as tea or fruit smoothies. We request that families send reusable water bottles to school each day for their child to drink from at snack, lunch, and throughout the day. We encourage children to notice and attend to their own bodies' thirst cues. As with eating, children are encouraged to sit while drinking. Children do not have bottles when napping/resting.

Breastfeeding and Breastmilk

CCS will work to support families who are breastfeeding by providing space for breastfeeding or pumping when requested (for instance, the office or the "back office"). Due to Health Department regulations, CCS is not able to store breast milk or formula on behalf of a family, and may not provide breast milk or formula to any child during their enrolled hours. Families may choose to store breast milk in our refrigerators, but they accept full responsibility for its storage, safety, retrieval, and use.

Food Schedule

Snacks and meals are regular parts of the daily schedule, per NAEYC 5.B.16. Snacks and meals are no less than 2 hours apart and no more than 3 hours apart.

Snack Alternatives

Lists of allergies and dietary restrictions are posted in every classroom, and teachers are familiar with food needs of all children. If a child cannot eat a food that is commonly used in our snacks, teachers may ask that child's family to supply an alternative snack item for that child, to be substituted for snacks at school as needed. Alternative items should be shelf-stable, supplied in quantity to last several months, and labeled clearly with the child's name.

Food Safety

All staff take steps to ensure the safety of all food served. At least one staff member is trained in the ServSafe food safety program. It is the job of the trained staff member to ensure CCS's compliance with all food safety practices. This ServSafe-trained person maintains a monthly dated document which details food safety compliance and any corrections that have been made. The expiration date of stored food must be regularly checked. All expired food must be discarded. Food left over from snacks must be discarded. If families send spoilable food from home for a child's lunch, the child's lunch is stored in the refrigerator; it is the family's responsibility to inform staff when a child's lunch requires refrigeration. We comply with state food safety regulations (§ 3270.161), and are inspected regularly by the Health Department.

Supervision while Children are Eating

All children should sit while eating. Children under 2 years old must remain in a teacher's line of sight while eating.

Food Allergies

CCS believes that the best way to keep allergic children safe is to educate them and their peers about their safety needs. As a general rule, we do not ban allergens from lunches and other food from home. Rather, teachers ensure that allergic children know their allergies, know how to identify when allergens are nearby, and know how to secure appropriate space. Teachers also work with non-allergic peers to be able to take care of those with allergies (e.g., "I have strawberries, but I know Ezra is allergic, so I'll keep

them far away from him”). Additionally, teachers are vigilant about children’s allergens, and make sure to enforce safe distance and prevent food sharing, both while children are still learning about allergen safety and after.

That said, we recognize that young children may not be developmentally ready for the task of caring for themselves and others with regard to life-threatening food allergies. In addition, certain common allergens (in particular peanut butter) have a tendency to get spread around by children without the fine motor skills to eat neatly. Therefore, on a case-by-case basis, CCS may decide to ban a particular food from the school for the space of a school year. In order for a food to be banned from the school because of an individual child’s allergy, the family of the child must meet with the director to discuss the short- and long-term needs of both the child and the child’s peers; the child’s allergy must be described in a doctor’s report as “High risk for severe reaction,” and that doctor’s report must be dated within 6 months of the start of the school year. As children often grow out of allergies, this process is required at the beginning of every school year. Note that while the school may disallow a certain food (e.g. peanuts), we will not require families to police food labels (i.e., a package that says “Produced in a facility that processes peanuts” is okay). School staff will notify all families when a particular food is banned for the year.

For information about the treatment of allergic reactions, see “Chronic Conditions, Allergies, and Medications.”

Handwashing

Staff, volunteers, and children must wash hands

- Upon arrival at school (or for children, if drop-off is in the yard, upon entering school for the day), or upon transitioning to another classroom (e.g., going to Aftercare)
- Before eating
- After using the bathroom, diapering, or coming into contact with any body fluids
- After water play
- After handling pets or other animals, or material that may have come into contact with animals
- Before cooking or food prep
- Any time that handwashing would substantially reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases

Additionally, *staff and volunteers* must wash hands

- Before and after feeding children
- Before and after administering medication to children
- After assisting children with diapers or toileting
- After cleaning or handling garbage

Wearing gloves during these activities does not change handwashing requirements.

Children are explicitly taught how to wash hands at the beginning of each year (teachers may use games, morning meetings, role-playing, puppet shows, etc.). Children use the sink in small groups so that teachers can monitor and assist in handwashing. Proper handwashing uses liquid soap and running water, and involves at least 20 seconds of vigorous rubbing of all parts of the hands. Children are encouraged to sing a song while washing, to make sure rubbings lasts for 20 seconds. Staff assist children as necessary to ensure that proper handwashing occurs.

When handwashing is not possible (e.g., on field trips), wet wipes may be used instead, or hand sanitizer may be used with children over 24 months as long as visible soil is not present.

See NAEYC 5.A.09 for more details on handwashing.

Child Abuse

General information about child abuse, including relevant laws, can be found at the [Child Welfare Information Gateway](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/) (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/>).

The law designates certain individuals, including teachers and other school staff, as mandatory reporters. These laws require school staff to alert the appropriate authorities about abuse or neglect. At CCS, all staff are required to be trained in child abuse mandatory reporting. If any staff suspect any child in our care of experiencing abuse or neglect, by law they *must* report it to the authorities.

To report suspected abuse or neglect, call the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at (800) 422-4453 or Pennsylvania ChildLine at (800) 932-0313. You can also file a report online, at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>.

Resources for Families and Staff

Organizations listed in our “[Resources to Support Families](#)” document may be helpful for families or staff members dealing with issues related to abuse.

IV. School–Family Relationships

Strong relationships between families and staff are a crucial part of CCS’s program.

As a general rule, CCS welcomes all families to participate in the life of the school and the classrooms. **We encourage families to spend time in their child’s classroom** by volunteering, coming to participate in classroom activities, offering a “lesson” or activity or teaching the children about a home practice or culture, or simply observing at any time. We ask that families communicate with teachers to plan for visits, so that children and teachers can be best prepared, and to avoid certain times for visits (there are inconvenient times of the day, such as rest time; inconvenient times of the year, such as the first month when everyone is getting settled; and inconvenient days, such as when too many adults are already in the room)—but families will never be denied the right to see their child or the school.

All families deserve equal access to communication and participation at school; thus, all opportunities for participation and communication must include a variety of flexible options for families (e.g., conference slots in the evenings, volunteer opportunities and community events at a variety of days and times, availability of multiple ways to communicate with teachers). Additionally, CCS will work with families as needed to meet translation needs for spoken and/or written communication.

Our community is strengthened when we include families with diverse structures, cultures, races, religions, values, socio-economic statuses, etc. Staff make a special effort to ensure that families whose identities are in the minority in our community feel they have full access to our program and our community. Without tokenizing or calling out families with minority identities, we work to build strong relationships between staff and family members.

Home–School Connections

At CCS, we recognize the essential role that families, including home cultures and languages, play in the lives of our students. As such we create avenues to connect families (including their home cultures and languages) to our work at school even before the school year starts. We begin with home visits, in which we dialogue with families and gather information about each family, including their culture, values, and language.

For children who come to CCS speaking another language we use this opportunity to gather a handful of words in the child’s home language that we can use to help this child feel comfortable and understood in their day. We record the words for teacher, mother, father, friend, hungry, thirsty, bathroom, sad, lunch, snack, and play.

We maintain the home-school connection throughout the year by regularly inviting parents into school to share stories, songs and food from their home cultures. We then incorporate these songs, stories and food into our daily play at CCS. In addition, as teachers plan for daily routines and provocations they look for opportunities to incorporate home cultures/languages into play.

Throughout the year teachers and staff create ongoing opportunities for families to contribute to their child’s education by offering input on educational goals, strategies and approaches, needs and services, and curriculum. Both in casual daily conversations and in more formal contexts (such as conferences), teachers seek families’ input on these topics. When families voice concerns, teachers collaborate with them and each other to find solutions that meet the needs of children, families, and the school.

School–Family Communication

At CCS we believe that communication with families is an essential part of building community. Teachers and staff communicate with every family on a regular, ongoing basis. This communication serves many purposes: primarily, it helps teachers and families work together to meet children’s individual needs; it also helps teachers and families coordinate around the logistics of child care (e.g., transitions, routines, etc.); it helps families build connections to the classroom and to the school community; and it helps teachers articulate their practice. Communication with families takes many forms at CCS, including both formal and informal communication, and both whole-group and individual communication.

Teachers **communicate with families as a group** via a daily whole-class email, with updates of goings-on at school, as well as announcements and reminders. Teachers may also share information about the school and the classes via our blog and our Facebook page, as well as physical documentation at school.

Teachers **communicate with individual families** primarily through (a) email and (b) face-to-face conversation at drop-off and pick-up (depending on the needs of each family). Teachers will schedule phone calls or face-to-face meetings with families as needed.

For families who are not comfortable communicating in English, CCS will arrange translation/interpretation.

In general, teachers check email before or after their time with children, not during their time “on the floor.” If families urgently need to share information with teachers during school hours, they should call the school phone number.

In the case of communication about sensitive matters (e.g., a child’s development or challenging behaviors), we will endeavour to schedule face-to-face meetings between families and relevant staff members, without the child present.

Twice each year teachers will meet with parents for formal conferences (see “Assessment,” below). Other meetings will be set up at the discretion of the teachers or directors or at the request of the family.

Supporting Families Outside of School

Only a small portion of young children’s lives take place at school; the most important part of their learning, growth, and development takes place at home, with their families. CCS staff is available to support families with their children’s learning, development, and behaviors at home as well as at school. Families are encouraged to reach out to their child’s teacher and/or school directors for support. Staff can help talk through and strategize for challenging behaviors, plan for upcoming transitions, and offer perspective on development and learning. Staff can be available for face-to-face meetings during school hours or for phone conversations after school hours.

CCS also creates and maintains a list of [resources for families](#). Anyone with resources to recommend for

this list is encouraged to contact the director.

Family Connections and Community

CCS supports enrolled families in building connections with each other, and in working together both inside and outside of school. Our Family Committee provides opportunities throughout the year for families to collaborate on efforts that benefit the school. We share families' contact information with each other (with their permission) to encourage social connections between them outside of school. We encourage families to make use of our space for events. We host events where families can communicate and connect with each other.

Policy for Release of Children

All students must have filled out an Approved Pick Up form before the first day of school which is accessible in their file. Teachers will have sign out sheet at all times during dismissal and are responsible for making sure each child is picked up by approved adult that sign out is completed. If someone picking up a child is not personally known to the supervising teacher, the teacher must ask for photo ID to confirm that the person is on the Approved Pick Up List. If someone not on the list tries to pick up a child, teachers may not release the child until verbal approval from a parent or guardian (or someone else on the list) is obtained. Per licensing requirements, staff may not release a child to an adult who is intoxicated or otherwise impaired in their ability to safely care for the child.

Families with Multiple Households

“Dual Consent”

There are many situations for which we ask for consent from a parent or guardian—for instance, adding someone to the Approved Pick Up List, administering medication, using children's photos, sending records to third parties, etc. Our default policy is that consent from one parent or guardian constitutes consent from the family. However, any parent/guardian may request to become a “dual-consent family,” in which two parents/guardians must both consent to a change in the child's records or approvals. Dual-consent status is situation-specific; for instance, if a family is dual-consent for adding people to the Approved Pick Up List, they are still single-consent for administering medication unless otherwise specified. CCS will maintain a list of situations in which families have requested to become dual-consent, which will be made known to all relevant staff, so that the family's wishes can be respected.

Meetings with Families with Multiple Households

It is best for children when all adults who care for them receive the same information at the same time. To that end, as a general rule when there is a meeting to be held about a child (for instance, Family Teacher Conferences or specific meetings about behaviors or concerns) CCS staff will *not* accommodate families who want different parents to have those meetings at different times. We expect families living in multiple households to make the effort to meet together for the good of their child. The exception to this is Home Visits at the start of the year; teachers will endeavour to provide visits to two households if possible.

Limited English Proficiency Policy

It is our responsibility to ensure that all clients have meaningful and equal access to services. This responsibility encompasses the most basic of human needs, the need for communication and understanding. In order to ensure effective communication CCS staff will make every effort to ensure communication and understanding for those clients or their immediate families who have Limited English Proficiency. Once a family has been identified as needing translation or interpretive services, CCS will ensure that such services are given.

Suspension and Expulsion *

Whenever possible we avoid asking an enrolled child or family to leave our school, either temporarily (suspension) or permanently (expulsion, or terminating the enrollment agreement). Incidents of suspension or expulsion are exceedingly rare at CCS. We will only exclude a child from our program if (a) our school is unable to meet the child's needs, (b) the child prevents the school from meeting other children's needs, or (c) actions of the family make a working relationship impossible—see below for details.

In circumstance (a) or (b), we will require a family to either keep their child out of school until a plan is made that all parties agree will meet the needs of all children and staff, or withdraw their child, in which case we will support them in finding a school with greater ability to meet their child's needs. We will endeavour to give families as much notice as possible before suspending or expelling a child, but we reserve the right to terminate child care (temporarily or permanently) without notice should we find it necessary for the safety and well being of the children in our care. Decisions regarding suspension and expulsion are the responsibility of the director; decisions must involve multiple examinations of possible biases that may be influencing staff's perceptions of or contributing to the situation, and these examinations must be documented.

Inability to Meet the Child's Needs

CCS staff has deep experience in working to meet the diverse individual needs of children, both typically developing and with special needs. When a child in our school community develops a behavior that significantly disrupts learning, CCS staff has a range of approaches to meet the child's needs, as well as protocols for interventions and support. This process includes ongoing communication and collaboration with the child's family. If the efforts of the staff cannot meet the child's needs, CCS has protocols for asking families to seek professional evaluation and services (typically free for young children), and resources to help families negotiate that process. Often through this process children, families, and teachers can receive professional support in meeting the child's needs at school and beyond.

If the child's needs (for health and safety, for learning, for positive experiences in a school setting) cannot be met at CCS, even with reasonable accommodations from the school and outside support services (or if necessary services are unavailable), we will ask the family to withdraw. Examples of this include a child's behaviors posing a direct threat to their own safety (for instance, multiple teachers feel they are unable to prevent an injury requiring more than routine first aid, or the child elopes); or a child needing to regularly spend significant portions of the school day (more than 15% of their time at school)

away from the rest of the class. In these cases we will document and share the behaviors with the family in an ongoing and timely manner.

Inability to Meet Other Children's Needs

In a classroom community, every child's behavior impacts the learning and development of their peers, and teachers use children's interactions as learning opportunities. Disruptive behaviors can require a teacher to focus attention and resources on a single child at the expense of others temporarily, but we value these behaviors as opportunities for both the child and the child's peers to learn about caring for themselves and for others. Thus, even behaviors that significantly disrupt other children's learning directly (e.g., physical aggression) or indirectly (e.g., behaviors that require a teacher's sustained one-on-one attention) are a normal and valuable part of our program. Typically in these situations teachers help the child learn over time to manage their needs, and the temporary disruption to other children is less important than the learning all the children gain from it.

However, in some circumstances a child's behavior is such that the disruption to other children's learning or well-being is significant, ongoing, and not responsive to teachers' interventions. Examples of this include a child's behaviors posing a direct threat to the safety of other children or staff (for instance, regularly harming others in a way that requires first aid or leaves physical marks); or a child's behaviors prevent CCS from meeting [DHS's safety and supervision guidelines](#) (for instance, maintaining legally required child-staff ratios). In these cases we will document and share the behaviors with the family in an ongoing and timely manner.

Family Reasons for Suspension or Expulsion

The following situations may result in ending the enrollment of a child at CCS, temporarily or permanently, at the discretion of the director:

- A family repeatedly fails to pay the contracted tuition, and efforts to find a mutually acceptable payment solution have failed
- A family's actions are inconsistent with the wellbeing of children, staff, or other families (for instance, abusive, disruptive, or threatening behavior over time)
- A family fails to comply with health and immunization requirements
- A family repeatedly picks up a child after the end of contracted services, and efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution have failed
- A family otherwise violates the child care contract—note that families are required to thoroughly read the entire child care contract, and to ask for a detailed explanation of any rules and regulations they do not fully understand prior to enrolling the child

What Children Should Bring To School

Clothing

Children should come to school each day dressed in clothing that is appropriate for active, messy play both indoors and outdoors. Footwear should allow for active play (i.e., no flip-flops). Families should expect for their child to get dirty and wet every day. On any "short sleeve weather" days, we request that children come to school with sunscreen already applied. Staff will reapply sunscreen to children before going back outside later in the day.

What Children Should Bring Every Day

- **LUNCH:** Children should bring a large, nutritious lunch each day. All containers should be labeled with the child’s name. It helps build independence if containers are ones that children can open by themselves. (See “Food,” above, for more details.)
- **WATER BOTTLE:** A re-usable water bottle, labeled with the child’s name. Water bottles can be left at school for up to five days, but should be taken home and washed at least once a week.
- **REST TIME ITEMS:** Children staying past 12:30 may bring a favorite stuffed animal, blanket, pillow, or whatever will help them rest. These items may remain at school if the child regularly attends the afternoon program.

What Children Should Bring the First Day

- **INDOOR SHOES:** A pair of easy-to-put-on shoes (many families choose Crocs), labeled clearly with the child’s name, that will be used indoors throughout the year. These will be kept in the child’s classroom for the entire year.
- **CHANGES OF CLOTHES:** At least one complete change of clothes, including extra underwear. These will be kept for children at school in case of wet/dirty clothes. When dirty clothes are sent home, families should send replacement clothing the next day. Teachers will remind families throughout the year to replace spare clothes as necessary for changing weather and growing children.
- **DIAPERS and WIPES:** Children who are not yet using the toilet reliably should bring one entire unopened package of diapers to school the first day, and one package of wipes. Teachers will request replacement diapers and wipes as needed throughout the year. (See “Diapering and Accidents,” above, for more information.)

Commercial Policy

We are interested in having children’s ideas and imaginations fill our school. To that end, we take care regarding children’s interactions with images, narratives, and ideas from “commercial” sources, such as movies, TV shows, mass-market toys, and so on—especially commercial characters, such as Disney princesses or Marvel superheroes. In the past, CCS has banned images from commercial sources at school; we are shifting from a ban to guidelines for careful thought for staff and families.

There are a number of reasons that we are wary of ideas from commercial sources:

- We have found that when children bring in ideas from commercial sources, their play and stories often take on a scripted, rigid, closed-ended quality that fails to develop complexity or flexibility over time.
- The narratives from commercial sources often contain ideas about gender, violence, and interpersonal interactions that conflict with CCS’s values, and sometimes promote behaviors or language that conflict with CCS’s goals for children.
- Commercial ideas generally have tremendous power over children’s attention and thinking—corporations have spent decades and billions of dollars developing ideas that children are most likely to latch onto—and thus it is important for children to have spaces in which commercial ideas have minimal impact.

On the other hand, commercial narratives can be a context in which children explore developmentally appropriate ideas and questions (e.g., power, identity, self-esteem, etc.), and commercial narratives have the potential to support peer relationships, as children connect over shared knowledge. Also, a well-intentioned ban on commercial imagery can have unintended consequences; for instance, a ban can make children and families feel ashamed of their choices and interests. A ban can also disproportionately impact low-income families, who often have greatest access to products that are cross-promoted.

We offer the following guidelines to staff and families in considering children’s exposure to commercial ideas:

- CCS will not bring images of commercial characters into our space.
- CCS asks that families to please avoid sending children to school with clothing or belongings with images of commercial characters when possible. In particular, when purchasing items for school (lunchboxes, water bottles, etc.) we ask that families avoid items with commercial characters on them.
- CCS will not disallow ideas in children’s play or stories on the basis of commercial origin.
- As with all curriculum content, when interacting with commercial narratives that interest children, teachers should be constantly on the lookout for the “interest beneath the interest.” What is driving the interest in this narrative for this particular child or group of children? Are they figuring out ideas about power? Investigating risk and safety? Excited about colorful costumes? Digging into deeper interests can open up powerful opportunities for meeting children’s needs and planning emergent curriculum that goes far beyond the initial, surface-level interest.
- When considering whether to interact with a commercial property at school—for instance, whether to play a song from a Disney musical at a child’s request, or whether to read a book based on a Marvel movie that a child has brought from home—teachers carefully consider the possible negative outcomes of these narratives and plan steps to counteract them. It is particularly important to preview content before sharing it with children, in order to be ready to discuss any messages raised.
- When interacting with commercial narratives at school, teachers should be especially attentive to explicit or implicit messages about identity (gender, race, ability, etc.) and interpersonal interactions (conflict, etc.), and be prepared to engage in critical conversations with children about these topics. In particular, teachers should look for opportunities to help children examine and question messages of White supremacy, patriarchy, and the normalization of violence (e.g., “I notice that in this superhero story whenever there’s a problem they try to solve it by punching each other. That’s different from what we do at school, isn’t it? I wonder why the authors wrote it that way”).
- When interacting with children’s play or stories based on commercial properties, teachers will take particular care to model and encourage creativity and flexibility in interpreting those narratives—for instance, inventing new superheroes to join a Batman game, or suggesting that there can be three Princess Elsas, or asking, “What if Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader worked together?”
- If play related to commercial narratives is negatively impacting children’s behavior—for instance, causing frequent conflicts or uncontrolled rough play—teachers may place boundaries on the play (e.g., “Spiderman play is only for the common room”) or enforce a break from the

play (e.g., “The *Frozen* game is causing too many arguments and making people sad. We’re going to take a break from *Frozen* until next week.”).

- If a commercial object or image a child is bringing to school is causing challenging behaviors, CCS staff may choose to ask the family not to send that item to school. However, staff should be conscious of the financial burden this may create for some families (for instance, not all families can afford to replace a lunch box).
- Issues with commercial narratives can and should be discussed openly with children, as a way to help them build critical media literacy.
- There is no clear line between what is and is not a commercial property or character. More important than whether an idea is or is not strictly commercial is whether the idea is leading to the negative outcomes described above.
- Families thinking about commercial ideas in early childhood are eagerly invited to discuss the issue with teachers and other staff.

Policy for Stereotyping Images

CCS will not allow images reinforcing harmful stereotypes to be displayed at school (for instance, logos for sports teams named after racial groups). If a child or family member brings such an image to school, a staff member will ask the family on the same day to not bring that image back to school again. In most cases, staff should *not* bring up the issue directly with the child during the school day (for instance, by asking a child to change their clothing).

Costume Policy

Children may wear costumes to school, as long as the costumes

- Allow for full participation in the school day, including active physical play and convenient bathrooming
- Are not scary to other children
- Do not include weapons (see Weapons Policy)
- Do not depict racial or cultural stereotypes

The costume policy is the same on holidays such as Halloween and Purim as on other days.

Families considering sending children to school with costumes depicting commercial characters should read and consider our Commercial Policy, above.

V. Teaching, Curriculum, and Classroom Practice

Teaching at CCS

Teaching at CCS is a process of continually working to meet the needs of children and families. This happens “on the floor,” through activities and interactions with children, and “off the floor,” through planning, communication, documentation, and assessment. Collaboration is a central aspect of our teaching practice. Teaching teams work together to share observations, create plans for learning, implement those plans in the classroom, and communicate with families. Throughout the year teaching teams continually revisit their existing efforts and work together to improve their practice. Teaching teams have a lot of discretion as to the form of their collaboration (e.g., how certain tasks are shared, divvied up, or rotated; who takes responsibility for what aspects of practice, etc.)—but the democratic value of collaboration is central to every teaching team.

Areas of Learning, and the “Four Pillars”

When we think of what young children are learning, we think in terms of the child’s “selves”: the Internal Self (emotional development, mindfulness, self-regulation); the Social Self (social skills, communication, collaboration, community); the Thinking Self (cognitive development, problem solving, academics); and the Physical Self (fine and gross motor development, sensory needs). Of course, every child is an integrated whole, and each “self” is intrinsically intermingled with all the others; nevertheless, in creating curriculum and assessing children it can be helpful to sometimes consider the different domains of learning separately. While all the selves are deeply important to children’s development and well being, our curriculum places particular emphasis on social and emotional learning; social and emotional skills learned in preschool have an impact on the rest of the child’s life.

Relatedly, we focus on the “Four Pillars” of what children learn at CCS: Mindfulness, Community, Inquiry, and Justice. Mindfulness is the ability to be present and attentive, and is most closely associated with the Internal Self. Community is the ability to connect and communicate deeply with others, and is most closely tied to the Social Self. Inquiry is the ability to ask questions and seek answers, and is most connected to the Thinking Self. Justice is an attention to fairness in both individual and group settings, and a sense of responsibility and agency in seeking fairness; it is closely tied to the Internal, Social, and Thinking Selves.

For a detailed breakout of what we teach children at CCS, see the document “CCS Learning Objectives and Map,” a tool teachers reference in every stage of curriculum planning and assessment.

Early academics—literacy, math, and science—are also important areas of learning for young children; see “Academics,” below.

The Internal Self

Children’s emotional lives are a crucial part of their learning and development, and a central part of the curriculum at CCS. Children at CCS learn to...

- Recognize and name feelings, in themselves and in others
- Appropriately express strong emotions
- Express ideas and feelings in a variety of ways—for instance, through language, movement, art, writing, or play
- Discover strategies for self-comfort
- Evaluate and understand the effects of one’s behavior
- Control impulses
- Manage frustration, persevere in the face of challenges, and control emotions enough to solve problems and communicate in moments of stress
- Establish independence and self-help skills
- Take risks, try new things, and be flexible, and build the ability to prepare for new experiences
- Ask for help when needed
- Express respect for others
- Develop respect for themselves

Mindfulness

A focal point for our work on the Internal Self is mindfulness, one of our Four Pillars. Mindfulness is the practice of learning to be present in the moment. A young child is being mindful when they name an emotion they are experiencing; when they consciously use a strategy to change their response; when they take time to notice something; when they are calm, aware, and attentive. At CCS we integrate mindfulness into our curriculum and into the ongoing professional development of our teachers and staff, and we seek to share these practices with our larger community.

We help children build mindfulness skills by teaching them to...

- Build a relationship with breath and breathing
- Notice feelings and physical sensations
- Cultivate sensory awareness of the world
- Practice moments of quiet
- Send well-wishes to others

Individual classrooms and teachers may teach mindfulness skills in a variety of ways. Typical examples of mindfulness teaching include...

- Building moments of quiet into daily routines, such as taking a slow breath before eating lunch
- Planning activities that ask children to notice and examine sensory materials, like describing the feeling of touching cornstarch
- Creating physical spaces for quiet and calm in the classroom, such as the Peace Corner
- Helping children attend to details in the natural world, or look closely at interesting objects
- Building vocabulary for physical sensations and for emotions
- Planning intentional physical activities, such as stretching or yoga
- Helping children name their experiences (“When she took the truck you wanted, it made you feel angry”)
- Explicitly learning strategies for managing emotions
- Playing games and doing exercises with breath

See related topics in “Guidance and Discipline,” below.

The Social Self

Children’s social interactions and relationships are a crucial part of their learning and development, and a central part of the curriculum at CCS. Children at CCS learn to...

- Be interested in others and enjoy social interactions
- Build positive relationships and friendships
- Participate in activities with other children in large and small groups
- Express themselves clearly and appropriately to children and adults
- Actively attend to and understand communication from others
- Resolve conflicts with communication, compromise, and collaborative problem solving
- Identify themselves as members of various groups and express a positive individual identity in relation to others
- Identify qualities of others and express positivity and respect towards them
- Express respect for differences in others and be inclusive and appreciative of people who are different from themselves
- Express care for others
- Share—toys, materials, ideas, emotions, time...
- Expect and ask for respectful behavior from others

Community

Community is the ability to identify and participate deeply as a member of a group; it is a focus of our work on the Social Self, and one of our Four Pillars. A young child is participating in community when they collaborate with peers on a project; when they allow others’ perspectives or ideas to influence their thinking; when they work to meet the needs of someone they care about; when they build connections with others. We integrate community across all parts of our curriculum, in addition to building community amongst our staff and families and working to connect with our local communities.

We help children build community skills by teaching them to...

- Build connections with peers
- Share their voices in group settings
- Attend to the perspectives and ideas of others
- Care for others
- Collectively govern

Individual classrooms and teachers may teach community skills in a variety of ways. Typical examples of community teaching include...

- Explicitly teaching skills like conflict resolution or listening
- Offering opportunities to make meaningful decisions together, such as classroom rules or routines
- Offering opportunities to care for other children, like sending well-wishes or helping injured peers, and for their space, like classroom jobs
- Scaffolding children in holding reciprocal conversations
- Offering opportunities for small group and pair work with a variety of other children, including

children of other ages

- Offering daily structures that encourage connection with peers, such as morning meeting and small group time
- Creating physical spaces that encourage child-to-child connections, such as play spaces that only hold a few children or materials that require cooperation
- Encouraging all children to express their ideas in group discussions
- Building community traditions, such as birthdays, and celebrating special events together
- Noticing and reinforcing community behaviors (“You are taking care of your friend” “You two worked hard to solve that problem” “You are helping to take care of our space”)
- Discussing, exploring, and celebrating diversity and differences

For more on building community, see the document “Building a Culture of Community.” For more on conflict resolution, see “Conflict Resolution,” below.

The Thinking Self

The way children use their minds to actively understand the world and express their ideas is a crucial part of their learning and development, and a core part of our curriculum. Children at CCS learn to...

- Observe the world and their surroundings
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Seek answers to their own questions in creative ways
- Gather evidence to use in drawing conclusions
- Express their ideas to others and attend to others’ ideas
- Solve problems creatively
- Build habits and attitudes of thinking such as curiosity, flexibility, persistence, attention, organization, and confidence
- Look at learning as an enjoyable, lifelong practice

Inquiry

Inquiry is the process of noticing interesting things, wondering and asking questions about what is noticed, proactively investigating those questions, and creating theories and answers based on evidence; it is a focus of our work on the Thinking Self, and one of our Four Pillars. A young child is participating in inquiry when they rebuild a block tower that has fallen down; when they investigate a frozen bowl of water on a cold morning outside; when they work with friends to solve a problem; when they watch the doors open on a bus and says, “I wonder how they do that”; when they watch her friend jump off a rock and then try it themselves; when they put a small ball through a hoop and then try a larger ball. We integrate inquiry across all parts of our curriculum. We also look at teaching practice through an inquiry lens, viewing teachers as investigators of children.

We help children build inquiry skills by teaching them to...

- Notice interesting and puzzling things
- Notice patterns, similarities, and differences
- Articulate questions when they wonder
- Seek information and answers in a variety of different ways
- Build theories and determine if evidence supports their theories

Individual classrooms and teachers may teach inquiry skills in a variety of ways. Typical examples of inquiry teaching include...

- Modeling and encouraging curiosity
- Avoiding answering questions when children can productively seek answer themselves
- Explicitly teaching the value of flexibility (“That didn’t work; what else can we try?”) and experimentation (“I wonder what will happen if we...?”)
- Providing interesting and/or puzzling experiences or materials for children to experience
- Playing games to encourage using multiple senses to gather information

A big part of our support for inquiry in children in play-based, emergent, project-based curriculum. See “Learning through Play” and “Emergent and Project-Based Curriculum” below for more information.

Justice

Justice is a mindset in which one is attentive to and aware of fairness in the world and active in taking steps to seek fairness for oneself and for others; it is a focus of our work in the Internal, Social, and Thinking Selves, and is one of our Four Pillars. We integrate justice across all parts of our curriculum. We also look at teaching and institutional practice through a social justice lens, viewing ourselves, as described in our mission, as working to “build a better world.”

We help children build social justice skills by teaching them to...

- demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, and positive social identities
- express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections
- increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts
- demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions

Individual classrooms and teachers may teach social justice skills in a variety of ways. Typical examples of social justice teaching include...

- Celebrating similarities and differences in our everyday lives
- Learning about the cultures of different people they know
- Asking children to recognize unfairness, both in real life and in stories, and helping them brainstorm ways to fix it
- Discussing topics from the news that children have heard about, and helping them to take action to address their own concerns
- Actively discussing various aspects of identity, such as race, gender, disability, and so on
- Telling stories of people who have worked to create a more just world

Social justice is the newest area of our curriculum, and our practices are still in active development. More information can be found in our “Social Justice Guide” document.

The Physical Self

Young children are deeply physical beings, and the way they use their bodies is a crucial part of their learning and development. Children at CCS learn to...

- Explore the world with all of their senses
- Carefully and intentionally use small muscles (e.g., fingers) to use tools, manipulate materials, change their environment, and express their ideas
- Confidently and effectively use large muscles (e.g., arms and legs) to explore their environment, build social connections, and express their ideas
- Find joy in physicality

Academics

Over the course of the year, children to learn through engagement in our social studies-based core curriculum. Topics in this curriculum include learning about themselves, school, family, and community. The emphasis is on the importance of active engagement in the world around us, and the skills and concepts found in reading or mathematics, for example, help us interact and make sense of our world.

Within the interdisciplinary curriculum, students are given rich and varied opportunities to develop and practice academic skills and specific content areas. Literacy, Math, and Science learning is woven throughout every project and investigation, as well as everyday activities—more detail below. Art and creative expression are integrated throughout all studies; details in next section. Health and Safety learning is also woven throughout the year (see Health and Safety sections).

Language

Our goal is to help children to become confident, articulate communicators, who are skilled in expressing their own ideas and in understanding the ideas of others. Generally speaking, oral language is “caught, not taught”—in other words, we can do children the most good by simply exposing as much as possible them to high-quality spoken language at school. Teachers should:

- Engage children at all ages in genuine conversations about their experiences and interests
 - In particular, give children opportunities to talk about their families, homes, communities, and cultures
- Model skills by engaging in clear communication with other adults
- Expose children to high quality language by reading books with rhythm, rhyme, and interesting vocabulary
- Expose children to games and songs that highlight rhythm, rhyme, and interesting vocabulary
- Find opportunities to point out interesting features of everyday language (for instance, “Merryl, your lunch has mangos and marmalade! Merryl, mango, marmalade, M M M!”)

Pre-Conversational Children

Not all children are ready to engage in conversations at school. Some children come to school speaking languages other than English. Some children have speech and language delays. Some children are simply too young. That’s okay! Our approaches are still valuable. Teacher still talk to children at a high level (e.g., no “baby talk”), model communication, and expose children to interesting features of language. In addition, these children can be supported by teacher-family collaboration. Teachers should ask families for language that is used at home that can be brought into school, and share working strategies from school that families can use at home. In particular, when children are English Language Learners teachers should learn some familiar words and phrases in the child’s home language to use at

school.

Literacy

The point of early literacy education is for children to build relationships with text and to build identities as readers and writers. This is done by creating a wide variety of meaningful experiences for children to interact with texts, both as consumers and creators.

Literacy skills—such as spelling, handwriting, letter-knowledge, etc.—are less important and less urgent than the skills and attitudes mentioned above. Literacy skills can and should be a part of early childhood curriculum, but should be viewed as one aspect of building relationships with text. Instruction in these skills is most effective when it occurs as a natural part of meaningful activities related to other curriculum (for instance, noticing letter sounds when reading a book related to an investigation, or working on handwriting when a child is making a sign to describe her block construction).

Writing and Invented Spelling

Learning to write is a long-term process of learning to express ideas by making symbolic marks. This process is long and complicated, and includes many experiences that don't necessarily look like writing to non-educators—artwork, fine-motor activities, reading, etc.

Learning to spell is a particularly complicated process. A healthy process includes both the use of invented spelling (e.g., children trying to sound out words and using the letters they think work) and standard spelling (especially for familiar words, like names of people in their families).

Supporting Writing at School

As children grow and gain more experience with writing, they will move along the writing continuum. Children progress from invented spelling to conventional spelling, from first letters, to words, to phrases and sentences. Children progress from random marks with a pen or pencil to intentional marks, to controlled marks, to writing-like scribbles and letter-like forms, to clear letters.

CCS teachers support this development by modeling conventional speech and writing as well as providing models of text in the environment. Teachers create structured opportunities for children to interact and practice with these models. Teachers provide play opportunities for fine motor development. Teachers provide a wide variety of frequent opportunities to create texts of their own, including dictating stories and letters (and opportunities for children to read those texts to each other or to adults). Teachers provide children with a wide variety of opportunities to practice writing and making letters, including making writing materials accessible throughout the classroom (not just in “writing” areas), access to materials for other ways of making letters (stencils, letter puzzles, playdough, etc.), and accessible models of text (posted alphabets, labels on things in the classroom, “word walls” or other collections of familiar words, etc.). When children are trying to write, teachers provide patient scaffolding. Teachers use writing themselves in a variety of contexts in daily life in the classroom, to provide models to children.

Reading

In order to read, children must develop a number of skills and knowledge. Here are a few things

children will develop as they learn to read:

- print awareness (English writing goes from left to right)
- letter recognition
- phonological and phonemic awareness (letter/sound correlation, rhymes, syllables, etc...)
- decoding strategies and comprehension skills

Because reading and writing are intertwined skills, gaining proficiency in one supports the development of the other.

Supporting Reading at School

CCS teachers create a rich environment for blossoming readers, and work to make reading joyful and authentic. Teachers thread literacy into the routines and structures of the day in a variety of ways:

- Children are asked to find their name for snack time, jobs and attendance (children's belongings and spaces are labeled with their names)
- Shelves and baskets are labeled so that students begin to develop a sight vocabulary as they play and clean up
- Teachers sing songs and play games that develop phonological and phonemic awareness (rhymes, fingerplays, etc.)
- Children are encouraged to read books on their own, and have spaces in the classrooms where they can always access books

Teachers read to children in small and large groups many times every day, and children are supported in interacting with texts in a wide variety of ways:

- reflecting on and discussing stories
- acting stories out
- making our own versions of stories
- helping to read words
- making inferences and predictions
- making connections to and between texts (e.g., to life events, to aspects of the curriculum, etc.)
- revisiting familiar books
- discussing books as artifacts (what are the parts of a book? how does text work? etc.)

Teachers ensure that children have access to a wide variety of kinds of books—fiction and non-fiction, rhyme and prose, with and without words, alphabet and number books, etc. Teachers work to provide children with books that represent a wide range of identities (e.g., characters of different races, ages, genders, in roles that do not reinforce common stereotypes). Teachers frequently bring new books into the classroom, but also allow popular books to stay and be revisited.

Because reading and writing are intertwined skills, gaining proficiency in one supports the development of the other. Children are invited to create and share their own books, signs, messages and letters. This helps strengthen students' identity as readers and writers.

Literacy Skills and Concepts

- oral language development
- phonological/phonemic awareness
- alphabetic knowledge
- concepts about print
- comprehension

To develop these skills, students are given the opportunity to engage in a variety of oral language and early literacy experiences, including:

- rich conversations based on real-life experiences
- storybook reading
- book discussions
- creating books
- listening comprehension
- word play
- meaningful writing
- dramatic play
- storytelling
- classroom responsibilities such as taking attendance
- language games, such as rhymes, chants, finger-plays, and songs

Math

As children explore their environment and interact with people and materials, they begin to build a foundation for mathematical skills and concepts. With peer interactions and modeling from adults, children at all ages begin to employ mathematical tools to support and deepen their explorations.

Young children are in the concrete stage of thinking. This means they understand concepts best when they are given the opportunity to explore in a concrete, hands-on manner. We use lots of materials for sorting, ordering and pattern making. Children are encouraged to create and share patterns of sounds, print, movement, color, number, and shapes. Children are given the opportunity to see and touch a variety of shapes, patterns, colors, sizes, etc. Abstract representations of mathematical concepts are also useful; each classroom's bookshelf should always have some books related to math concepts.

We encourage children to build math skills and understanding by using observation and exploration on the materials and environment around them, and to use a variety of tools to express their understanding (language, gestures, artwork, etc.). Teachers scaffold children in using building ever more sophisticated expressions and concepts—for instance, at first the class may use non-numerical terms (“a lot,” “some,” “many,” “tons!”), but eventually work towards using more specific terms and quantities.

Mathematical learning should be embedded in meaningful, real-life activities—for instance, helping to prepare and set up snack. Children count the students and determine the number of plates needed; they portion out and serve food (counting pretzels or crackers or spoonfuls of yogurt); and so on. Teachers also help children make sense of their experiences by using graphs and charts to represent knowledge. Children gain experience tallying and representing sets. Children make charts about their play (“Who is your favorite super hero?”) and charts about themselves (“what is your favorite snack?”). Children are encouraged to take their play to deeper levels through the use of mathematical tools, such as measurement, counters, shapes and patterning.

Math Skills and Concepts

- develop an understanding of the meanings of whole numbers

- recognize the number of objects in small groups without counting
- begin counting and one to one correspondence
- sort, match, and compare shapes and objects
- recognize and create patterns
- use landmarks to find objects or locations

To develop these skills, students are given the opportunity to engage in a variety of rich early mathematical experiences, including:

- opportunities to enhance their natural interest in mathematics and to use it to make sense of their physical and social worlds
- manipulative work with building blocks, pattern blocks and puzzles
- games
- play with auditory, movement, and visual patterns
- classroom responsibilities such as setting up for snack (one napkin for one chair)
- play with attribute blocks and toys (for grouping and sorting)
- dramatic play
- storybook reading, songs and poems

Science

Science is a process—the process of wondering about something, formulating a question, making a plan for how to find out the answer, following through on that plan, and sharing your findings with others. *Science is also a set of skills and approaches*, such as observation, data gathering, organized and systematic thinking, and communication. Both as a process and as a set of skills and approaches, science is very similar to the process of emergent curriculum. The entire curriculum at CCS is focused on *finding things out*, an essentially scientific concern. We encourage teachers to approach every investigation with children through the lens of scientific research.

Science is often used to investigate the natural world (plants, animals, seasons, geology, astronomy, etc.)—*but the natural world is not the same as science*. Science should be used with young children to investigate *any* question about the world—“Where did this ice come from?” “How does bread turn into toast?” “How does the elevator work?” “Why do my blocks keep falling down?”

Teachers help children at all ages become scientists by:

- encouraging children use all their senses to learn about objects and their environment
- encouraging children to solve problems
- encouraging children to experiment, to make mistakes, to make things happen
- providing opportunities to use tools investigate (e.g., magnifying glasses, levers and pulleys, shovels, etc.)
- encouraging children to describe what they notice and what they wonder
- providing opportunities to collect and represent data (e.g., drawing pictures of plants, taking surveys of their classmates, taking photos of animals, counting the cars that pass, etc.)
- providing experiences that provoke wondering and thinking, and promote senses of curiosity, surprise, and excitement about the world
- providing opportunities to discuss scientific concepts in everyday conversations (e.g., “Tell me what you notice about it.” “I wonder what the weather will be outside.” “Hmm, how could we

find out?” “Why do you think that is?” etc.)

- using vocabulary that accurately describes relevant scientific concepts (e.g., melt, freeze, float, sink, insect, weather, etc.)
- modeling the scientific process (i.e., wondering aloud, making plans to find out, sharing new knowledge with others)

While science is not the same thing as the natural world, exploration of the natural world is appropriate at all ages and is well suited to a scientific approach. Teachers should incorporate a wide range of opportunities for children to explore ideas related to:

- the nature of life
 - Questions include What things are alive and what things are not? What does it mean when something dies? How do we care for living things? How do things grow and change?
 - Explorations include growing plants, observing wildlife, caring for a classroom pet, gardening, reading books about animals and plants, etc.
- the nature of the earth and astronomy
 - Questions include How do the seasons change? What is weather like? What’s in the sky? How do light and shadow work?
 - Explorations include observations of weather, reading books about astronomy, investigating rocks and dirt, etc.
- the nature of matter
 - Questions include What are the properties of different kinds of materials? How do materials transform?
 - Explorations include feeling and describing materials, experimenting with freezing and melting, playing with things that sink and float, etc.

Science Skills and Concepts

- observe
- investigate student generated questions
- debate and discuss the investigations
- debate and discuss the evidence
- construct a beginning understanding of classification (similarities and differences)
- construct a beginning understanding of space (physical relationships, cause and effect, positions, directions and how things fit together)
- construct a beginning understanding of time (duration, predictability, and sequence)

Learning Through Play

Play provides the best medium for understanding and consolidating knowledge for our children. Play is the means through which children think, feel, and create meaning.

- Children investigate and explore what they know and don’t know about their physical and social world.
- Within the relatively safe context of play, children try out roles, act out “what-ifs,” express ideas, try out solutions to problems, and simply imagine.
- Through the symbolic nature of play children lay the foundation for future, more sophisticated abstract and symbolic thinking.

- Students play with open-ended sensory materials- such as blocks, paint, clay wood, water, and sand.
- Practices such as yoga are integral to our play based curriculum, as they support the development of physical well-being, self-awareness and emotional stability. These practices enable the children to approach learning holistically, and to acquire powerful tools that support learning and development.

Teachers use play as a primary tool for learning and instruction. Teachers provide both unstructured play time, in which children can use and explore their own ideas, and structured play, in which teachers plan specific opportunities in which play is used to explore and deepen specific ideas that are relevant to the curriculum.

Emergent and Project-Based Curriculum

CCS uses emergent, project-based curriculum. Children’s interests and needs are observed and used to create learning experiences that are meaningful to children and purposeful in their goals. Teachers plan a wide variety of activities and explorations connected to children’s interests; the variety allows different children to explore different ideas at different times in different ways, ultimately building a shared, holistic understanding of an interest. Activities and ideas are revisited over the course of days and weeks, and children’s understanding grows over time. The projects that grow from children’s interests are used as contexts for planning meaningful learning in every content area and developmental domain. The CCS Learning Objectives are used at all stages of planning curriculum.

For example, in spring of 2014, the Oak class showed a group interest in superheroes. The Oak teachers guided the children in creating a 3-month project around learning about superheroes which strongly engaged the children’s interests while meeting learning goals for socio-emotional development (e.g., learning to listen and respond to others during rough play); language development (e.g., collaborative superhero storytelling activities); physical development (e.g., gross-motor “adventures” and “saving the day”); literacy (e.g., making books from storytelling activities); math (e.g., using shapes and patterns for costume-making); science (e.g., investigating physics of making toy people “fly” with catapults); technology (e.g., using ropes, pulleys, and levers in “machines” for pretend play); health and safety (e.g., exercising self-care during rough play); social studies (e.g., recognizing the needs and qualities of others in the stories we shared); and creative arts (e.g., costume-making).

Communication with Children

Communication is our most important teaching tool. Staff at CCS communicate with children in a way that conveys respect for them. Communication approaches and strategies that convey respect include:

- Listening attentively and respectfully to children’s ideas, experiences, and input, as well as giving attention to children’s actions and creations
- Actively making ourselves available for communication (for example, prioritizing a conversation with a child over tasks like filling out paperwork)
- Avoiding stereotypical language (replacing phrases like “boys and girls” with “children” or “friends”; replacing “the big kids” with “the Magnolia class”; etc.). We avoid referring to children with labels based on their sex/gender, age/size, race/ethnicity, religion, ability, etc. unless those labels and identities are specifically relevant to the conversation.

The Three Rules

The three classroom rules at CCS are:

- We take care of ourselves
- We take care of each other
- We take care of our space (or environment)

All challenging behaviors can be discussed with children in the context of these rules. If a behavior does not violate any of these rules, it is probably not misbehavior, but rather something that is simply annoying or inconvenient; in this case, a teacher's response should be different, and more moderate, than in an instance of failed care-taking.

Weapon Play Policy

CCS does not allow children to participate in play with pretend weapons while at school.

Pretend play is a crucial context for learning, and our teachers actively use children's play as an opportunity to build skills in all of our core learning areas—mindfulness, community, inquiry, and justice. The ideas children bring to play are worthy of our attention, respect, and support. The issue of play with pretend weapons, and pretend guns in particular, is especially complex. Weapon play is likely to bring up powerful emotional responses for some children and some adults, especially those with personal experiences with weapons and/or violence; it is likely to call up associations with media and current events; it connects with social justice issues in the world outside our school; and it intersects very differently with different people's cultures. Any policy around weapon play must deal thoughtfully with the various needs the issue brings up for children, families, staff, and the community around us.

We have developed this policy (summer 2018) in order to support teachers as they seek to guide children's development. The policy is open to review, feedback, and change as our understanding develops and evolves over time.

In this policy, we are guided by several thoughts:

- We are responsible for teaching in a way that upholds our values and vision for the world. This includes using our teaching as best we can to interrupt the normalization of racism, sexism, institutionalized oppressions, and violence.
- A focus on building a caring community is a crucial frame for this work.
- It is important to find a balance in what we provide children—a sense of safety without overprotection; attentive care that builds resilience; self-advocacy skills that do not lead to entitlement.

What is a weapon?

- An object, real or pretend, that is used (or is being used) primarily for causing real or pretend physical or emotional harm.

Young children often show strong interest and attachment to play that involves power, violence, and pretend weapons. While children's interest in weapon play is natural and understandable, we recognize

that experiencing this kind of play, even as a bystander, can be emotionally difficult and even harmful for some children and adults. In particular, children and adults who have had experiences with violence (whom we will not always be able to identify) have the potential to become retraumatized. Creating a school where all feel welcome, included, and safe to learn includes protecting people from trauma. Furthermore, we have found that in some cases weapon play can interfere with respectful relationships and consenting interactions, both of which are important to our educational philosophy. For these reasons, CCS does not allow children to participate in play with pretend weapons while at school.

At the same time, we recognize that children’s pretend play is an expression of not only their interests but their *needs*. Children desiring to explore weapon play (and power play more generally) may be showing a need to process important issues (such as good and evil, life and death, strength and power, gender and identity, safety and risk, conflict and resolution, etc.) or build particular skills (such as conflict resolution, nonviolent communication, negotiation and problem solving, self-care and self-advocacy, empathy, considering others’ points of view, etc.). Thus, when children show interest in weapon play, it is crucial that they not be made to feel ashamed of their interest, but instead gently guided to socially appropriate contexts to explore the issues underlying their interest.

Guidelines for teachers:

- Strategies for stopping weapon play include...
 - Calling attention to emotions: “Weapons are scary to some people, even pretend weapons. We don’t want people to feel afraid at school.”
 - Calling attention to the reality of weapons: “Weapons are things that hurt people in the real world, so we don’t allow them in our school, even for pretend.”
 - Calling attention to your own reactions: “Weapons make me feel worried.”
 - Calling attention to context: “At school we don’t play with weapons. Maybe it’s different at your home, or at the park.”
 - Offering other strategies to meet needs: “It’s okay to roughhouse with someone who consents—just not with weapons when you’re at school” or “It looks like you’re excited to make loud noises! What other kinds of noises can you make that aren’t weapons?”
- Children should not be made to feel ashamed of their interest in weapon play. A teacher might say something like, “I know, you feel like it’s really fun to play with weapons. That’s okay! Just not at school.”
- When a child does not follow the no-weapons rule after a reminder, they should be guided to a different kind of play or a different space: “It looks like you’re having a hard time not using weapons here in the sandbox. Let’s go and play in the playhouse” or “You keep using weapons with Jarrod. It’s time to find someone else to play with.”
- It is important to remember that the impulses that produce weapon play are natural expressions of genuine needs. Staff must respect children’s interests and the motives behind them. As with other interests of children, teachers will observe carefully, consider children’s needs, and do their best to meet those needs. This is especially important when we see *patterns* of weapon play—for instance, a particular group of children who repeatedly play with weapons despite teacher interventions. Instead of simply shutting down the play again and again, teachers will create other contexts in which children can explore the interests and needs underlying the play.
- A no-weapons rule is likely to be most effective in the context of whole-group discussions of the issue and active agreements to the rule, especially for older children. Teachers should plan to

proactively bring up the issue with the class at least once near the beginning of the year (ideally *before* it has become an issue), and possibly more times throughout the year depending on children’s behaviors. These conversations are most likely to be effective in stopping weapon play behavior when they are genuine conversations—for instance, explorations of how this kind of play makes different people feel—rather than simple declarations of the rule.

One common consequence of banning weapon play is that children will continue the play but attempt to hide it from teachers, and to lie about it when caught. *It is harmful to children to be put in positions where lying or hiding is a logical choice.* Teachers must take steps to minimize this outcome.

- Don’t ask a question that a child would be likely to lie to. (“Is that a gun?” “No.”) Instead, make descriptive statements. (“You’re pointing your finger and saying ‘pow pow.’”)
- Use the definition of a weapon (above) to open up a conversation. (“Tell me about what you’re holding.” “It’s a blaster.” “Oh. What do you use a blaster for?”)
- A disagreement about whether something is a weapon can turn to the definition. (“If you’re using it to hurt someone’s body or feelings, for real or for pretend, it’s a weapon.”)
- It may help to differentiate between intent and impact. (“You say it’s not a gun, it’s a pogo stick. But the way you are using it is scaring other children. What can you do to make sure they feel safe?”)
- It may help to validate the child’s knowledge of the rule, even in breaking it. (“It looks like you were playing weapons in the corner, because you know that weapons aren’t okay to use at school. I’m so glad you know how important it is to keep people safe!”)

Guidance and Discipline

Adapted from The Power of Guidance by Dan Gartrell

Staff may never use any of the following tactics for discipline or any other reasons:

- Physical punishment (e.g. shaking, hitting, squeezing)
- Psychological abuse (e.g. shaming, sarcasm, threatening, frightening, ostracism, withholding affection)
- Coercion (e.g., rough handling, physically forcing)

Note: Physical restraint is permissible when used to protect the child or others from harm.

1. Teachers uses guidance in order to teach children democratic life skills. Democratic life skills support children to be healthy individuals and productive citizens. Democratic life skills include the ability to:
 - see one’s self as a worthy individual and a capable member of the group
 - express strong emotions in non-hurting ways
 - solve problems ethically and intelligently
 - be understanding of the feelings and viewpoints of others
 - work cooperatively in groups, with the acceptance of the human difference among members.
2. Teachers regard classroom conflict as *mistaken behavior* rather than misbehavior, and use conflicts and challenges as teaching opportunities.
3. Teachers work to understand the reasons for children’s behavior.
 - When the reasons for a behavior are understood, teachers are much better able to

- address the behavior.
 - “Reasons” might include a need the child is attempting to meet, a stimulus the child is responding to, or a response the child gets from the environment through the behavior.
 - The tools of Applied Behavior Analysis (also known as “Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence” or ABC) can be used to understand the causes of behaviors.
4. Teachers build and maintain an encouraging classroom in which all children feel welcome as fully participating members.
 - Teachers single children individually out for encouragement or feedback, focusing on process
 - Teacher addresses public acknowledgement to the group
 - Guidance methods such as conflict management, guidance talks, class meetings and comprehensive guidance are used
 - Teachers work with parents and other educators to form partnerships that anchor the encouraging classroom
 5. Teachers use developmentally appropriate practice to prevent institution-caused mistaken behavior.
 - Activities and expectations that are developmentally appropriate
 - Schedule that provides balanced routines and efficient transitions
 - Hands-on, active, personally relevant learning experiences that engage minds and bodies

Conflict Resolution

There are many kinds of conflicts that young children will not be capable of fully resolving themselves. Conflicts that may require adult support include arguments, physical harm, and teasing or exclusion. Our long-term goal in assisting children in conflict resolution must be for them to gain skills to productively resolve conflicts without adult intervention. Our short-term goal is to use a conflict as an opportunity to build internal skills (self-regulation, confidence); social skills (respect, empathy, community, communication); and thinking skills (problem-solving, perspective-taking).

As a community, students will learn these 4 conflict resolution steps

1. Calm down (walk away, count to ten, breathe, etc.)
2. Describe the problem
3. Discuss and Resolve
4. Acknowledgment (handshake, high five, etc.)

A script or model phrases can give kids the words they need in tricky situations. Language has power, and children can grasp scripted language. As they grow, they will then build on these scripts and develop their own. Also, a common language in the classroom creates a classroom culture. When we use similar words, we understand each other and the expectations around those words. See the document “CCS Scripts and Strategies” for more information.

Field Trips

As a part of our curriculum, teachers sometimes decide to take children on field trips within the

neighborhood. Sometimes field trips are planned, to create learning opportunities connected to ongoing explorations and curriculum. Sometimes field trips occur spontaneously, to take advantage of learning opportunities that present themselves (for instance, a walk to see an active construction site, or a walk to collect fallen leaves in the neighborhood, or a walk to the farmer’s market to buy food for snack).

Unplanned field trip guidelines:

- Unplanned trips will be to places within children’s walking distance only
- Teachers leading trips will notify their co-teachers and administrators of their plans
- Teachers leading trips will be contactable by cell phone
- Trips will return to school in time for families to pick children up normally

Families sign a blanket permission form for unplanned field trips along with enrollment paperwork. Field trips of a larger scale (e.g., trips that involve transportation other than walking) require specific permission slips, to be signed by families in advance.

Teachers hold high standards for appropriate and safe behavior on field trips. If a child has been demonstrating difficulty following instructions or being safe on the day of a field trip, that child should not participate in the field trip. If a child is demonstrating difficulty following instructions or being safe during a field trip, the child should return to school immediately if possible. While the goal is for all children to participate in all learning opportunities, on field trips teachers must give extra weight to the safety of the entire group, and use their discretion accordingly.

See “Transportation and Field Trips” for more information about logistical and safety concerns during field trips.

Arts

Art is an important opportunity for learning and expression for young children. As articulated by the Reggio concept of “The Hundred Languages of Children,” children need as many modes of communication and self-expression as possible: often young children cannot express or even have certain ideas in spoken language, but they can explore and express the idea through visual art, movement, or another “language.” To provide children the greatest opportunity to learn and communicate, we incorporate a wide variety of arts into our classroom curriculum.

Use of Arts

Art is a tool that we use in every stage of learning. When children are first exploring an idea, art helps to articulate questions and existing knowledge. As children are developing their understanding, art can help them to integrate and express new knowledge. And as children are reaching the point of communicating what they know, art is a vehicle for them to show what they know. Additionally, experiencing art made by others—people in the world, or peers in the classroom—can help them to see and understand new ideas in new ways.

Art is also a context in which children can gain appreciation for different ideas, people, and cultures. Teachers should expose children to various kinds of art (visual art, music, drama, dance, etc.) that comes from a range of cultures and expresses a range of ideas, and engage children in conversations

that explore and celebrate the diversity they see.

Art Education

Children learn about art, and learn to make art, in two kinds of ways: exploration and skill development.

Exploration: Children at all ages, from infancy through preschool, learn through hands-on experimentation, so it's important to provide them a wide variety of ongoing opportunities to try out different modes of artistic expression and creation. Examples of teacher practices that can support children's artistic explorations include:

- Providing a variety of art tools, supplies, and materials to use freely—for instance, easily accessible markers, crayons, and paper; baskets of dress-up clothes; musical instruments; writing tools; etc.
- Periodically providing new art tools, supplies, and materials, to inspire new investigations.
- Providing children examples of others' artistic creations as inspiration—for instance, photos of famous paintings next to the easels; seeing plays put on by others; etc.
- Participating joyfully with children in art—for instance, holding dance parties, playing pretend, making visual art, etc. (In creating visual art, teachers should be careful not to create art *for* children ["Draw a dog for me!"], or to inadvertently allow children to become discouraged about their own comparatively poor skills in visual representation.)

Skill Development: Children can better express their thinking through art if teachers work actively to build their "vocabulary"—the skills they can use to make art. To this end, teachers should mix free exploration of the arts with planned opportunities to build specific skills. Examples of teacher practices that build artistic skills include:

- Building art-related vocabulary when creating or experiencing art—for instance, using words like "texture" or "brushstroke" with regard to visual art; "rhythm" or "composer" with regard to music; "audience" or "acting" with regard to drama; "movement" or "perform" with regard to dance.
- Planning activities to learn to use specific techniques or tools—for instance, intentionally trying out different kinds of paint brushes in a single sitting; or looking at a famous painting and trying to recreate it together.

Holidays *

At CCS we often *learn about* the holiday traditions that families, staff, and our community observe. As a part of celebrating the diversity of our community, we eagerly invite enrolled families and staff to share their own holiday traditions with their classes. Participating in activities, such as cooking projects or reading books, that help children more deeply understand the lives of people they know is a wonderful way to build community and knowledge.

At CCS we *celebrate* holiday traditions that we have created ourselves—holidays that are welcoming to all families, relevant to children's perceptions of the changing seasons, inspired by shared traditions from different cultures, and special just to us. All our holidays are connected to events in school life (e.g., graduation) or in the world around that are naturally visible and meaningful to children (e.g.,

changing seasons). In creating our own holiday traditions, we call on themes of celebration found across many cultures (e.g., lighting lights in the winter; decorating with colors in the spring), but are careful not to appropriate any specific culture's traditions.

Our two biggest holidays of the year are the Winter Festival in December and the Spring Jubilee in May, both of which focus on celebrating the changing of the seasons and acknowledging the traditions of people around the world. We also have an annual Campfire Singalong in October, a Fall Potluck in November, a Pancake Breakfast in February, and Graduation at the end of the school year.

Assessment

At CCS we conduct authentic assessments, informal and formal, in order to

- Create a holistic understanding of children's strengths, needs, interests, thinking, learning, and development
- Make informed decisions about teaching, curriculum, and interventions, both for groups of children and for individuals
- Connect with children by finding opportunities to meet their needs and support their curiosity, engagement, and learning
- Improve teaching practice and make program improvements
- Communicate with and serve the needs of families

Teachers continually observe children and document their thinking and development. They use their observations to inform curriculum for the whole class and teaching choices for individual children. Twice a year (in mid-November and late February) teachers share observations and thoughts with families in formal conferences. Twice a year teachers provide written assessments: an "assessment report" given with the February conference, and a "narrative" given at the end of the year. Additionally, in the spring of each year we conduct a Pre-Kindergarten screening of children who are 4 years old or older, to evaluate developing academic skills.

Authentic assessment of children comes from gathering many sources of information over long periods of time, not from any individual "snapshot." We observe children at play and during everyday activities; we collect children's work; we ask children questions and engage them in conversations; we ask children's families for observations and perspectives; we use standardized tools that measure understanding. We gather all of this information continually throughout the year.

All assessment tools used at CCS have been developed by CCS staff specifically for use at our school and within our community. Assessment practices (aside from the Pre-K Screening) are designed to be appropriate for use with all young children, regardless of age, language, or ability. Assessment practices are reviewed and revised by the staff every year to continually improve them and ensure they meet the highest standards as well as our mission and educational philosophy, as well as our educational goals (the "CCS Learning Objectives"). Collaboration between teachers, as well as close oversight by directors, ensure valid and consistent implementation between classrooms and from year to year. Collaboration also ensures that all staff understand the purposes, values, and uses of assessment practices in our school, so that they can articulate the practices to families and other community members. Both the screening tool and the individual child results are made available to families.

Confidentiality of Assessments

All assessment data are kept confidential, as required by law. Observations of a child are shared only with people beyond the child's family (for instance, other educators or therapists involved in the child's care) with the express permission of the family. Records of children may be anonymized (names, faces, identifying information removed) to share with others for professional development and other purposes. Hard copies of assessment data are kept in children's files in the office. Electronic copies must be kept secure—for instance, in password-protected online systems (like Google Drive or Evernote), or in secure computer files (see Electronic Devices policies). Families are entitled to access any information, file or assessment regarding their child at any time. Families should email the director to access information.

Observation

We use observation as a tool for connecting with children. Our observation notes open up pathways for us to connect further with children. The process of observing asks us to be present with children. Working with our observational notes we are best able to be child-centered and to begin our interactions from where children are. We link observation to instruction by using our observational notes to plan for instructional next steps based on the children's interests, needs and strengths.

Observational assessments occur throughout the year and on a daily basis.

Children are observed throughout the day engaging in their natural environment (daily routines, social interactions, play). Teachers record what they see as objectively as possible. Teachers are careful to gather data across all developmental domains. Careful observation and assessment of children's work products (e.g., artwork) provide indices not only of mastery of the task at hand but also of the child's approach to work. Additionally, observation does not happen in a vacuum: teachers' interactions and conversations with children are an important part of children's experience and an important way that teacher deeply know children, so those interactions and conversations are an important part of observation and assessment.

Teachers record threads of interest, evidence of developmental milestones, evidence of thinking, and evidence of areas of struggle. Although narrative data provides a rich source of information for teaching, it is not the only kind of data that the teacher should rely upon. Teachers should use multiple sources of information to understand and assess children and make choices about teaching. Additionally, multiple teachers should gather observations of each child, to gain a diversity of points of view.

Teachers refer to observations for planning for instruction and creating curriculum, as a tool for addressing children's strengths, needs, and interests. Teachers refer to observations in their weekly planning meetings. Observations are also the most important resource for communicating with families, both casually and in conferences and narratives.

Teachers evaluate observations in an ongoing way, looking for patterns in the class and for individual children. Throughout the observation process, teachers refer to the CCS Learning Objectives, both to guide observation and provide context for evaluating them.

Observation is also the basis for making intentional and comprehensive program improvements. Observational information is used to reflect on and improve our program from the individual to the collective experience. Program elements, such as schedule, materials, and groupings are considered on a weekly basis. Teachers use assessment to ensure students have an overall, enriched experience in each developmental domain, and to continually improve their teaching practice.

Family Conferences

Formal conferences are held with each child’s family twice a year, in mid-November and late February. The goal of formal conferences is to provide a space for two-way sharing of information. Each direction of communication is equally important. Teachers give information to families about their child’s life at school, and our understanding of their child’s learning, growth, development, strengths, and challenges. Families give information to teachers about their experience of school, their child’s strengths, needs, and growth. Both teachers and families share goals, strategies, and ideas to benefit the child.

In addition to the two formal conferences, families are given a variety of opportunities to communicate with teachers. We actively solicit input from families, since their perspectives are a crucial part of understanding children (i.e., of the assessment process). Input from families is used to plan curriculum and create strategies to meet the needs of individual children.

Written Assessments

Twice a year teachers create a written assessment of each child—an assessment report in late February, and a narrative at the end of the school year.

The assessment report follows an outline that includes all developmental domains (internal self, social self, thinking self, physical self, and literacy and math), each containing bullet points for “strengths and skills” and “working on.” The assessment report is shared with families in advance of their late February conference, and used to guide the conversation in that conference.

A narrative is a detailed description of a child’s life at school, with specific observations used to support a coherent, holistic picture of a child’s strengths, needs, thinking, learning, and development, within the context of the life of the classroom. Teachers use their observations, as well as input from their colleagues and the directors, to create a “portrait” of each child to share with their family. Narratives are the culmination of our teaching practice for each child, and present the most authentic understanding of the child we know how to create. Narratives are shared with families at the very end of the school year.

Pre-K Academic Screening

Every February teachers screen children who are four years or older for academic development, so that children approaching kindergarten can be best prepared for success there. The screening allows teachers to identify academic areas to be strengthened and allows families to know what areas to think about.

Teachers screen children in a one-on-one setting, using a CCS-created tool that assesses a variety of literacy- and math-related skills. The tool prioritizes a child’s positive experience and endeavours to make the process playful and low-stress.

Results of the screening are shared with families during the spring conference. Teachers provide a context for the results of the screening and share ideas with parents for further supporting their child. Results are also used for planning curriculum to meet children’s academic interests and needs.

Daily Schedule

Each classroom team will create a daily schedule for classroom hours. The classroom schedules are individualized to the needs of each specific classroom and the needs of its children and teachers; as such, it is expected that the schedules will be revised several times over the course of a school year. At the same time, we recognize that young children thrive in an environment of predictability, so the schedule should not be revised more often than necessary. Similarly, in creating and revising the daily schedule, teachers must balance young children’s need for predictability and structure with their need for an environment that flexibly responds to their changing needs; a schedule should never be adhered to so rigorously that it prevents learning from unexpected opportunities.

A good schedule for young children includes certain elements *every day*:

- time for both structured, teacher-guided learning and unstructured, child-initiated play and learning
- time for both active physical play and quieter learning and rest
- time for both indoor and outdoor learning (if weather prohibits outdoor time, we provide comparable indoor activities)
- opportunities for large-group and small-group interactions, as well as one-on-one interactions and solitary play
- time devoted to meeting children’s physical needs (food [see “Food Schedule”], rest, personal care and hygiene) and their needs for well-managed transitions
- opportunities for a wide variety of types of play—socio-dramatic (pretend), creative expression (art, etc.), fine-motor, gross-motor, constructive (blocks, etc.), social, solitary, etc.

A good schedule adapts those elements to the changing needs of the children, according to their age and development.

Schedule Blocks

The following items are almost always part of every classroom’s daily schedule, both in the morning and in the afternoon:

- “Meeting” or “Circle Time”—a time for the whole class to gather together for community-building, mindful moments, conversation, and consideration of ideas.
- “Small Groups” or “Centers”—a time for small groups of children to work on particular projects or activities planned by teachers.
- “Choice Time”—a time for children to play and do activities of their own choosing in the classroom.
- Meals and snacks
- Outdoors (weather permitting)
- Common Room

Items that may be included in class schedules include story time or reading, movement or dance, mindfulness, etc.

Transitions

Transitions are important moments in young children’s days. In accordance with what we know about child development, it is important to use routines and time reminders to support children with transitions. We encourage teachers to problem-solve when students are struggling with transitions; looking for ways to help students feel a sense of control and engagement as they learn the flexibility required for successful transitions.

Physical Activity, Active Play, and Learning

Adapted in part from Model Child Care Health Policies, 5th Edition (Susan S. Aronson, editor, 2014), with thanks to the Pennsylvania Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (PA NAP SACC)

Young children need frequent, regular, joyful physical activity as a part of their everyday lives. Physical activity is crucial to not just physical health, but also emotional, social, and cognitive development. Physical activity is any activity that involves whole-body activity and large muscle groups, including running, climbing, riding bikes, building large structures, balancing, dancing, yoga, digging, boisterous dramatic play, and so on.

An important component of physical learning is taking pleasure in physical activity and in the qualities and abilities of the body. Teachers can help children find joy in using their bodies through encouragement (“Keep climbing! You can make it!”), supporting self-knowledge (“You have a huge smile on your face! You must really feel great to have made that jump!”), supporting self-care (“You decided it wasn’t safe to climb there. You really know how to take care of your body”), calling attention to effort (“You really worked hard to roll that heavy log!”), and calling attention to growth (“I remember a month ago when you couldn’t climb to the top; today you climbed it so easily!”).

The following opportunities exist for active physical play:

- Play in the yard—all children have opportunities every day, weather permitting
- Play in the common room—all children have opportunities every day
- Physical activities for whole-group in the classroom (e.g., dance party at circle time)—teachers should create these opportunities regularly and frequently
- Physical activities for small groups (e.g., carpentry or clay)—teachers may create these opportunities depending on curriculum and the needs of the group
- Special activities such as field trips, walks around the building, etc.—teachers may create these opportunities depending on interest, needs of the group, and so on

Authorities (for instance, Aronson’s Model Child Care Health Policies, 5th Edition) recommend physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day for toddlers and at least 90 minutes per day for preschoolers, including at least 60 minutes outdoors when weather permits (assuming an 8-hour day).

Strategies for Accessible Physical Learning

Like all areas of learning and development, teachers must use active strategies to ensure that all children can participate in and benefit from physical learning. In physical learning accessibility is an issue of ability, of course, but also temperament, culture, and identity. The following approaches can help teachers increase the accessibility of physical learning.

VARIETY: Teachers ensure that kinds of available physical activities vary throughout the day and from day to day. Teachers provide physical activities in multiple spaces (in the yard, in the classroom, in the common room) and at multiple times of the day. Teachers ensure enough variety and choice that a child who is not interested in one choice will be likely to find something else attractive. Materials for physical play, including climbing structures, are rearranged and rotated frequently, so new challenges are always available.

INTENTIONALITY: Teachers plan physical activities with a similar level of intentionality as other parts of the curriculum. Discussion of physical activity is a regular part of curriculum planning meetings. Note that while “free play” is a valuable and important part of every school day, planned and structured activities are more accessible for some children (for instance, many children who will not choose to simply “run around” will happily join a dance party or a game of “Bad Butterflies”).

PARTICIPATION AND MODELING: As much as is practical while maintaining standards of supervision, teachers participate in physical activity with children. When children see teachers participating in physical activities, they learn that such participation is valued and expected. Teachers model attitudes and habits such as enthusiasm for active play, flexibility in play ideas, cooperation and communication, and so on. (See also “Supervision and Safety During Active Physical Play,” below.)

WHOLE-CHILD INTEGRATION: Like other learning and curriculum areas, many children engage most deeply in physical activity when plans are connected to other interests and learning areas. Teachers create plans for physical activity that not only connect thematically to other parts of the curriculum, but as much as possible include learning opportunities in other domains (for instance, during a dinosaur project teachers might plan a dinosaur dance party; or when learning about letters, teachers might plan “letter yoga” to practice making letter shapes with bodies).

DIFFERENTIATION: Teachers make adaptations to physical activity plans to meet the needs of individual children (for instance, teachers might bring noise cancelling headphones to the common room for a noise-sensitive child; or teachers might bring dress-up clothes to a digging activity to engage particular children who wouldn’t otherwise participate). Every physical play space should include a wide range of physical challenges, so that different children can always find opportunities to feel challenged and develop skills.

Supervision and Safety During Active Physical Play

During all active physical play, teachers remain attentive and involved. The point of supervising gross motor play is not merely to prevent injury; teachers intentionally use active play as a context for learning and development. Teachers help children build specific skills (“Remember to look below before you jump”) as well as provide encouragement (“You can do it!”).

Teachers directly supervise all children by sight and hearing at all times. The same teacher:child ratios apply in all spaces (classroom, common room, yard, etc.). The quality of supervision during active play should be the same as during other parts of the day. Physical play isn’t “recess,” it is quality instruction time. During active physical play teachers identify potential higher-risk areas (e.g., an area where children are jumping from a height) and position themselves nearby.

Risk-Taking

During active play, children are not disallowed from taking physical risks. Physical risk-taking is an important opportunity for children to learn about both themselves and the world. When children take risks, teachers stay close by to support them in thinking through their choices and accomplishing their goals in a way that keeps others safe. Strategies teachers might use to help children take appropriate risks include encouraging reflection (“What happened last time you tried that?”), encouraging foresight (“What will happen if you land on those rocks?”), encouraging awareness of surroundings (“Have you noticed the other kids nearby?”), and encouraging self-awareness (“If you fall down there, will you be upset or will you be okay?”). (See also “Risk Assessment Procedure,” above, for more information.)

Note the distinction between risks and hazards. A risk is a choice a child makes that could result in harm; regardless of the outcome of that choice, the child has an opportunity to learn from a risk. A hazard is something that could harm a child without their ability to practically foresee or avoid it; very little learning comes from injuries due to hazards. Teachers should be vigilant in noticing and eliminating hazards. Possible hazards include: wooden equipment that could cause splinters; tripping hazards in areas where children are running; a fall zone with objects or children in it; slippery areas; hidden tripping hazards (e.g. large stones hidden just beneath the sand); broken equipment with sharp areas; etc.

Behavior Management and Physical Play

Withholding of physical play is never used as a consequence for “misbehavior.” To the contrary, for many young children challenging behaviors are a sign of a deep need for more physical activity. If a child is not keeping other children safe during physical play they may be asked to take a break until they are calmer or are ready to keep others safe; in these instances, the goal is for the child to be the one determining readiness.

It is often effective to plan periods of active play immediately preceding times when children will have to be still and/or attentive (e.g., circle time, small groups, meals). To this end, it can be a good idea to end a group’s time in the common room or yard with planned/structured physical activities, which often allow the most children to participate, before moving to the next section of the day.

Gross Motor Equipment

Play equipment and materials in the facility should meet the recommendations of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the ASTM International (ASTM) for public playground equipment. Equipment and materials intended for gross-motor (active) play should conform to the recommendations in the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook and the provisions in the ASTM “Standard F1487-07ae1: Consumer Safety Performance Specifications for Playground Equipment for Public Use.” All play equipment should be constructed, installed, and made available to the intended users in such a manner that meets CPSC guidelines and ASTM standards, as warranted by the manufacturers’ recommendations. Indoor non-stationary gross-motor equipment, such as climbers, must be arranged so that the safety of the children is accounted for. This includes spacing and flooring considerations; for instance, the climber should be on a mat and the slide should have a landing pad.

When making decisions about equipment, supervision, or other practices around gross-motor play, staff

may refer to “Caring for Our Children” (<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/>), a national set of guidelines.

Physical Preparations for Outdoor Play

Teachers take children to play outside in a wide range of weathers. Children will spend time outdoors even if it is raining, snowing, cold temperatures, or very warm. (See “Environmental Hazards” in the Health and Safety section for more information.) If the weather does not permit outdoor play, teachers will create indoor opportunities for active, gross-motor activities.

Children must be dressed appropriately for weather. In cold weather children wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth. In warm weather children wear clothing that is cool and easy to move in.

On sunny warm days children have shady places to play. Parents send in sunscreen (UVA/UVB SPF 15 or higher) and teachers apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going outside. Parents are asked to sign permission slips for sunscreen at the start of the school year. Families are encouraged to send sunhats with children, which teachers will encourage children to wear.

If insect repellent is needed, we use all natural (DEET-free) sprays. Repellent should be applied no more than once per day. Parents are asked to sign permission slips for insect repellent at the start of the school year. If families prefer their children to wear repellent with DEET, they should apply it before their child arrives at school. (NOTE: In the unlikely event that public health officials indicate high risk of insect-borne disease, sprays containing DEET will be used, or children will remain indoors.)

Water Play

Water play is an important part of the learning experience at CCS. Children are offered opportunities to play with water both inside and outside. As with other play, it is essential that teachers work with students to keep play safe, and to teach and enforce boundaries.

When playing in the yard, children playing with water should slip on rainpants and rainboots. If clothes are wet after play, teachers should change children into dry clothes from the child’s extra clothing supply.

The following rules must be observed during water play to ensure sanitation:

- Fresh, potable water is used, but children may not drink the water
- Children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play
- Standing water is changed before each new class of students uses it, and drained at the end of each day

Children with Special Needs

CCS has a rich history of working successfully and deeply with children with special needs and their families. We work very hard to collaborate with families and service providers to make sure that the needs of children and families are met, and that children with special needs are included in our school in as full a way as possible.

Aspects of our work with children with special needs include

- Coordinating with service providers to meet the child's needs at school
- Advocating with service providers for the needs of the family and the child
- Support for the family in negotiating services offered and the systems therein
- Support for service providers in meeting the child's needs
- Involving the child's IEP or IFSP goals in our classroom practice
- Learning approaches from service providers and families to support each particular child
- Building relationships with service providers, so that we can best meet the needs of multiple children and families over time

Special needs include, but are not limited to, disabilities, behavioral challenges, and health issues. CCS will offer individualized support to all children and families, regardless of whether a special need is diagnosed.