



Parent-Family Handbook

www.lilschooladk.com

The Lil' School at St. Bernard's

NYS OCFS License # 740283

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The Lil' Early Childhood and Enrichment Program, Inc. (henceforth referred to as "The Lil' School", "The Lil' School of the Adirondacks", or "the Program"), participates in Quality Stars NY and is a licensed/registered by the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) in New York State. A copy of our license, compliance history, licensor information, current NYS OCFS Regulations, Health Care Plan, and all other currently applicable state or federal guidance are posted conspicuously and accessible in communal area(s) of the program. Additionally, the applicable regulatory standards (Part 418-1 Child Day Care Centers) can be found at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/regulations/>

WELCOME to The Lil' School!

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Families,

We would like to welcome you and your child to our Early Childhood and Enrichment Programs!

Parents, Guardians, and Families are an integral part of successful early childhood education and enrichment programs. Through your involvement we are better able to meet the developmental and personal needs of your child(ren). As early childhood professionals, we can serve as a valuable resource for families and their children concerning most areas of child development. Therefore, we like to think that families and early childhood programs can and should work together to provide a secure and supportive environment that facilitates the growth and development of each individual child.

This handbook has been developed to help strengthen the relationship between our schools, teachers and families by providing specific information about our program. It includes our program's responsibilities to your family such as our mission & teaching philosophy, our program information, policies and procedures for Health/Safety, role of the teachers, and goals for the children as well as our expectations from parents/families including enrollment/attendance requirements, involvement, communication and more. You will be asked to complete and sign several required forms prior to your child(ren) participating in our Program and may be asked to do so again periodically throughout enrollment.

We feel it is essential for parents, guardians, families, teachers, and schools to work closely in providing children with truly high-quality early childhood education and care.

We hope you will find our handbook informative and helpful in making you more familiar and comfortable with our programs. We look forward to continuing to be a part of your child's learning and growing experience.

Who we are...

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks has high standards for professionalism, integrity, qualifications and experience. By maintaining a dedicated, highly qualified staff we are able to provide exceptional care and education for young children in our community. Take a minute to get to know us!

Founded in 2015, The Lil' School is still a new program to the Tri-Lakes area. However, it was built on 30 years of experience through partner programs (M.A.T.S.S. Kids Gym and ECEC) located on Long Island. As a native to the Saranac Lake area, owner Rose Blanchard knew of the desperate need for quality and affordable care to the area. But more than that, Rose wanted a program that would create new learning opportunities for children and expose them to new experiences not previously available in the small town. Thus the dream of The Lil' School was born!

Our incredible staff are our greatest assets, so the program is a holistic compilation of the knowledge and experience of 8 early childhood administrators and over 50 early childhood education teachers over the past few decades! Each member that joins our team not only utilizes our current curriculum and methods, but is strongly encouraged to help mold and grow the program. With the HighScope Curriculum as our foundation, we weave in the knowledge of our experienced staff as well as our competent Nutrition & Physical Well-Being component to meet the ever-changing, whole-child needs of our families.

Please see our Family Board Posting for biographies on our current staff and their own philosophies on teaching at The Lil' School!

**Thank you,
The Lil' School Team!**



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Our Vision

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks envisions a community in which all families have access to quality early childhood and enrichment programs that encourage children to love learning both inside and outside the classroom.

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks pursues this vision by upholding the highest degree of quality programming for children and their families. Programming is designed for the varying needs of the community we serve through collaboration with families and staff- enabling us to be flexible and creative in meeting the changing needs of our families.

Our Mission & Philosophy

“We empower children to develop a lifelong love of learning.”

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks provides a safe and positive environment which meets children's needs to learn and grow. Children construct knowledge through experience, so we engage them in an array of activities that allow for success and encourage advancement in all areas of development. Children are exposed to a variety of hands-on and movement-based activities which support the exploration of academic, motor, interactive, and self-regulatory concepts.

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks provides children with opportunities that appropriately challenge them and foster their progression along their naturally occurring continuum of development. The Lil' School of the Adirondacks respects the unique qualities of each individual child. Staff encourages the development of the individual child at a pace which is most appropriate for him/her. Our approach to learning teaches children to appreciate these unique differences among themselves and others.

Our entire staff subscribes to this vision of a curriculum which teaches “for the individual child” rather than “for the class”. This is accomplished through careful observation and planning. We maintain a balance of planned learning activities which are attuned to the naturally developing interest of individual children and the class. This allows both the children and the teachers to have a stake in the direction of the learning process.

“Helping hands can change the world.”

Children who learn to give back to others grow up to be compassionate members of our community. With this in mind, we have incorporated community service into our curriculum to help cultivate the natural empathetic nature of all children. The Lil' School of the Adirondacks chooses service activities which are appropriate for the abilities of the children and exposes them to a variety of methods to give back to our community.

The service component of our program promotes character building and a sense of belonging. Our staff uses these service activities to encourage the development of positive self-image, confidence, generosity, integrity and creative problem solving.

The Lil' School also believes that it truly “takes a community to raise a child”. In aligning with this belief, our program is devoted to a partnership among children, families, teachers, support/administrative staff, and the larger community. We are available at all times to support the families we serve.

Parent/Guardian & Family Participation

Both school and home play an important role in promoting positive self-identity. Staff, parents/guardians, families, and their children are encouraged to volunteer in the program and share their language, traditions, knowledge, and cultures with our school. The Lil' School teaches children to appreciate the unique qualities of themselves and others in a manner which is respectful to all.

Families are welcome to join in our program as appropriate. We invite you to participate in workshop meetings, parent/family groups, volunteering, conferences, visits, field trips and more. If the program and families are mutually able to work together, we will be able to provide a setting that best meets every child's growth needs.

To assist with transition into the program, parents/guardians/families must attend an orientation & tour with the Director to ensure the program is the best fit for each family in meeting their needs and philosophies. Along with the Family Orientation, pre-enrolled children are encouraged to attend the Meet the Teacher Event which allows the children and teachers to get to know each other in the classroom setting before their first official day! Intake paperwork is also designed for the teacher to learn about the new child in their care and plan for integrating the child into the classroom. Whenever possible the program also invites pre-enrolled children and their families to visit the program prior to full time attendance. Regular communication from the time you inquire and all the way throughout enrollment is one of the most important factors in ensuring a high-quality early education and care experience for your child(ren).

- **Daily Communication:** The child's home and our program should offer continuity. Parents/guardians/families and teachers must openly communicate pertinent information about the child on a daily basis. This should include the child's developmental achievements, illnesses, changes in sleeping or eating, medication given at home, elimination habits, and so forth. Such information may be shared through verbal communication and daily posts via the app. Handwritten journals may also be used for specific families if it is deemed that this method is more effective for them. The app and/or journal is used by both teachers and families to log the child's activities, demeanor, and milestones in a confidential manner. An overview of classroom activities is also posted daily and/or weekly on the app.
- **Parent/Guardian/Family Conferences:** Conferences are offered and required for each child. General guidelines should be twice a year and additionally by request, subject to daily communication efforts/daily reporting. This time should be used to review the child's progress and development. In addition, the conference is an opportunity for teachers and families to set developmental goals for the child. These conferences will be an information sharing session and will also allow for discussion regarding progress, concerns, challenges, growth opportunities, transitions, etc.
- **Newsletters:** Parents/guardians/families will receive periodic email updates discussing the upcoming events and activities of the program. We also include reminders about upcoming closure dates.

**Families must ensure that all contact information including phone numbers and emails remain up to date at all times. Regular communication as well as emergency notifications rely on those methods of contact for delivering important/urgent information.*

Open Door Policy- Parents/guardians and families are welcome at any time during program hours subject to visitor control procedures and policies. Involvement is valued and encouraged. However, for security and transitional needs of the children, we would like prior notice of the day and time of the visit. We appreciate family involvement and invite them to bring special interest activities to the Program; but we ask that families consult the Lead Teacher or Director prior to doing so.

*Visitor control policies are subject to current New York State Department of Health and Office of Child and Family Services guidelines. Public Health Emergencies (such as COVID-19) may require state/federal implementation of restrictions regarding visitation procedures.

Use the Program as a Resource- Families should always feel comfortable in using the program for various types of family support. Staff are trained professionals in the area of early childhood development/practices and families are encouraged to consult them regarding these topics. In addition, our program can inform and help to connect families to a variety of resources and supports such as information on child development, oral and medical health care needs, insurance and wellness programs, community programs, family support groups and training opportunities, financial information or assistance, NYS Department of Education school enrollment, etc. This information and more are available in our family resource center in the main lobby, our parent-family board posted outside our classrooms, sent regularly via digital communications, and can be additionally provided upon request to any of our staff members. This Parent-Family Handbook is also a very useful tool for not only understanding our program policies and procedures, but also in describing best practice methods in early childhood development.

Grievance Procedure- Should any suggestions, concerns or complaints arise please discuss them with the Director as soon as possible so that a positive, mutual resolution can be reached. In the event of a serious concern where a family feels we were unable to reach a mutually agreeable resolution, our licensor (current information posted on the Family Board) and/or the NYS OCFS Child Care Complaint Line (1-800-732-5207) may be contacted. Please note that our complete, current compliance history and license will be prominently displayed in the communal hallway for family review at all times.

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents- Mailings, conferences, emergency contacts and authorizations will be as directed by the custodial parent/guardian/family member. All parents/guardians/family members are encouraged to attend conferences and other functions, but it's the responsibility of the custodial party to inform the non-custodial party of such arrangements.

Programs & Hours of Operation

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks is a 12-month, year-round program as well as offering a School Age Summer Camp. Every aspect of the program- from budgeting to programming activities- is designed around this schedule of enrollment. Families sign a written contractual agreement to fulfill requirements for the full duration of each program calendar year unless otherwise decided upon with the Owner/Director in writing. Such instances are reserved for extenuating circumstances and made on a case-by-case basis.

Nursery School & Daycare (3 mo. to 3 yrs) Monday through Friday 7:15a – 5:00p
 ○ Minimum Infant/Toddler Program 2-day, 3-day, 4-day, 5-day 8:40a – 11:30a

Preschool with Daycare (3 yrs to 5 yrs) Monday through Friday 7:15a – 5:00p
 ○ Minimum Pre-K 3yrs Program 2-day, 3-day, 4-day, 5-day 8:40a – 12:30p
 ○ Minimum Pre-K 4yrs Program 2-day, 3-day, 4-day, 5-day 8:40a – 2:30p
 ○ Minimum Pre-K 5yrs Program 2-day, 3-day, 4-day, 5-day 8:40a – 2:30p

School Age Care (5 yrs to 12 yrs) Monday through Friday 7:15a – 5:00p

*Note that full 12-month School Age Care is before/after the school day as well as during Holiday/Summer breaks. Families may alternatively enroll School Age children in our Summer Camp only program rather than the year-round program based upon availability.

ALL Part Time options (less than 5-days) are not guaranteed and based on availability. Requests for part time must remain flexible. While the program may be licensed for the full duration of hours described above, the program may adjust opening/closing times based on enrollment and contractual requests.

Play with Me Classes, Toddler Tumble Classes, Toddler/Preschool Gymnastics, & School Age Enrichment Classes – Scheduling is available by session and posted on our annual program calendar.

Calendar/Holiday Closings

The Lil' School makes every effort to provide continuous care for working families at times which best fit their busy lives. Our yearly calendar is available prior to the start of each program year as a method for keeping parents/guardians/families informed of which dates we are closed, early dismissals, and other important dates. We plan our calendars in conjunction with local School District calendars and generally only close our program for legally recognized holidays as well as professional development. However, it is possible around the holidays that our dismissals/closings may differ slightly due to regularly decreased attendance so it is important to utilize the annual calendar to stay informed. In addition, the program allows for up to five (5) closure days through the summer months for professional development and preparation for the start of a new program year.

Emergency & Inclement Weather Procedure

While we aim to provide care consistent with our annual calendar, occasionally environmental, weather, natural disaster hazards, and mandatory health emergencies prevent the program from being able to open. The Lil' School generally makes inclement weather closing/delay decisions in accordance with The Saranac Lake School District and St. Bernard's School. Please remember that a decision to close our program is not taken lightly but is made with the health and safety of our children, families, and staff in mind.

We will do our best to notify families of delay/closing decisions through our app alert/messaging system as soon as the decision is made. Should the Program have to close early or cancel afterschool classes, families will be notified via the app and occasionally also via email, text and/or phone as necessary.

Staff/Child Ratio and Group Size

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks strives to provide the best possible learning environment and always maintains compliance with New York State regulations for ratios, group size, and room/program capacities. We strongly believe that the ratio of children to teachers and group sizes directly affect the quality of the learning experience. Therefore, whenever possible, The Lil' School will opt for lower ratios. Minimum State ratios will be maintained as follows. In a "mixed age" group, ratios and group size are followed as deemed by NYS OCFS regulations.

Infant/Toddler (Continuity of Care Nursery)
NYS DCC Regulations

3 mo. – 3 yrs = 4 children to 1 teacher
Maximum group size = 8 Infant/Toddler mixed

Preschool
NYS DCC Regulations

3 year olds = 7 children to 1 teacher
Maximum group size= 18 Preschoolers per class

4-5 year olds = 8 children to 1 teacher
Maximum group size= 21 Preschoolers per class

School Age
NYS DCC Regulations

5-12 year olds mixed = 10 children to 1 teacher*
Maximum group size= 20 School Age per class
*Children must be enrolled in the school system.

Staff schedules may change depending on the supervision needs to maintain the regulations stated above. Children are supervised by sight at all times; supervision by sound is permissible when age appropriate for

private activities such as toileting. Attendance is taken via a “face-to-name” attendance each time the class is leaving an area and again when they arrive at their destination.

Enrollment Requirements & Procedures

Appendix A

Enrollment Requirements (App. A.1)

The Lil’ School upholds the highest level of Health & Safety as well as NYS Regulations in providing quality programming for our community. The enrollment process requires a series of registration documents, agreements, and forms which are tracked with submission dates on the New Child-Student Start Checklist on the inside cover of the child’s personal file. These requirements and in some cases additional information must be submitted and approved before the child will be able to attend our program.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS: Every child enrolling in any of our Nursery School (Infant/Toddler), Preschool, and School Age programs must submit/fulfill each of the following documents and permissions prior to starting at our program unless otherwise noted:

- The Lil’ School Registration Form
- Pick-Up Procedure Form
- “Get to Know Me” Student Information Sheet*
- Infant Information Sheet (for children under 2 yrs as needed)*
- Specialized Instruction Permission Form*
- The Lil’ School Contract Agreement
- The Lil’ School Release of Liability Waiver
- Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)*
- Medical Statement for Child in Childcare (OCFS-LDS-4433)* dated within (12) months of official start date. Must include immunization records which are updated concurrently with each immunization per the NYS OCFS Child Daycare Regulation 418-1.11(3).
- Child Care Employee, Volunteer, Parent Child and Essential Visitors Health Screening One-Time Attestation (OCFS-6040)
- The Lil’ School Topical Ointment (OTC) Permission Form

**Children who are enrolled in the public or private school systems are exempt from this requirement*

Situational requirements may include the following dependent on arrangements made specifically with each family in accordance with their needs:

- The Lil’ School Subsidized Care Agreement
- IEP, Early Intervention Information, Evaluations, Service Agreements etc. as needed to ensure we are able to provide the most developmentally appropriate programming for each child.

Children with special health care needs such as medications, allergies, services, and other conditions have additional documentation requirements to ensure we provide the best possible care. These documents must be resubmitted at least every six (6) months and any time in which the child’s needs change:

- Written Medication Consent (OCFS-LDSS-7002)
- Individual Health Care Plan (OCFS-LDSS-7006)
- Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan (OCFS-6029)

Children WILL NOT be permitted to participate in The Lil’ School programs without ALL attendance requirements and documentation. Additional paperwork may apply. It is the parent/guardian/family’s responsibility to ensure that all information is kept accurate and if necessary, resubmit to remain up-to-date.

Enrollment, Payment, and Withdrawal Policies

ENROLLMENT: Our Nursery, Preschool, and School Age programs are a 12-month commitment which runs for a duration of 52 full weeks covering September through August for one program year (please refer to School & Enrichment Calendar). Changes to this agreement can only be made in writing with the Director. Enrollment after the September starting date may be accepted based on availability.

TIME SLOTS: Families request to enroll their child(ren) in a full slot between the hours of 7:15 am and 5:00 pm. Times of arrival and departure must be approved prior to child attendance and are based on availability. The enrolled child may attend the program on the approved days for the approved hours unless alternate times are submitted in writing and pre-approved by the Director.

CONTRACT CHANGE REQUEST: Any requests for permanent changes to the contracted schedule or agreement must be made in writing at least ten (10) business days in advance so that the program may do its best to accommodate the change. Accommodations are not guaranteed as they are subject to the program's availability and ability to staff for such requests. All contractual changes must be approved by the Director and/or designee.

REGISTRATION/INSURANCE FEE: A per year, per child registration/insurance fee is due upon enrollment and at the start of each new contract year.

DEPOSIT: A non-refundable security deposit in the amount of one week's tuition is required prior to attendance. Prior to the end of the contract year, contract signees may decide not to renew the contract agreement for an additional year. In such cases, thirty (30) days written notice is required for deposit to be applied to the last week of tuition. Without the required advance written notice of withdrawal, deposit is forfeited to the program. If the family elects to continue to another contractual year at our program, the deposit may "roll over" as the deposit for the next contractual year so long as the signee has not defaulted on tuition payments. Adjustments may be made if the deposit amount changes from one program year to the next. Should a family need to withdraw due to extenuating circumstances (such as relocation, loss of employment, etc.), evaluation for the application of the deposit may be discussed with the Director on a case-by-case basis.

TUITION: Tuition is due by 5:00 pm on each Thursday for the following week of care. At this time, only cash and checks are accepted forms of payment. Non-payment of tuition for the contractual agreement amount may result in additional fees, expulsion from the program and/or forfeit of deposit. In addition, interruption of attendance will require an additional service fee upon return and availability is not guaranteed. Notifications of such adjustments would be made in writing to the contract signee.

The full twelve (12) month commitment of attendance is required to secure pricing. Payment for each week of contractual agreement is required whether or not child is in attendance including all manner of program closures and the contractual weekly tuition amount due does not change.

SERVICE FEES: Administrative Changes, Delinquency Late Payments, and Returned/Insufficient Checks are subject to an additional fee. Any unpaid balances will be expected to be paid in full prior to continuing participation.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS: Every child enrolling in any of our Nursery School (Infant/Toddler), Preschool, and School Age programs must submit/fulfill all required enrollment documents and permissions prior to starting at our program. Situational requirements may include additional documentation/permissions dependent on arrangements made specifically with each family in accordance with their needs.

Children with special health care needs such as medications, allergies, services, and other conditions have additional documentation requirements to ensure we provide the best possible care. These documents must be resubmitted at least every six (6) months and any time in which the child's needs change.

Children WILL NOT be allowed to participate in The Lil' School programs without ALL attendance requirements and documentation. Additional paperwork may apply. It is the family's responsibility to ensure that all information is kept accurate and if necessary, resubmit to remain up-to-date.

Please Note: Children with any conditions which impair their ability to safely participate will not be permitted to attend The Lil' School programs without a physician's written release and approval by the Director. The program must ensure its ability to provide

quality care and programming to all children enrolled in our programs at all times. It is also always advisable to consult your physician prior to undertaking any program which includes physical exercise. Should any changes occur regarding your child's health, pediatrician, family situation, contact phone numbers, etc., contact our administrative staff to update your records immediately.

ATTENDANCE: Tuition and payments will not be refunded or adjusted for missed days/classes, early pickup of child(ren), or late arrival of child(ren). This includes but is not limited to illness, snow days, all manner of program closures and vacations. It is the undersigned family's responsibility to notify us if a child will not be attending their regular schedule and any temporary changes to the agreed upon schedule (such as illness, vacation, etc.). Make-up days may be requested but are not guaranteed, and are approved on a limited case-by-case basis.

The program will be closed for a period of up to five (5) days throughout the summer months each year as well as days surrounding major holidays and professional development (please see the annual calendar for specific dates).

According to NYS Regulations, the program is required to maintain proper group sizes and teacher-child ratios. Therefore, during holiday weeks families must notify designated teaching staff about their child(ren)'s attendance at least ten (10) business days prior to the start of said dates.

All children in all groups are required to arrive to the program by 8:40 am each school day (excludes summer/mini-camps) as part of attending a Preschool, Nursery School, and/or School Age Enrichment Program. Arrival after this time is disruptive both to the individual child in addition the school day as a whole and will not be permitted on a regular basis. Families are required to adhere to the agreed upon times of arrival and departure to ensure that staffing/student ratios are maintained and programming is not disrupted. While we understand that delays occasionally occur, it is important for NYS OCFS compliance standards that arrival/pick-up times remain as consistent as possible. Pick-up delays that fall beyond the center's hours are subject to an additional charge of fifteen (15) dollars per every or any part of fifteen-minute increments past contractual pick-up time. Persistent delayed pick-ups are subject to supplemental charges, meeting with families to resolve issues, and/or discontinued enrollment.

SUITABILITY OF GROUP: The Lil' School reserves the right to move a child to the group most appropriate for the development and age of the child as well as laws governing age-based ratios in accordance with NYS OCFS regulations. Families will be notified in advance of moving-up of children to ensure the easiest transition for the child.

MEDIA/PHOTOGRAPHY APPROVAL: Parents/Guardians/Families grant permission to The Lil' School to take photographs and video of their child/children during participation for use in newsletters, program, Website or other publicity purposes. No information about the identity of the child(ren) will be released in conjunction with the media use (i.e. name, birthdate, address, contact information) unless separate/additional written permission is given by the parent/guardian/family for a specific use purpose. All photography and other media are the sole property of The Lil' Early Childhood and Enrichment Program, Inc (a.k.a. The Lil' School).

Enrollment “Welcome” Procedure (App. A.2)

The Lil' School makes every effort to ensure that our families are well-informed of our practices, procedures, expectations, and program activities. Upon enrollment, families receive the following for easy access to information regarding our programs:

- Full Tour with Program Information Packet
 - o Includes documents such as Required Items Listing, MyProcure Set-Up, Kaymbu Overview and Welcome Letter, ASQ Information Guide, and HighScope COR Family Guide.
- The Lil' School Annual Calendar and/or Enrichment Classes Session Calendar
- Parent-Family Handbook
- The Lil' School Health Care Plan
- Child Care Weather Watch Chart
- Additional current supplemental interim/operational procedures and protocol

Staffing Policies, Guidelines & Qualifications

Appendix B

Position Qualifications and Descriptions (App. B.1)

Administrators, Teachers, and Assistant Teachers are hired based on their qualifications, ability to perform required duties and desire to learn and grow in the field of Early Care and Education. In all instances, The Lil' School meets and/or exceeds NYS and best practice requirements for staff qualifications and training. In an effort to provide the quality of care that The Lil' School strives to offer, teaching staff must be flexible and dedicated to continued excellence.

Regular Staff Members: All staff members must be qualified by training and experience to carry out their respective functions in the administration, operation and maintenance of our Program. Staff must be mature, of good character and possess suitable personal qualifications as well as be in good physical and mental health and have the energy and emotional stability necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of their positions. The following outlines minimum education and experience qualifications for Teacher and Assistant Teacher positions.

- **Administrative Staff:** Associate's or higher degree related to the position of hire and a Plan of Study as required for position with relevant experience and knowledge working with children. Child Development credential, Associate's Degree in Early Childhood, or an advanced degree in a field relating to early childhood development or education is acceptable dependent upon position with relevant experience and knowledge working in the position of hire. Plans of study for an applicable degree program will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- **Lead Teachers Infant, Toddler and Preschool:** Child Development credential, Associate's Degree in Early Childhood, or an advanced degree in a field relating to early childhood development. A degree in the field of education is acceptable if candidate has minimum of one-year specific training in early childhood development and two years' formal experience caring for young children. Plans of study for an applicable degree program will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- **Lead Teachers for School-Aged:** Associate's Degree in Child Development recreation, childhood education, or related field and two years' direct experience working with children under 13 years of age.
- **Assistant Teacher of all age groups:** Minimum High School Diploma or its equivalent and two years' formal experience working with children in the age-range of the group for which he/she has applied to work with. Preference given to those with additional credentials in the early childhood field and/or interest pursuing such credentials/training.
- **Teacher Aides for all age groups:** Minimum High School Diploma or its equivalent (or in process) and informal experience working with children. Preference given to those with additional credentials in the early childhood field and/or interest pursuing such credentials/training.

Substitutes and Floaters: The Program will hire appropriate and qualified Substitutes or Floaters as needed to assure the proper staff/child ratios in each classroom on any given day, but generally prefers to utilize full time/regular staff. In addition to the Employment Requirements/Background Review and policies noted in the next section, the following applies specifically to Substitutes/ Floaters:

- Substitutes and Floaters must have at minimum their High School Diploma or its equivalent and informal experience working with young children. Should the Substitute or Floater be filling in for a staff member for a longer leave of absence than a regular illness or vacation, said individual must possess additional qualifications/experience which is suited for the position he/she is fulfilling.

Volunteers: The Program will allow student parents/guardians and families as well as other external volunteers to participate in program implementation on a case-by-case basis. Each potential volunteer will be reviewed individually to ensure a good match for the program and applicant. All volunteers other than parents/guardians/families of currently enrolled children are subject to the Employment Requirements/Background Review and policies noted in the next section. In addition, the following specifically applies to volunteers:

- Volunteers will be directly supervised at all times by Teaching and/or Administrative staff members.
- Volunteers are not counted in the child to staff ratio and are never left alone to supervise children.
- Volunteers are also not permitted to intervene in policy-sensitive scenarios included but not limited to behavior management, toileting, diapering, incident reporting, child files/documentation, confidential matters and conversations, etc.

No person other than the Director, Teachers or Assistant/Aide Teachers may supervise a group independently even for brief periods of time, except in an emergency. The minimum age of a staff person is 16 years. However, no person under 18 years of age may be left alone to supervise a group of children.

All staff and external volunteers are subject to a comprehensive background check including but not limited to:

- The Lil' School Employment & External Volunteers Application with Resume and References
- Statewide Central Register Database Check (OCFS-LDSS-3370)
- Request for NYS Fingerprinting Service (OCFS-4930ASFA) or Waiver for Duplicate Fingerprint Card (OCFS-4659)
- Criminal Conviction Statement (OCFS-LDSS-7038)
- Request for Staff Exclusion Check (JC-CBC-3)
- Medical Statement (OCFS-6004) *must be dated within 6 months
- Child Care Employee, Volunteer, Parent Child and Essential Visitors Health Screening One-Time Attestation (OCFS-6040)

Professional Conduct (App. B.3)

Personal Presentation

All staff are expected to uphold the philosophy of The Lil' School and present themselves in a professional manner at all times as a representative of our program. This includes but is not limited to hygiene, dress, manner, and written and oral communications.

Confidentiality Agreement

We value confidentiality and trust. This includes but is not limited to families' financial records, educational & health records of a child, and personal information. Only staff or authorized state agencies are privy to this information when necessary and in accordance with federal and state confidentiality laws. We require a signed, legal familial request for information to be released to anyone other than the aforementioned.

We also expect parents/guardians/families and any other persons who interact with our school to respect and maintain the confidentiality of all other students, families, and staff as you become familiar with those in our program. All individuals involved with our program are required to honor the privacy of anyone related to our program whether or not they are mandated by law to do so.

Professional Relationships

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks requires all employees to maintain a respectful and professional relationship with families and children who are currently enrolled in or otherwise involved with the Program and/or Organization. Casual relationships with such families and children are not permitted for the duration that these individuals are involved with the Program. This includes but is not limited to "friend" status on social media, casual outings and recreation, babysitting, as well as any and all discussions relating to The Lil' School and any of its employees, families, or children.

Outside Employment

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks does not permit or encourage its employees to provide after hours, off-site care for the children enrolled in any of its programs, as it is considered a conflict of interest.

Ethical Practice (App. B.4)

The Lil' School prides itself on providing the best care for our children and quality partnerships between our staff and families. The Lil' School respects every individual child, family, staff member, and member of the community. We demonstrate fair and honorable treatment of individuals of all abilities, genders, ethnicities, backgrounds, experiences, and every unique quality as we see every person as a true asset to the world.

The Lil' School employee is honest, flexible, accommodating, and inclusive in all activities and decisions. We exhibit a high level of professionalism through behavior, etiquette, language, action, and maintaining confidentiality. Each employee abides by the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and is committed to upholding said values of childhood education, development, professionalism, and decision making.

Staff Training Requirements and Policies (App. B.5)

The Lil' School provides training opportunities for staff to develop professional skills that will assure a nurturing, stimulating, healthy and safe environment for all children. Our staff maintains a commitment to professional development so that our methods are aligned with best practice standards in providing superior programming. This allows our program to grow as the field learns more about childhood development.

- The program will ensure that staff has a minimum of 30 hours of training (15 hours in the first 6 months of hire) for each two-year licensing period which cover all categories/topics required by NYS OCFS.
- First Aid and CPR certifications for the age groups being served are required of all regular employees regardless of position.
- Each staff member additionally completes trainings covering gym set-up, proper spotting techniques, gym and movement safety measures, and others. Staff must demonstrate their ability to properly follow the above protocol prior to conducting activities and lessons within our gym and movement spaces.

Classroom Daily Routines & Procedures

Appendix C

Arrival of Children and Families (App. C.1)

Greeting children and their families sets the tone for the entire day and provides the teacher with vital information about our children. In addition to a warm welcome:

- Child must be awake and aware/responsive at time of drop-off for the child to be admitted to the program. If a child is sleeping upon arrival, they must be awoken and removed from any car seats/strollers/etc. for the daily health check to be conducted.
- Children are greeted in their home language and/or language of preference in a manner that is sensitive and inclusive of the home culture of the individual child.
- Drop-off persons ensure that the child is prepared for arrival. This means that as age and developmentally appropriate, the child has participated in the arrival routine to the extent of their abilities (i.e., the child has placed own belongings in their cubby, taken care of lunch items, brought in water bottle, and checked into the classroom, etc.). In addition, it is the drop-off person's responsibility to ensure that their child(ren) have sunblock and insect repellent applied prior to arrival to our care (seasonal).

** Drop-off procedure is subject to current New York State Department of Health and Office of Child and Family Services guidelines. Public Health Emergencies (such as COVID-19) may require state/federal implementation of restrictions regarding drop-off and pick-up procedures.

- Drop-off persons bring child(ren) to the designated door for drop-off and speaks directly with staff to ensure transfer of care of their child. Information is exchanged concerning the child's experiences at home and any changes/note regarding overall health/wellness.
- Support with separation is offered as needed and individualized for each specific child. The program can provide support and resources regarding attachment and transitions to families.
- The time of arrival of the child and individual dropping off the child to the program are recorded on the attendance sheet.
- A daily visual health assessment in accordance with Appendix A: Instructions for Doing a Daily Health Check of the Health Care Plan is conducted and recorded for each child.
- Parents/guardians and/or authorized caregivers must sign in their child!

Sign In of Children

Families and authorized drop-off persons must always sign in the child through our digital database (or by sign-in on the attendance sheet) if they are leaving the child in the care of the program. Upon enrollment, each parent/guardian/authorized pick-up person will be assigned a personal ID number and choose a four-digit numerical password for use with our digital sign in/out system. A tablet or computer will be available during pick up and drop off times for families to access the database application. This is a requirement of our program which creates a digital record of the times, dates, and individuals who pick up and drop off. During times requiring limited sharing of devices, teachers will record drop-off times and names of authorized persons manually.

Personal Items

Children will require a variety of personal items from home to be successful throughout the day (backpack, clothes, shoes, water bottles, lunch boxes and containers, seasonal outerwear etc.) These items are described on The Lil' School Required Items Listing(s). While we will do our best to teach the children responsibility and care for these items, they can sometimes become lost, soiled, or broken at school as a part of typical childhood use. Smocks and towels will be offered when engaging in art/sensory play as appropriate, however children's clothes may become soiled at school as part of the natural learning process. Children need open-ended, independent opportunities to engage in these types of free expression activities to promote a range of development. While our staff will encourage children to act responsibly and be accountable as developmentally appropriate, our program will not interfere with or inhibit the learning process of our students.

Other personal valuables NOT required for daily programming (such as toys and books from home) should be limited. If Health and Safety protocol permit, our program will sometimes allow children to bring personal items from home for show/tell and sharing purposes to promote inter-personal relationships, build sense of community, encourage conflict resolution, and to teach knowledge of self and others. Please reach out to classroom staff regarding the current policy on personal valuables brought from home for more information.

All personal items and valuables from home must be labeled with the child's full name (First and Last) at all times. Other than seasonal outerwear, all other personal items/valuables must be able to fit and store inside one child's backpack or diaper bag unless otherwise instructed by the program. Children who nap/rest may have a separate, approved nap mat bag for storage of sleeping items.

The program is not responsible for any lost or damaged personal items or valuables.

Meals and Nutrition (App. C.2)

Meals and snacks are opportunities to promote good nutritional habits, autonomy, self-help skills, cooperation and social interaction. The Lil' School is committed to following appropriate child nutrition guidelines. Staff must follow the guidelines set forth when handling, preparing, serving and storing food. Meals and snacks provided are aligned with CACFP guidelines to meet the child's nutritional requirements in proportion to the amount of time they are in the program each day. Each week's snack schedule will be posted on the weekly meal board in the communal hallway near the Family Boards. Children who require alternative food options due to age/development, dietary needs, and/or allergies/restrictions will be offered a comparable substitute from the CACFP approved listing.

Meal Time Procedures:

- Our program currently includes two nutritious, balanced snacks for each program day. Each meal component listed on the snack schedule must be offered to each child (as age and developmentally appropriate) on the assigned days. Families with younger children or those with specific developmental/dietary needs will work with the program to ensure they can safely enjoy our provided snacks (we can offer preparations that are raw, cut, etc.) and may need to supply appropriate alternative snacks from home. This ensures that each child receives the nutrients he/she needs. Families must also supply a lunch from home for their child which adheres to our nutrition policy (see below).
 - If a child comes without a meal: family is to be contacted.
A back-up meal or supplemental food items will be available for children but on a limited basis when absolutely needed. Families are responsible for providing adequate meals for their children and may incur an additional fee if there is a recurring issue which requires the program to supplement food items.
- Chairs, tables, and utensils are suitable for the size/developmental levels of children. Children are NEVER fed in strollers, buggies or while engaged in physical activity. Children are encouraged to serve and feed themselves, and assist with cleaning.
- Meals and snack times are pleasant social and learning experiences for children, while respecting families' cultural preferences. Adults sit with children during meals, providing assistance and encouraging social interaction through family-style dining.
- DOH guidelines for safe food handling and storage are followed at all times. (*refer to Health and Safety-Safe Food Handling/Storage*)
- Check for food allergies and see that they are posted in a confidential manner for all attending staff to reference.
- The following foods are considered to be hazardous to children under the age of four (4) years old and therefore may NOT be served in the program:
 - Hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds
 - Whole grapes and cherries
 - Meat, larger than can be swallowed whole
 - Chewing gum and all hard candies
 - Whole marshmallows
 - Nuts
 - Any other whole food item posing significant choking risk for the age/development of the child.
 * Raw vegetables will be allowed but prepared "Julienne" cut, not circle cuts.
- Infants must be supplied from home with all food items, formula, breastmilk, etc. and all eating/feeding utensils/dishes as needed. The program does not stock infant food items. Eating needs and arrangements will be maintained in writing at the program and updated routinely by parents/guardians/families and teachers to best support the changing needs of each infant.

Meal Time Policies:**Nutrition Policy**

Mealtime promotes good nutrition habits and serves as an opportunity for the class group to discuss health concepts such as nutritional choices, food groups, portions, and more. Families are expected to pack their children healthy, balanced lunches in accordance with our Program Nutrition Policy each day. The Director can provide additional educational materials/instruction regarding nutrition and portions to families who need or want assistance.

It is the belief of The Lil' School that learning how to live a balanced lifestyle begins in Early Childhood with the support of friends, family, community, and school in making healthy choices. Nutrition and exercise are concepts which are built into our regular curriculum and a big part of our daily routine. Meal times are teachable moments which occur naturally each day and allow us to discuss such important life skills.

Part of teaching about nutritional choices is demonstrating "all things in moderation" and balance of lifestyle choices. This philosophy is at the core of the program's nutritional policy. With that said, The Lil' School opts not to allow for "sweet treats" and/or "empty food" to be eaten by children or staff while at school. Children are encouraged to discuss the concept of "treats" and "snacks" with their families so that they can approach the topic in whichever way they feel is most appropriate for their children. Some of our families highly regulate treats/snacks at home and some do not. As part of our program mission to encourage healthy choices while supporting our families with their parenting decisions, we have decided that such items are not necessary at the program.

The purpose of this nutritional policy is to request that families do their best in packing at least one portion from each of the core food groups as part of providing a balanced meal each day. Items that are "sweet treats" or "empty snacks" should not be sent to school with the children; these may include but are not limited to:

- Candies, chocolates, etc.
- Cookies, cakes, pies, cupcake snacks, etc.
- Jell-O and Pudding
- Gummies and fruit roll-up type snacks
- Chips (such as potato, doritos, cheetos, etc.)

As a healthy substitute for these items, families are encouraged to pack naturally sweet items and other wholesome items such as:

- Fruits- fresh, cups, dried, dehydrated, etc.
- Yogurts
- Whole Oat and Grain Granolas- granola bars, granola mixes, cereals, etc.
- Muffins- fruit, oat, vegetable varieties
- So many more options!

"Sweet Treat" and "Empty Snack" food items brought from home will be returned home in the child's lunch box. If needed, an equivalent substitute will be provided for the child's meal as a replacement for the item that cannot be served.

Allergy Sensitive Policy

The Lil' School confidently maintains that we make every effort to be an "Allergy Sensitive" facility. Our program works hard to provide a safe, inclusive environment for children and staff with mild to severe allergies to various food products. How our program adapts to the individual needs of a child or staff member is dependent on the age and ability of the individual and their group, the needs of the family to ensure the individual's safety, and the severity of the allergy itself.

The Lil' School primarily provides meals and snacks composed of fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and whole wheat items. For the few packaged and prepared food items that we purchase, we make every effort to review all packaging and ingredients labels. For families of children with severe allergies we completely understand that the above explanation may not be enough comfort and will work with the individual family as best we can, allowing for separate snacks to be provided from home.

The health and safety of each child is of the utmost importance to us. For this reason, there may be times that we must adapt our policy as the children, families, and staff in our program grow and change. Exclusions from lunches may apply in the event of more severe allergy cases. Although we understand that ingredient exclusions can be inconvenient, it may be in the best interest of an individual within a group who could suffer potentially life-threatening complications from exposure to specific food items.

The decision to exclude specific allergy causing ingredients is not made lightly and done in conjunction with the family, individuals which are directly affected by the condition, and our Health Care Consultant. It is the program's belief that excluding a child or adult from group meals due to an allergy is neither socially nor emotionally supportive of that individual. Our policy decision is aligned with best practice standards and designed to decrease the potential for severe risks while maintaining the inclusion of all children and adults within the group.

The identities of children and/or staff members who have food allergies will not be released by the program. The program will not discuss specific food allergy cases and individuals with anyone within the program other than those required by law for safety purposes as it is a breach of confidentiality.

Food items brought from home that are found to contain excluded ingredients will be returned home in the child's lunch box. If needed, an equivalent substitute will be provided for the child's meal as a replacement for the food item that cannot be served.

Current Allergy Exclusions:

There are currently no peanut or tree nut containing products permitted in the Program at any time. Packaged items which indicate either peanuts or tree nut varieties as an ingredient and homemade items which are found to contain these ingredients will not be served within our facility. Packaged items which specify "produced in a facility which processes nuts" or "may contain traces of peanuts and/or tree nuts" may be reasonably served only to the child who brought the item from home so long as there are no identifiable peanut/tree nut ingredients present in the food item. In such instances, steps may be taken to additionally limit the potential for cross-contamination. All foods provided by families for individual or shared consumption must be in accordance with this food safety policy.

***As with any other medical/health emergency, protocol for responding to and treating allergic reactions are outlined in our Health Care Plan.

Holidays, Birthdays, and Special Events

The Lil' School teaches diversity through education and celebration of all holidays, birthdays, and special events in a culturally appropriate manner. At times, these activities may include the incorporation of foods as a part of the various cultures they celebrate. All food items distributed at The Lil' School program will adhere to our Nutritional and Allergy Sensitive Policies as described above. In addition, restrictions may apply for homemade (non-commercially or in-program) prepared food items.

Nap, Rest, and Quiet Times (App. C3)

Each child is given the opportunity to rest during the day in a way which is age and developmentally appropriate. Resting the body and mind are vital for the health of children. This may include a nap period, quiet rest time, and/or quiet activity time. Over the course of time in our program, we teach children to self-regulate and understand the needs of their own bodies. They are taught to identify how they are feeling, why they are feeling that way, and what steps may be taken to improve their health as a part of making autonomous sleep and rest decisions on a day-to-day basis. The primary protocol below applies to all groups that nap/rest with supplemental guidelines to follow based upon age/development:

- Young children require ample, quality rest and sleeping times for proper development and health. Nap and rest times are especially important in a nursery and preschool program which is extremely active and routinely engages the children in hands-on learning. For this reason, The Lil' School recognizes that the needs for children at these ages is highly individualized.
- The program will work with families to maintain a nap/rest schedule that best meets the needs of each individual child. The program cannot and will not under any circumstances prevent a child from sleep or rest if the child is tired and requires it. A healthy, uninterrupted duration of sleep/rest time is offered to children based on age/development/need. Any child who wakes earlier than others and/or does not engage in sleep within a reasonable time frame will be offered alternative quiet/restful activities as appropriate.
- While children grow and their needs for sleep/rest change, children are taught to identify their own needs for sleep and rest over time. As they gain an understanding of their own behavioral and physical needs, children are supported in making appropriate decisions for themselves.
- All children sleep alone in commercially approved cribs or foam cots based upon age, development, and need. Children are not permitted to sleep on any other surface or baby appliance such as couches, car seats, strollers, etc. as these are not deemed safe for sleep practices. Any child who falls asleep on an alternative surface or device/appliance will be moved to a crib or cot.
- All children must have their own nap/rest items which are not shared including amongst siblings. Those napping in cribs must have an appropriately sized fitted sheet. Those napping on cots must use an approved, program-specific rolling nap mat with attached blanket/pillow. Use of attachment items are permitted as deemed appropriate/safe by both regulation and program. All nap/rest items are stored in each child's individual storage bag. At the end of each week and additionally as needed, all personal items are sent home to be washed and returned for the next day of attendance.
- As long as ratios and regulation allow, arrangements will be made for napping children to sleep in separate quiet spaces so that the non-napping children may continue their regular activities. Sleeping areas are placed in a manner as to not block egress routes and to ensure children are not at risk of being stepped on by others (such as in a walkway). Children are positioned in such a manner that they are within direct visual supervision by staff and staff can move freely within the area to check on or meet the needs of each child.
- Napping areas are draft free and children are spaced at least 2 ft apart, head to toe (spacing and placement may change based upon current/interim Health and Safety guidelines) to ensure the comfort of each child.
- Children are encouraged to help staff set up their individual nap items as appropriate. Once sleeping areas are set, children may engage in a range of calming activities such as story time, music, and/or yoga to help their bodies self-regulate and their minds transition to a restful status.
- Lighting is adjusted to encourage sleep but should be adequate enough so that all children can be seen. Soft music, white noise, and/or natural lavender essential oil therapy (in accordance with permissions) may be used. Staff members may rub children's backs, read stories, and offer comfort to encourage them to sleep. Staff is not permitted to lie on the floor with napping children.
- Children should be generally allowed to wake up on their own whenever possible. Usually, the natural sounds of the environment waking up will encourage children to rise at their own pace. Should a child need to be woken up, it should be done gently and with awareness of the child's individual needs. Children are

then encouraged to help clean up their nap/rest items either independently or with support as age and developmentally appropriate.

- Alternative sleeping arrangements to those outlined may be approved based solely upon medical/developmental need and may require current written prescription from a Health Care Provider.

Infant & Toddler (Nursery) Groups – Nap Time

- Infants – The sleep needs of infants change as they grow and develop. For this reason, sleep habits (as well as eating needs, diapering needs, etc.) are recorded and regularly updated on the individual child’s daily needs overview sheet by families, caregivers and teachers. Infants sleep in individual commercial cribs. Children under the age of one year will sleep on their back without any loose blankets or personal items for health and safety purposes in accordance with NYS OCFS regulation 418-1.7.
- Toddlers – The sleep needs of toddlers are still highly individualized. Toddlers sleep on individual, non-shared commercial foam sleeping cots with an approved nap mat (if child’s age, development, safety needs, and family’s preference allow/require). At this age children generally have moved to one nap per day, approximately 2 – 2 ½ hours right after lunch time however this may be more or less based on the child’s individual need.

Pre-K Threes Groups- Nap Time

- Generally, the children in our three-year-old group(s) are still napping. At this age children typically take one nap per day, approximately 1½ – 2 hours, however this may be more or less based on the child’s individual need. If it is in the best interest of a child in this age group to not nap, accommodations will be discussed with and agreed upon with the child’s family to ensure their sleep/rest needs are appropriately met. Children will be given an opportunity to nap after lunch time and on an as needed basis. Children are able to finish eating at an appropriate pace before moving on to nap time.
- Preschool children sleep on individual, non-shared commercial foam sleeping cots with an approved nap mat.

Pre-K Fours/Fives Groups- Rest Time

- Generally, the children in our four- and five-year-old groups are no longer napping but do engage in a 20-25 minute rest period. If it is in the best interest of a child in this age group to nap, accommodations will be discussed with and agreed upon with the child’s family to ensure their sleep/rest needs are appropriately met. Children will be given an opportunity to rest after lunch time and on an as needed basis. Children are able to finish eating at an appropriate pace before moving on to rest time.
- The rest period is an independent, calm period with gentle music and lowered lighting which encourages self-regulation. During this time, children may engage in a variety of quiet activities such as art, reading, laying/relaxing, using quiet fine motor toys, puzzles, etc.
- Children are offered independent, comfortable spaces to rest in accordance with their needs, preference, and choice activity. A child engaging in art may choose to sit at a table while a child opting for a puzzle may choose a carpeted area. Options include tables, couches and chairs, carpeted areas, various cushions, laying on nap mats, etc.

School Age Groups- Quiet Time

- Generally, the children in our school age groups are no longer napping or resting but do engage in a short quiet period. Children are encouraged to engage in quiet activities individually to allow for a quiet environment, self-reflection, and self-regulation. If it is in the best interest of a child in this age group to nap or rest, accommodations will be discussed with and agreed upon with the child’s family to ensure their rest needs are appropriately met. Children will be given an opportunity for a quiet period after lunch time and on an as needed basis. Children are able to finish eating at an appropriate pace before moving on to quiet time.

- Children may spread out in different classroom areas to allow for personal space and privacy. During this time, children may engage in a variety of quiet activities such as art, reading, laying/relaxing, using quiet toys, puzzles, etc.

Field Trips and Walking Trips (App. C.4)

Field trips & walking trips into our community are an excellent way to extend learning beyond the classroom and give children hands-on experiences. While these trips are a lot of fun for children, staff, and families it is imperative that certain procedures are followed to assure our safety. In all trips away from the facility the following measures are taken:

- Children may not attend a field trip without a signed permission slip specific to the individual activity. Care will not be available at the program for children who are unable to attend. We strongly suggest to families that their children be allowed to attend our field/walking trips as they are an important aspect of our curriculum and foster group cohesion & inclusion.
- Walking/Field Trips will be designed by not only considering the learning objectives for the trip, but also the individual needs of each child. Meal times, rest periods, and bathroom needs will all be considered with each proposal.
- Each staff member/volunteer duo is assigned a small supervision group which helps children and staff to stay organized and safe.
- At minimum, one staff member on the trip has current CPR/First Aid certification.
- Any trip involving water recreation requires an individual with current lifeguard certification and training (either publicly provided or on staff). In addition, water recreation activities will only take place at state approved public use areas.
- Just as we do throughout the day, the class will maintain with them at all times an Emergency Bag containing such things as attendance/health checks, student information sheets, walking ropes, flashlights, stocked first aid kits, medications, etc.
- At least one staff member is designated and required to bring a cellular phone for emergency use and contacting the center purposes only. If the Director is not in attendance on the trip, staff must check in with the Director upon arrival to their destination and departure to return to the center as well as in any emergency situation.
- Families are encouraged to volunteer for class trips as chaperones.
- Attendance is taken at each location before departure and upon arrival by count and name. In addition, name to face counts are conducted periodically throughout transition between locations to ensure all children are accounted for.

Walking Trips- defined as any venture off facility premises which does not involve the use of motorized transportation. The following procedure applies:

- The program may obtain written permission for enrolled children to go on periodic walking trips within the nearby community which are not destination-based. In these instances, parents/guardians/families will grant perpetual permission for the program to take children on community walks when weather permitting and adhering to all safety guidelines. In such instances, the program will notify families via our messaging app shortly before taking the walking trip and include information about the time of departure and duration of the walk.
- Proposals for interim walking trips should be submitted to the Director at least two weeks in advance. The Director will work with staff to evaluate the feasibility of the trip, associated costs, availability of additional staff to increase supervision, and learning goals associated with the trip.
- Once the plan is approved, families should be notified at least one week ahead of time and given a permission form with detailed information regarding the trip. At minimum this includes each place we

will be going, the timeframes at each location, any special instructions on what to bring/wear, the staff to child ratio, safety protocol if applicable, the submission date for permission slips, and the learning goals associated with the trip.

- Walking ropes will be used to increase supervision and teach children road safety.

Field Trips- defined as any venture off facility premises which does involve the use of motorized transportation.

The following procedure applies:

- Proposals for field trips must be submitted to the Director at least one month in advance- preferably sooner. The Director will work with staff to evaluate the feasibility of the trip, associated costs, availability of additional staff to increase supervision, method of transportation, and learning goals associated with the trip.
- Once the plan is approved, families will be notified at least three weeks ahead of time (if not sooner) and given a permission form with detailed information regarding the trip. This includes each place we will be going, the timeframes at each location, any special instructions on what to bring/wear, method of transportation, which staff members and family volunteers (if applicable) will be in attendance, and the learning goals associated with the trip. Permission forms must be submitted no later than two weeks prior to the trip.
- The program may plan up to (4) field trips per program year. The program will not provide nor orchestrate any transportation in motorized vehicles of any kind. Transportation arrangements are done outside of the program and without the program's liability. In most instances parents/guardians and/or family members which to accompany their children for the duration of the field trip. This type of arrangement is usually preferable for both the families and the program. In the event that this is not an option, parents/guardians/families who give prior notice may choose to drop-off their child to our staff on the premise of the field trip's destination for the duration of the visit, and then pick them up at the end of the programming to provide transportation for their child.

Departure of Children and Families (App. C.5)

Our goal at the end of the child's day is to facilitate a smooth transition from the Program to the care of the parent/guardian/family. Greet families and authorized escorts in a courteous, friendly manner.

- Children remain engaged in various activities until they are prepared to leave.
- Staff help families and children with the transition to home by talking to each parent/guardian/family in a confidential and informative manner about their child's day. Both staff and families are expected to maintain confidentiality at all times, discussing only their own child and doing so in a respectful and private manner. If a sensitive discussion is required (behavior incidents, injuries, concerns, etc.) it will be conducted in a private area away from others.
- Children's work and materials should go home with the child on a routine basis.
- Families will be encouraged to gather their child and their belongings and depart from the Program efficiently in order to protect the safety of all children.
- Parents/guardians and/or authorized caregivers must sign out their child!

Sign Out of Children

Families and authorized pick-up persons must always sign out the child through our digital database and/or our written sign-out sheets if they are leaving with the child. When using our digital system, the parent, guardian, family, and/or authorized pick-up person must use the same PIN and Numerical Password chosen at enrollment to sign the child in/out of the program. Based upon best practice and/or health and safety recommendations the program may periodically be required to maintain paper records of sign-out. In those instances, staff may require pick-up persons to manually sign at departure and/or staff may record pick-up times and names of authorized persons.

In the event child(ren) are not picked up as scheduled, the program will attempt to contact the family. If they are unable to be reached, the program will then reach out to emergency contacts as listed on the child's enrollment forms to secure alternative pick-up. Charges, fees, and protocol for late pick-up are discussed further in the Enrollment, Payment, and Withdrawal Policies section of this handbook as well as The Lil' School Contract Agreement.

This program will work to safeguard the well-being of all children in our program at all times. Transporting a child while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or without using the appropriate vehicle restraint system (car seat, booster, seat belt, etc.) creates an unsafe situation for the child. If it is the determination of program staff that a child cannot be transported safely from the program, we will ask you not to transport the child and will propose appropriate alternatives. These may include but are not limited to calling alternative pick-up persons/emergency contacts to provide transport, continuing to provide care for the child(ren) while awaiting alternative transport, providing reasonable extra time for pick-up persons to retrieve appropriate vehicle restraints, etc. If a pick-up person refuses these alternatives and insists on still transporting their child, the program will immediately call the police and report an unsafe situation. Safety concerns for children will be reported to authorities as appropriate and required.

Pick-Up Procedure

The Lil' School of the Adirondacks puts safety at the forefront of our concerns. For this reason, any of our programs which involve the child being dropped off and the parent/guardian/family leaving the facility (daycare, child care, and drop-off enrichment programs) are subject to the Pick-Up Procedure described below.

It is the policy of the Program to only release children to authorized persons. A list of designated pick-up persons other than the parents/guardians/family listed may be provided at enrollment if any other individuals will routinely pick-up the child. The form also requests families to identify any individuals that *may not* pick-up their child if safety concerns exist. If a court order limits the rights of one of the parents/guardians/family, it is the family's responsibility to immediately supply the program with a copy of the court order. The program reserves the right to remove any person from the authorized pickup list for any reason.

Parents/Guardians/Families will also set an individual pick-up password only known to the program and those who are authorized to pick up the child.

In the event that a person other than those on the approved list must pick up a child, the family of said child must notify the teacher of the person's full legal name prior to pick up. When the alternate pick-up person arrives, he/she must produce a valid driver's license which matches the identity noted by the family. In addition, the individual must also give the "pick-up password" as an added safety measure.

No child will be released to an alternate pick-up person unless all of the above requirements are met.

***Until staff gets to know each child's family and authorized persons, even authorized persons and parents/guardians/families may be required to present photo ID and the password.

Learning Environment

Appendix D

Curriculum (App. D.1)

The Lil' School programming engages children actively in the learning process, provides a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences, and encourages children to pursue their own interests in the

context of life in the community and the world. The program will provide a wide variety and quantity of materials/equipment/experiences appropriate to the ages/development and interests of all children which promote the children's cognitive, educational, social, emotional, cultural, and physical development.

The Lil' School believes that each child should receive individualized care, so we break our groups down to the smallest possible groups and assign teachers as "primary caregivers" of each small group of children. This allows the learning and assessment process to become highly individualized and ensure that the needs of every child are attended to.

It is our program's practice to combine key concepts and methods from The HighScope Curriculum and Handwriting Without Tears in designing hands-on learning opportunities with a balance between teacher-planned activities and child-guided interest studies. Lesson plans are reviewed with the Director at each weekly planning meeting to ensure that activities reflect an understanding of the curriculum, our program philosophy, and regularly address the needs of each child by using observation-based assessment data to inform planning.

In the classroom...

- The Lil' School has written curriculum plans based on knowledge of child development and learning, and assessment of individual needs and interests. The plans leave ample flexibility for children to explore concepts of interest while providing a framework of resources for the teachers to utilize.
- The learning environment and activities for children reflect the program's philosophy and curriculum goals.
- Teachers have clearly defined goals for both the group and individual children that guide curriculum planning.
- Teachers formally document, in writing, children's development relevant to curricular goals, objectives and developmental continuum.
- Teachers identify children who experience difficulties in behavior or development, and develop individual plans for achieving the appropriate milestones.
- Teachers adapt plans in response to the needs, strengths, and interests of the children.
- The program is designed to be inclusive of all children, including children with identified disabilities and special learning and developmental needs.
- Families are involved in the development and use of individual education plans.
- The daily schedule provides a balance of activities in consideration of the child's total daily experience.
- The schedule provides for alternating periods of quiet and active play.
- A balance of large muscle and small muscle activity is provided.
- More than one option for group activity is available to children most of the day.
- A balance of child-initiated and teacher-initiated activity is provided.
- The amount of time spent in teacher-initiated, large –group activity is limited.
- Media (TV/Video)/Screen Use: For Infant and Toddler children (under age 3 years), no screen use will be permitted at any time. For Preschool and School Age children, the use of passive media such as television, films, and videotapes, tablets, etc. is extremely limited. Only developmentally appropriate programming that has been previewed by staff and pre-approved by the Director may be used. To be approved, the media must have the sole purpose of enhancing a planned learning concept that could not otherwise be delivered adequately through an alternative method. In addition:
 - Media must be of high quality and either educational or movement-based programming
 - Must be free from commercials
 - Use may not exceed 30 minutes total within a one-week period
 - Another option for activity is always available
 - No child is required to view the program
 - Teachers discuss what is viewed to develop critical viewing skills

- Should be used infrequently, not as part of a regular, daily routine. TV/Video media will not be used at any point during meal or rest/nap times.
- Teachers provide a variety of developmentally appropriate activities, experiences, and materials that are selected to engage children in active meaningful learning.

In the Warm-up Room, Gym, and Outside...

- The Lil’ School incorporates a movement curriculum which coordinates the concepts being learned in the classroom with large-motor applications of those concepts.
- Children have time each day in a large, open, indoor space to engage in gross motor learning with a variety of materials.
- Structured and unplanned activities range from learning elementary sports skills (soccer, football, gymnastics, etc.), tumbling, basic gymnastics, music (with instruments, rhythm sticks, etc.), finger plays, sing-a-longs, skits, and a range of movement materials including bean bags, scarves, hoops, and more!
- The daily schedule provides for all age groups to play outdoors. At minimum, this includes two outings per day and represents one third of the total time spent in the program as long as conditions protect children’s health and safety in accordance with the Child Care Weather Watch Chart.
- Children must be dressed appropriately for the weather conditions during outdoor activities. This includes heavier and waterproof clothing during cold/wet times of year as well as lighter clothing, hats, sunglasses, and sunblock, etc. during warmer times of year. Parents/guardians/families are responsible for providing appropriate attire and protection each day.
- The outdoor environment is safe, clean, attractive, and spacious. It provides opportunity for a variety of motor, creative, and sensory exploration.
- We adhere to guidelines for playground equipment and provide resilient surfaces for all climbing playground equipment. Play equipment is constructed and installed in such a manner as required by manufacturer guidelines for use by children.

In the Community...

- The Lil’ School emphasizes the importance of raising thoughtful, compassionate community members. With this philosophy in mind, we have included a service component in our teaching practices.
- Each month the class will decide together upon a community service task to complete. Service activities that are chosen are safe and age-appropriate for the children in the group. Activities may include baking cookies for a local retirement home, making valentines for local vets, helping to plant a community garden, volunteering for community events, and more! During times of limited exposure and contact, alternatives are arranged such as digital concerts and cardmaking.

Curriculum Framework

How We Teach

In a HighScope program, teachers ignite children’s interest in learning by creating an environment that encourages them to explore learning materials and interact with adults and peers. We focus on supporting early learners as they make decisions, build academic skills, develop socially and emotionally, and become part of a classroom community.

Active learning is at the center of the HighScope Curriculum. It’s the foundation of young children gaining knowledge through their natural play and interactions with the environment, events, and other people.



Adult-Child Interaction

Teachers act as partners, working alongside children and communicating with them both verbally and nonverbally to encourage learning. Key strategies for adult-child interactions are sharing control with children, communicating as a partner with children, scaffolding children’s play, using encouragement instead of praise, and taking a problem-solving approach to supporting children in resolving conflicts.

Learning Environment

To create a predictable and active learning environment, teachers arrange and equip the classroom with diverse, open-ended materials that reflect children’s home, culture, and language. The room is organized and labeled to promote independence and encourage children to carry out their intentions.

Daily Routine and Schedules

A consistent framework for the day provides a balanced variety of experiences and learning opportunities. Children engage in both individual and social play, participate in small- and large-group activities, assist with cleanup, socialize during meals, develop self-care skills, and exercise their small and large muscles. The most important segment of the daily routine is the plan-do-review sequence, in which children make decisions about what they will do, carry out their ideas, and reflect upon their activities with adults and other children. These higher-level thinking skills are linked to the development of executive functions, which are needed to be successful in school and life.

Assessment

Ongoing child assessment is also an underlying component of the HighScope Curriculum. Objective anecdotal observations of children collected throughout children’s natural play allow teachers to assess child progress and plan meaningful learning experiences.

What We Teach

The HighScope Curriculum is based on more than 50 years of research on early childhood development and has been validated by direct evaluation of the curriculum. Our framework for understanding and supporting

children’s learning from ages birth through 5 years is based on key developmental indicators (KDIs), which are aligned with national and state early learning standards, Common Core State Standards, and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

In the HighScope Curriculum, learning is focused on the following content areas:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Health
- Language, Literacy, and Communication
- Cognitive Development:
 - Mathematics
 - Science and Technology
 - Social Studies
- Creative Arts

Curriculum Content

Learning in these content areas is guided by 58 key developmental indicators (KDIs) for Preschool children and 42 key developmental indicators (KDIs) for Infant/Toddler children. Each KDI identifies an important learning goal for young children. We recognize that the normal pace of children’s development and learning varies widely across these eight categories and the KDIs reflect that continuum of widely held expectations. Our curriculum is designed to help teachers appropriately scaffold learning for every child across all areas.

The HighScope key developmental indicators

- Provide teachers with a child development “filter” for observing and choosing appropriate interactions and activities
- Help teachers interpret what young children say and do along a developmental continuum
- Enable teachers to maintain reasonable expectations for young children
- Reinforce children’s play as the primary mechanism for learning
- Allow teachers to be more knowledgeable and intentional in their daily planning for individual children and the class

Diversity

Teachers treat children of all genders, abilities, races, religions, family background and cultures with equal respect and consideration. Our program will not discriminate against nor refuse to admit a child because of developmental delay or disability, HIV/AIDS status, gender/identity, health, age, race, national origin, sexual orientation, or public assistance status. Each child will be evaluated by the program to determine whether the child could be accommodated in the program if reasonable modifications are made to the premises/program without incurring significant expenses.

We provide all children with equal opportunities to take part in all activities. Teachers make it a firm rule that a person’s identity (age, race, ethnicity, language, disability, etc.) is never an acceptable reason for teasing or rejecting. We initiate activities and discussions to build positive self-identity in each child and also teach the value of differences. Teachers talk positively about each child’s uniqueness including physical characteristics, ability, cultural heritage and others.

In addition, teachers will:

- Build a sense of the group as a community, bringing each child’s home culture and language into the shared culture of the Program so each child feels accepted and gains a sense of belonging.

- Greet children in their home language(s) and incorporate home language into the daily program activities.
- Provide books, dolls, puzzles, materials, images, and experiences that reflect diverse cultures that children may not likely see, as well as those that represent their family life and cultural group.
- Cook and serve foods from children's various contemporary cultures.
- Display photos of children and their families.
- Invite families' participation in all aspects of the program.
- Infuse all curriculum topics with diverse cultural perspectives.

Learning Center Descriptions (App. D.2)

Free play is a period of time when a child chooses from a wide variety of games, toys, puzzles or gross motor activities. Children gain a newfound sense of independence through mobility, and this freedom of choice allows them to further exercise this skill. Games, toys, books, puzzles and other materials are specifically selected to meet the child's development needs. Children have access to uninterrupted free play opportunities for a substantial portion of each day across multiple time periods.

Freedom of movement is a foundational philosophy for development at The Lil' School. Every day, children of all ages are immersed within thoughtfully planned learning environments which promote and encourage independent exploration and mastery. Freedom of movement allows children to connect concepts to action and to learn through trial and error through the natural developmental progression of hands-on learning. Liberal physical and explorative experiences provide the child with balanced proprioceptive, vestibular, sensory, and motor input which are vital to the development of the whole child.

For this reason, there are intentionally no restrictive furniture, barriers, or "containers" in our program so as to not interfere with naturally paced motor development. Alternatively, children of all ages are actively encouraged to freely explore their learning environments including in the classroom, movement room/gym, and outdoor play spaces. Support and supervision from staff are aligned to what is developmentally appropriate and required for the ages and abilities of each individual child to ensure safety while fostering optimal growth. This includes our infants, both mobile and not yet mobile, who also benefit from regular, ample supervised movement opportunities on their stomachs during their awake/alert times in each of our indoor and outdoor environments.

Classrooms are arranged in a specific way to encourage thoughtful, uninterrupted play in which children can reach new milestones. We arrange the classrooms to correspond with both EC/IT Environmental Rating Scales to ensure sufficient materials and quality learning space are provided. Accommodations may be made subject to current New York State Department of Health and Office of Child and Family Services guidelines. Each area of the classroom is called a "learning center" and generally includes the following:

Quiet Area:

This area is established in a quiet carpeted corner of the room where children can do quiet activities without interruption. Materials may include soft pillows and blankets, plush toys, a felt storyboard, independent reading nooks, and a variety of books. Books and other literature for varying abilities are available for children to look at and manipulate. Many contain simple story lines that adults can read to children. Books and storyboards are great language facilitators and a wonderful way to introduce children to the joy that can be found through reading. The quiet area gives children opportunity to learn self-regulation and vary between active and quiet play.

Writing Center:

Writing materials are always available to encourage children to develop fine motor skills necessary for the eventual development of writing skills. In addition, materials such as crayons, pencils, chalk, etc. provide an open-ended activity that fosters expressions of creativity. As children advance in **preschool** years there is more independent use of materials such as pencils, pens, markers, stamps and stamp pads. Often you will find writing materials throughout the other centers to promote literacy exposure in other activities (such as “tabs” to take restaurant orders in the kitchen, graphing paper to draw “blueprints” in the block area, and others).

Manipulative (Math and Science):

The manipulative area is generally set up in a quiet area of the classroom where children can work either independently or in small groups. This area promotes fine motor development and skills such as grip, pincer grasp, hand eye coordination, and small muscle control. Fundamental scientific and mathematic skills are also promoted in this open-inquiry center. Materials may include puzzles, pegboard games, stringing beads, patterning activities, interlocking blocks, and so forth. Specialized interactive displays are also routinely interchanged in this area to expose children to materials relating to scientific and mathematical phenomenon (such as sink/float exercises, magnets, and others). These activities encourage the child's development of problem-solving techniques along with knowledge about how objects relate to each other.

Block Area:

The weight and feel of blocks make them an inviting manipulative for children and create an opportunity for exploration and learning. The role of a teacher in the block center is to be a facilitator. A teacher can use open-ended questions like, “Tell me about what you’re building?” He/she can place pictures of buildings, interesting architecture, space ships, farms, etc. in the block center to inspire children to explore various types of structural concepts. Math concepts such as sorting, classifying, counting, and measuring can be capitalized in the block center with questions like: “How many small rectangles long is the long rectangle?” or “What can we use to measure the height of your building?” Science concepts such as physics and gravity can also be explored in the block center. Questions that challenge children to think and explore like “How will the cars get out of the garage?” will encourage children to come up with a ramp. After the ramp is built a teacher can ask, “How can you make the cars go faster/slower?” From these simple questions, children begin to make predictions that can be recorded and they can experiment as they acquire knowledge.

Dramatic Play Area:

For many classrooms, this area resembles a house with a kitchen, baby care, tool bench, and grocery store. It has familiar household items that children can use to imitate activities they see in their own house. This encourages children to practice familiar activities such as cooking, sweeping and talking on the telephone. Imitation is an important part of their social, emotional and physical development. Adults can use this time effectively to facilitate language about what the child is doing. This helps the child to put words to actions and therefore encourage language and social development. As children advance in their development, they progress through various types of social play (parallel, cooperative, etc.).

Music Corner:

Musical instruments, records, CD’s and tape players are available for independent and group use. Music helps children to begin to develop a sense of rhythm through dancing, swaying and clapping. However, music can also become a part of every activity, and caregivers are encouraged to sing to children many times during the day.

Art Center:

In the art area our goal is to foster creativity. The desire for self-expression gives children the incentive to use tools, which increase small motor skills and refine hand-eye coordination. Through experimentation children make discoveries about cause and effect as well as becoming familiar with colors, shape and textures. This is another area where language is used to describe actions, textures and characteristics and

allows children to be creative. Art materials are visible and accessible and children are free to choose from materials such as: paint, clay, play dough, markers, crayons, glue, glitter, yarn, fabric, and any other treasures they may want to incorporate in their work. Each art media can be used in a variety of ways. Children are exposed to a wide range of experiences, which in turn inspire the creative process. Children take pride in their accomplishments and express their uniqueness through their work. Art activities are open ended with emphasis placed on the process rather than the product. Child-made artwork is displayed proudly at eye level both in the classroom and throughout the facility to encourage ownership of the program and pride in one's work.

Sensory Table:

This area allows children to experience a large variety of textures such as water, sand, dirt, rice, oatmeal, beans, and more. Objects such as funnels, measuring cups, bowls, and cylinders enable children to experiment with pouring, dumping and scooping. This encourages fine motor skill development along with increasing their knowledge about various textures/materials and the characteristics of these objects.

****Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water play does not spread contagious illness or disease. Used water is exchanged for fresh water regularly and toys/surfaces are sanitized. Ill children are not permitted to participate in communal water/sensory play activities. During times of limited contact, water play activities are done independently.*

Special Activities:

Special Activities include cooking, woodworking, science experiments, and other experiences in which the child can actively participate. Such exercises enable children to observe cause and affect relationships and to see how things are made. These special activities provide children with an additional learning experience through manipulation of materials. Community service activities- done each month- fall under this category and may include a variety of opportunities for hands-on learning. Age appropriate off-premise school trips are also planned to enrich learning.

Mirrors, Photographs, and Displays:

Mirrors are wonderful objects children use to learn about themselves. This helps to encourage self-identity and increase self-esteem. Pictures of each child and their families are hung low on classroom walls to encourage ownership of the classroom, feeling of belonging, and appreciation for our unique cultural differences. Other simple wall displays may be hung in learning centers to inspire play (such as pictures of buildings in the block center, a window in the dramatic play area, etc.).

Movement, Gym(s), Gross Motor and Outdoor Play Areas:

Since children are still practicing many newfound physical skills, gross motor and large muscle area development are an essential part of the Lil' School program. These experiences teach children to learn, share, cooperate and negotiate through a variety of play activities, allowing for success and encouraging advancement in all areas of development. Our program supports ample free movement opportunities to engage in gross motor skills development and exploration both inside and out across all classrooms, movement spaces, gyms, and playgrounds. In addition, we offer a comprehensive, well-planned movement, tumbling, sports and physical education experience. This balanced combination of both planned and free choice experiences throughout each day allow children to develop their optimum fundamental motor skills. These areas provide children with opportunities to aid in mastery over gross motor skills and coordination.

In addition to varied play/learning centers, the Infant/Toddler (Nursery) classroom also offers a large, dedicated gross motor space for children under three years to practice a range of gross motor skills. This space is accessible to infant and toddler aged children as a free choice at all times throughout the day and is also supplemented with planned activities from teachers. When indoors, Preschool and School Age children rotate into gross motor spaces such as the movement room and gym for both planned and free choice activities while the classroom ensures additional regular accessibility to movement and music materials (such as scarves, rhythm sticks, bean bags, instruments, etc.).

All children in all age groups spend a substantial amount of time outdoors- including on our playgrounds, fields, and walking trips. At minimum, this includes two outings per day and represents one third of the total time spent in the program. Teachers regularly bring materials outside with them and promote intentional opportunities for learning- creating an “outdoor classroom”.

Screening, Assessment, and Goal Setting (App. D.3)

The Lil’ School maintains that all young children, including those from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and ability backgrounds have the right to benefit from screenings, assessments, and goal setting. Our program will make every reasonable effort to acquire training and support as well as providing various appropriate accommodations to ensure that these processes are conducted in a linguistically and culturally responsive manner (i.e., that is informed by children’s specific cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and ability groups). While adhering to all confidentiality laws, these efforts may include collaborating with service providers, obtaining community support/training, accessing language/translation services and support, maintaining current knowledge/training regarding education of English Language Learning (ELL), and others. In all instances, the program will work closely with families to ensure equitable accessibility to all screening, assessment, and goals setting for their child(ren).

Screening:

In order to support children, families, and staff in the transition to attending the program, The Lil’ School collects information on child’s development upon enrollment. This intake information is used to inform curriculum planning, help guide the child’s learning, gather information on special needs, learn child’s preferences, and understand family circumstances from day one.

The Lil’ School strongly believes that the first step toward a strong partnership between families and school in providing high quality education is to involve families in the screening process. For this reason, the program utilizes the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) which is a research-based, family-centric screening tool which pinpoints developmental progress in children between the ages of 1 month to 5 ½ years.

Prior to enrollment, each family will be provided an ASQ screening tool to complete based on their knowledge of their child. Support can be provided to the families as needed in understanding and completing the tool. Within the initial 30-day enrollment period, the child’s primary teacher will also complete the tool based on their observations of the child’s development within the classroom setting. The families and staff are encouraged to meet to discuss the outcomes of the questionnaires. The two completed screening tools can then help both parents/guardians/families and teaching staff in identifying any potential indicators for further evaluation. They will also serve as a base-line understanding of the child’s initial, basic developmental levels.

Assessment and Goal Setting:

It is the goal of The Lil’ School to provide a quality program and ensure that children are developing in an age-appropriate manner. To do this, our program utilizes the HighScope COR Advantage Child Observation Record assessment system. Children are assessed across the four developmental domains: social/emotional, language development, cognitive development and physical development which account for 58 Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) of developmental milestones. Ongoing observations and work sampling are consistently collected to gauge individual and group development over time.

Informal ongoing assessment by teachers is conducted every day as they record the milestones attained through routine activity. Data collection includes a variety of methods to assess each child including but not limited to photographs, work samples, family input and anecdotal observations. These daily observations are then recorded in that specific child’s digital portfolio via the HighScope COR Advantage app presented on the Kaymbu platform. Most of those observations that supply the assessment data are actually part of that child’s

daily posts which are shared with families through the app. Each individual child is assessed over the course of four, quarterly observation periods each year (these periods are noted on the annual program calendar). In addition to receiving daily/weekly updates about the development of their children, teaching staff and the Director additionally conduct family-teacher conferences with each family at least twice per year and additionally on an as needed basis. Individual descriptions of children's development and learning are written and compiled as a basis for planning appropriate learning activities, facilitating optimal development of each child, identifying children who may be in need of more systematic diagnosis of a learning or developmental need, and for ongoing goal setting.

Each child's digital portfolio and assessment tracking data are only accessible to that child's teacher(s), the Director and/or Assistance Director, and designated parents/guardians (or appropriate foster parents/family members if applicable) as approved on the child's current enrollment paperwork to ensure confidentiality. Assessment information is protected and only available to those who are required to know the information in accordance with confidentiality laws and ethics.

The program additionally uses aggregated assessment results to inform program practice. Each week, the HighScope COR Assessment app is used to run a classroom overview report which tabulates and averages across all of the children's assessment data. This report is used to identify program strengths as well as opportunities for improving/adapting the learning environment, planned learning opportunities, and supports for children and their families. In this manner, aggregated data can provide specific information that guides programming over time while best meeting the developmental needs of the children.

Program Assessment and Goal Setting:

It is the practice of The Lil' School to not only assess and plan for child learning, but also to ensure quality programming. We believe that in order for our program to remain effective and continue to grow, we must continually assess each aspect of our program. The Lil' School utilizes the HighScope Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) at least annually to assess our ability to meet program goals, reflect upon our programming, and plan for an even better program as we move forward. Additional information is gathered from enrolled families at the end of each program year through use of The Lil' School Family Opinion Survey to help evaluate how effective our programming is for current families and children.

Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs are integrated within the childcare setting to promote education in the least restrictive environment.

Steps Prior to Enrollment of Special Needs Students

- Integration shall be assisted by the preparation of children without disabilities, families, and staff to facilitate having the children with special needs participate.
- A written multidisciplinary evaluation of the child and family shall be conducted prior to the child's attendance at the facility. This evaluation is conducted by the school district's CPSE (Committee on Preschool Special Education), Early Intervention through the Department of Health, or a private outside agency. This evaluation shall consist of a minimum of results of:
 - Medical and development examinations
 - Assessments of the cognitive functioning and/or
 - Assessment of the child's overall functioning
 - Evaluations of the family's needs, concerns and priorities
 - Any other evaluations that were deemed necessary

- The family assessment and subsequent discussions shall focus only on those aspects of family functioning that are relevant to the provision of services to the child and that optimize the child's development.
- The Director or designee is responsible for coordinating care in the facility and with any caregiver or service provider as written in the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- The Director, family, health care providers, and other specialists must work together to determine if the program meets the needs of the child so as to ensure the best possible care of all children in the program.

Staff Training

The Director shall ensure that staff has been oriented in understanding children with special needs and in ways of working with these children in group settings. Orientation training may include, but is not limited to:

- How different conditions affect the child's ability to participate in certain group activities and how to accommodate the child in those activities.
- Methods of helping the child with special needs to participate in the facility's programs, behavior modification techniques, positive rewards for children and promotion of self-esteem
- Intervention for children with special health care challenges

Access to the Facility

The Lil' School shall be accessible to children who use wheelchairs and for other children with several motor disabilities. Accessibility includes access to buildings, toilets, sinks, and all classroom and therapy areas. Special provisions shall also be made, as needed, for the child with health, vision or hearing impairments.

The Director or designee will ensure that there is an available space for the provision of individual therapies to the best of the program's ability.

Program

Providers of special services who come into the facility to give intervention to a child must also communicate at each visit with the lead teacher of the classroom and/or the Director. Such discussion shall be documented in the child's written record. The special needs child shall follow any and all of the classrooms daily activities with modifications made only to better ensure the child's participation in the class program. Wherever and whenever possible, the child's "team" shall meet to review the child's educational plan. The team shall include, but not be limited to the:

- Teacher
- Classroom teaching staff
- Director or designee
- Parents/Guardians/Families
- Related service providers (speech, occupational, and physical therapists, psychologists and social workers).

Discharge/Transfer

Prior to discharge or transfer from the facility, the designated care coordinator shall collect and review the child's records. The team shall review and summarize the progress the child has made and make recommendations in a written plan for the future.

The transition plan shall include the following components:

- Review and final preparation of the child's records
- A child and family needs assessment
- Identification of potential childcare, educational or programmatic arrangements
- Plan timetables for selection of the future care providers

- Identification of the next care or service arrangement
- Transition responsibilities and timelines for the family, the sending agency and the receiving agency

Behavior Prevention, Management, and Responsive Planning (App. D.4)

Our program focuses on preventative behavioral strategies and regularly engages in opportunities which teach children self-regulation while building confidence through positive decision making. Teachers regularly model positive behaviors and encourage children to do the same. Potential behavioral issues are often prevented by providing clear, comprehensible ground rules for the classroom. In addition, we guide children in identifying/expressing their emotions in a healthy way as well as teaching social-emotional skills through both planned and opportunistic learning experiences.

Responsive techniques for behavior management are respectful, direct, and appropriate for the children’s development/understanding. Approaches may include but are not limited to close supervision, gentle guidance, natural consequences, and redirection. When incidents occur, teachers engage the children in conversations regarding the ramifications of their actions for themselves and others in order to teach empathy. Direction is provided in a way which is respectful to all children and appropriate for their developmental level.

In the event of ongoing behaviors and/or behaviors which are outside of those typically expected based upon a child’s age/development, a specific protocol will be followed to address these concerns in consultation with the support team (including staff, the director, and family of the child). A child’s behavioral support plan may include but is not limited to behavioral tracking, initial/ongoing meetings with the support team, intervention techniques for identified behaviors, preventative measures, additional supervision/observation as appropriate and feasible, and referral for behavioral/developmental support.

Classroom Management Techniques:

With the above philosophy in mind, we practice many classroom management techniques which serve as positive preventive and re-directive strategies within the classroom. These strategies include but are not limited to:

- ❖ “Space to Learn”- The classroom and center arrangement is designed according to EC/IT Environmental Rating Scale centers in order to provide plentiful space and materials for each child. The use of these scales in organizing learning spaces prevents many types of common conflicts among young children. This includes a number of quiet, private areas where children can play independently and away from groups of children when needed.
- ❖ “Sliding Scale of Emotions”- Our curricular practices routinely engage children in identifying not only the basic emotions, but a wide range of each type of emotion (such as instead of simply “angry”, we also teach “bothered”, “annoyed”, and “frustrated”). By teaching children that each emotion has a range of feeling, they are better able to gauge the level of their own emotions, communicate them clearly, and react appropriately.
- ❖ “Get Some Space”- As a part of teaching our sliding scale of emotions, we help children not only to identify how they are feeling, but to pursue the best solution(s) for working through that emotion. Children are encouraged to feel and helped to understand what they need when they are ready. Occasionally this means that the child is not yet ready to work through a situation. It is important that the child understands that this is ok, and given time to self-regulate before engaging in conflict resolution. This is how such an instance may look:
 - Child is stomping feet angrily suddenly during play. Teacher approaches child and tries to ask the child what happened, but she is having difficulty explaining why she is upset. The teacher may say such things as “I noticed that you are feeling very frustrated right

now. Would you like to pause the problem for a minute and get some space?”. The child agrees and the teacher helps the child to choose a quiet area to sit and rest, possibly with calming materials such as stuffed toys, a soft couch, a book, etc.

- The teacher offers to stay with the child or give him/her alone time (it is the choice of the child) and ensures that the other child(ren) involved are given the same support as well. The teacher continues to check back in with the children who are then able to identify when they are ready to try again. Together, the teacher(s) and child(ren) resume where they left off and take turns discussing the situation until resolution is reached.

NOTE- this is not “time out”. The child is always involved in the process as it is designed to encourage self-regulation and emotional growth.

- ❖ “Natural Consequences” Concept- It is the belief of The Lil’ School that children must learn that their actions have naturally occurring consequences. A large part of this concept is how we teach our children that there can be social and emotional consequences for themselves and their peers. When children engage in conflict interactions, each child has an emotional stake in the situation and the relationship between the children is being tested. It is important that our staff supports each individual child emotionally during these occurrences not only for the purpose of the situation itself but also for developing and strengthening the relationship between the two children. Children are taught about social and emotional consequences of actions such as:
 - “If I push my friend, he will not want to play with me anymore.”
 - “If I do not share, I will have to play by myself because my friends will not be able to play with me.”
 - “When I act angry, I need to take time to calm down so it doesn’t upset my friends too.”
 - “When I yell, my friend cries and wants to be alone.”
 - “If I run in the classroom I will fall instead of getting there faster.”
- ❖ “Talk it Out” Technique- Children are taught a variety of problem solving skills that are expanded and added to over the course of time within our program. Solutions may include “share”, “take turns”, “use a timer”, “play separately”, etc. These techniques are taught through actual conflict occurrences, role playing exercises, group sharing, and other naturally occurring times. Each of these solution techniques is then represented in print and through illustration on simple to understand “solution cards”. The solution cards and other relevant materials (timers, books about conflicts, etc.) are kept at a child-accessible center deemed the “Talk-It-Out Table” where children can privately engage in problem solving together in a quiet area of the classroom. The staff review these solution cards and materials with the children regularly and encourage them to use the techniques indicated during conflict interactions. As the children develop their conflict resolution skills, teacher-support is slowly reduced and children are encouraged to engage in the process more independently.
- ❖ “Pattern Breaking” Classroom Management- Pattern breaking is a redirection technique that utilizes music and movement to capture the attention of the children in a positive, effective way. It can be used to control classroom volume, re-engage children in effective play, redirect problem behaviors, and more. This management technique takes many forms which may include:
 - “Echoing”- Children are very effective at modeling behavior, especially those which involve music and movement. During times of increasing volume or difficulty concentrating, it is much more effective to capture the attention of the children by:
 - Creating a rhythm pattern through clapping, stomping, etc.
 - Chanting a song with repetitive verses until all join in.
 - Singing the volume which you would like their voices and encouraging them to match not only volume but pitch.
 - Use a short direction following song combined with movement that engages the children.

- “Positive Reinforcement”- Many behaviors in young children relate to seeking the attention of others (whether it be teachers or even other children). Often the group can be best managed by providing positive feedback to the children who are demonstrating the behaviors you would like to see from those who are not:
 - “Johnny is sitting criss-cross-applesauce so I know he’s ready to go outside!”
 - “I noticed that Amanda and Jamie are talking quietly so that it isn’t too loud at the table. Thank you!”
 - “Wow, Fred! You matched all of those toys to the correct bins without any help or reminders!”

Staff is **never** to:

- Hit, shake, pinch, or use any other form of physical or corporal punishment
- Use disrespectful, abusive, or profane language of any kind
- Ridicule, humiliate or frighten a child
- Use any form of emotional or social punishment
- Withhold opportunities for food, rest, sleep, toileting, or any other bodily need.
- Physically intervene UNLESS- the physical removal of a child from a situation is required to prevent the harm of that child or others; in such cases the intervention should be done in a gentle, reassuring manner. Director and parents/guardians/family must be informed of such situations and an Incident Report must be filed.

Continuity of Care

The Lil’ School of the Adirondacks deeply values and respects the foundational relationships and experiences of children throughout their development. For this reason, our program promotes continuity of care for all children at all ages consistent with regulatory and research-based best practice standards.

Continuity of Care is concerned with quality of care over time while supporting primary relationships. The environments children encounter, the relationships they form, and the activities they engage in are key to healthy and positive growth, development, and learning outcomes that can last a lifetime. The excerpt referenced below from the National Association for the Education of Young Children summarizes how research has found multiple benefits for children, families, and caregiving staff when continuity of care is implemented successfully, including:

- Caregivers/teachers develop a deeper knowledge of each individual child and family, facilitating individualized care.
- Continuity models promote responsive caregiving.
- Children make smoother, steadier developmental progress which is more accurately/effectively documented and supported by consistent primary caregivers/teachers.
- Facilitates secure attachments for children.
- Children have the opportunity to both learn from older peers as well as modeling skills for younger peers within the setting; developing prosocial behaviors within the group environment.
- Strengthens family-caregiver/teacher partnerships as strong, lasting relationships are promoted.
- Empowers families by supporting them in becoming strong advocates for their children.
- Families, children, and caregivers/teachers have decreased stress and a more positive experience within the program because they do not undergo multiple transitions and the associated frequent breaking/reforming of relationships.
- Eases future transitions for children, families, and caregivers/staff.

At The Lil’ School, continuity of care takes the following forms for each age group:

- **Infant/Toddler Nursery:** This group serves children ages birth through three (3) years within a mixed age group setting. The group is further broken down into primary caregiving cohorts which are assigned to a specific caregiver/teacher to promote foundational relationships, though children become familiar with each staff within the classroom.
- **Preschool:** This group serves children ages three (3) through (5) years with a daily schedule rotation that accounts for large group time within the mixed age group setting as well as working in smaller groups of same aged peers to promote development. Children in each of three groups (Pre-K 3, Pre-K 4, and Pre-K 5) are assigned primary caregivers/teachers, however they become familiar with each of the assigned preschool aged teachers in the groups on a daily basis during large group periods.
- **School Age:** This group serves ages five (5) years through twelve (12) years in a mixed age group setting before school, after school, and as a camp during school breaks. Children remain with their primary caregivers/teachers through transitions between grades and scheduled school breaks.

In addition to the above, The Lil' School implements many strategies to support children as they transition in to the program, between groups, and out of the program. These techniques are further described in the following "Transitions" section within this handbook.

Transitions

Secure attachment is vital to the growth and development of children at all ages and is intentionally supported and respected by our program. The structure of our program and transitional plans are sensitive to the individual needs of each child and family to ensure that separation is handled in a manner that is responsive and respectful of healthy attachment. The program should always be seen as a partner to families in transitioning their children to the program, within the program, and upon leaving the program. Staff receive training on separation and attachment in order to support families in promoting attachment and healthy separation practices. In addition, the program maintains resources regarding transitions, separation, and attachment both in our family resource center as well as the ability to provide them digitally. All plans for transition will be developed with the families of the children in advance with adjustments communicated throughout as necessary.

New Enrollment

The Lil' School is committed to making each child feel as comfortable as possible in our program at every age and within each of our various programs. Children need time to adjust to new situations and people; making the transition into our Program a very important part of their overall experience.

When a child is enrolled into the Program, the family and child will be invited to spend some time together with the caregivers, the peers and the daily classroom activities. Families and children may come to visit for one or more hours on several occasions before the family and teachers jointly decide that the child is ready to spend time in the classroom without the family. This is usually determined by the child's age, personality and previous experiences with other caregivers. Some children require several visits with the family before feeling comfortable about being in a new setting. Some children are ready to venture into the environment alone after one visit. Each child is an individual and transitions into the Program will be handled in an individualized manner. Visits are subject to current New York State Department of Health and Office of Child and Family Services guidelines. Public Health Emergencies (such as COVID-19) may require state/federal implementation of restrictions.

Transitions within the Program

Transitions are also important as children move from one age group to another within the Program. When it is determined that a child is almost ready to move into the next age group due to their age and developmental level, he/she will begin to visit the new group at various times of the day. These visits will usually be one or two hours at a time and special attention will be given to how the child reacts to their new setting. Again, some

children adjust more quickly than others and some need more time for transition. The length of these visits will gradually increase so that after two to four weeks, the child will feel comfortable about being in the new classroom interacting with people and participating in new activities.

These transitions are an important part of our philosophy of providing nurturing and quality care for children. One of the most important things to remember is that each child is an individual and the transition into a new classroom will be handled in a way which is sensitive to the individual child's needs.

Transitions Out of the Program

Just as transitions into the program are imperative, so are transitions out of the Program. Whether children are aging out of the program, moving away, or going to a different program, the transition from a regular schedule and group can be difficult. Children may feel anxious about the unknown and may need time to adjust. To the child, he/she is leaving somewhere safe and happy to a place that may not be. It is also a big transition for the child's peers within the class who have formed bonds and relationships with the child. It is very important that the transition away from the program is supportive of not only the child who is moving on, but also the children who are remaining.

The most important part of ensuring that moving on is a positive experience is planning. Once a family knows that their child will not be continuing with the program, they are responsible for informing the program and becoming a part of the transitional plan. In receiving proper notice, the program staff will help the family in setting an official "last day" and devise strategies for helping all of the children transition. This may involve reading books about the topic, celebrating the child's final time with the program, and making plans for maintaining relationships such as through sending letters and pictures. Some transitions, such as the movement to kindergarten, allow for shared programming between our program and the district and/or private schools. In these instances, the program facilitates visits to the new school(s) the child will be attending and participates in programming developed by the schools to help children transition. The program provides families with resources and information relevant to the transition to kindergarten as well as helping to facilitate their communication with the school their child will be attending.

As appropriate and with proper written consent from the parents/guardians/families, the family can request that the program release information about the child that may assist in the transition of the child. This may include but is not limited to academic records, screenings and assessments, and any progress/behavior plans that may be in place for the child. This type of information can help a new school/program setting acquire more initial information about the individual child prior to their start.

The program will make every effort to help the children not only accept the changes ahead, but also to become excited about the prospects of their next steps!

Health and Safety

Appendix E

*The Lil' School maintains licensure by NYS Office of Child and Family Services and ensures health and safety of all children as outlined in the NYS OCFS Child Day Care Center Regulations (Part 418-1). Supplemental health and safety procedures/protocols may be periodically released to address interim and emergency health/environmental issues should they arise. Guidelines would align with those set forth by the state/federal agencies for which our program falls within jurisdiction. Such guidance would supersede any

previous applicable procedures/protocol and remain instated until revoked/replaced in written notification from our program to our enrolled families.

Health and Safety Procedures Throughout the Day (App. E.2)

Hand Washing Procedure

Regular, proper handwashing and hygiene are pertinent to health, safety, and infection control measures. The full procedure for handwashing can be found on Appendix B: Hand Washing of the Health Care Plan.

Handwashing procedures are posted in each classroom and bathroom near the hand washing sinks.

Children will wash their hands in accordance with the noted procedure at the appropriate times, which include but are not limited to:

On arrival for the day, after diapering or using the toilet, before/after meals and snack, before/after serving food, after playing in water/sensory materials, after handling pets and other animals, upon arrival to the classroom from visiting another area of the program, after outdoor play, and after contact with any potentially infectious materials including bodily fluids and nose blowing.

Specifically, staff and volunteers also must wash their hands:

Before/After serving meals and snacks, before/after feeding a child, before/after administering medication, after assisting a child with toileting or diapering, after contact with any potentially infectious materials including bodily fluids and nose blowing, after handling garbage or cleaning, and whenever soiled

Diapering Procedure

Diapers will be changed at least every two hours and on an as needed basis. Diapering is handled in a relaxed, reassuring, and individualized manner based on developmental needs of the child. Teachers plan with families to make diapering a safe, trusting experience for children and create a positive atmosphere through conversation, routine, and respectful caregiving. The full procedure for diapering can be found on Appendix C: Diapering of the Health Care Plan.

Toileting Routines

Routines such as toileting are handled in a respectful, relaxed, reassuring, and individualized manner based on developmental needs. Teachers plan with families to make toileting a positive experience for children.

- Staff role is to encourage children who are toilet learning, while allowing children to approach the toilet and to go at their own pace. Expectations for toilet learning will be based upon developmental readiness and appropriate practice.
- Toileting children will be closely supervised “by sight and sound” based upon development and safety needs. Staff will allow privacy in a way that is appropriate for the age and development of the individual child and ensures safety.
- Staff will accept all “accidents” and appropriately respond to the needs of the child in a respectful manner.

Labeling of Personal Items

According to NYS OCFS regulatory standards, all personal items must be labeled with the individual’s first and last name. Items may include but are not limited to water bottles, re-usable eating utensils/dishes, nap or rest materials, topical ointments/sprays and medications, clothing, bags, etc. The Lil’ School reserves the right to label the personal items of children as necessary to ensure compliance with state regulations.

Sanitation and Cleaning

All staff members are required to participate in upholding the highest standards of sanitation and cleanliness throughout every facet of the Program. The program adheres to sanitation schedules which meet or exceed both

NYS OCFS Regulatory and NAEYC Accreditation standards at all times. These sanitation schedules are posted throughout the facility at appropriate locations and pinpoint not only the responsibilities of each individual staff member position, but also the timeline for completing each task with the method that must be used. *Please see current Sanitation and Cleaning Schedules.*

Safe Food Handling and Storage

All food products (snacks) and disposable eating utensils (silverware, plates, cups, bowls, etc.) are stored in a dedicated food cabinet in each classroom. These food cabinets must only be used for food grade products. No other products may be stored on the same shelves as or above the food products/utensils. This is especially important in regards to cleaning products or chemicals which could leak and contaminate the food items.

Regular inspections will be conducted to ensure compliance with DOH guidelines.

- **HAND WASHING-** must be done before and after serving/eating food. This applies to both children and staff. Hand washing sinks must maintain a temperature of 90 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **EATING SURFACES-** must be sanitized with the approved sanitation solution before and after meal eating/prep times. This may include but is not limited to tables, chairs, and countertops. In addition, garbage cans/lids and sinks should be sanitized after each meal time and kept clean on a routine basis.
- **REUSABLE DISHWARE-** Children are allowed to have reusable dish sets (including plates, bowls, cups, and utensils) that are sent home to be washed. In addition, other than while in use, these dishes must be stored in each individual cubby in their personal dish storage bags. This means that at no point can we stack or store reusable dishware of multiple children. Each individual piece of dishware is only used once by the child each day to ensure the use of clean dish items. The program will not wash any dishes for child use. The use of reusable dishware is subject to current New York State Department of Health and Office of Child and Family Services guidelines. Public Health Emergencies (such as COVID-19) may require state/federal implementation of restrictions regarding use. This theory also applies to water bottles. These bottles should be emptied before being sent home, and kept child accessible but separate from play areas to reduce cross contamination.
- **DISPOSABLE DISHWARE-** are available for children who do not have reusable dishware and are stored in a closed cabinet. Plastic silverware is kept in a caddy with the handles pointing out. This allows only the handle to be touched which reduces contamination. Disposable plates, cups, and bowls are stacked neatly in the dedicated food cabinet.
- **PAPER SUPPLIES-** We are required by law to keep a full stock of clean toilet paper and paper towels at all times. Closing staff refills these products each night and teaching staff replaces stock as needed throughout the day. It is every staff member's responsibility to ensure that we do not run out of supplies and to inform the Director of any supplies which are running low before they are depleted.
- **VENDER PERMITS-** any food items which are regularly supplied by an outside vendor must be accounted for on the approved menu plan. In addition, the program must maintain a file with up-to-date vender permits and check their validity annually.

Building/Facility Access and Security

The Lil' School considers building safety of the utmost importance and remains locked at all times. For this reason, visitors, families, and staff must be "buzzed in" by the Director or reception staff in order to enter the building. Our facility is only accessible by use of a key or by being let in upon arrival.

The Lil' School at St. Bernard's:

There are currently **5 doors** to our facility. They are:

- (1) Front Door = glass double door entrance at the front of building. Visitors, families, and staff may ONLY enter through this door.
- (4) Emergency Exit Doors = each classroom has an emergency exit which leads directly outside for efficient evacuation in case of emergency. These doors must remain CLOSED and unobstructed at all times to ensure building safety.

Visitor Policy

Any individual who is not a current staff member or parent/guardian/authorized pick-up person of an enrolled child will be considered a visitor to the program. Visitors are welcome in the program; however, the Director should be notified in advance. To ensure the safety of the staff and children, the building will have a system for logging in visitors:

- All visitors will sign in and out at the reception area.
 - Visitors must be accompanied by a staff member while at the Program.
 - A member of the administrative staff, the Director or the designee will accompany all visitors requiring a tour of the facility. Such visits may be spontaneous; however, when possible, arrangements will be made in advance.
 - Staff guests will not be allowed to wait for the employee in the children's areas (classroom, gym, playground, etc.). Should a visitor need to wait for an employee to finish their required shift time, they will need to wait outside, or on the front porch.
- ** The visitor policy is subject to current New York State Department of Health and Office of Child and Family Services guidelines. Public Health Emergencies (such as COVID-19) may require state/federal implementation of restrictions regarding visitors to the program.

Non-Smoking Policy

Per NYS OCFS Regulation 418-1.11, smoking on premise including both indoor and outdoor areas as well as in vehicles is prohibited. This includes program staff, and parent/guardians/families on premise.

Safe School Policy

In accordance with NYS OCFS Regulation 418-1.5, firearms, shotguns and rifles are prohibited on premise except that nothing in the section shall be construed to prohibit a police officer or peace officer, as those terms are defined in section 1.20 of the criminal procedure law.

Illness Policy, Communicable Disease Management, and Child Safety (App. E.3)

Illness Policy, Communicable Disease Management and Medication Administration

The Lil' School maintains an updated Health Care Plan which is reviewed at least annually by a Health Care Consultant. The Health Care Plan is accessible at all times both on premise and digitally in conjunction with this Parent-Family Handbook. The following policies and procedures are contained in the plan:

- Illness and exclusion policy
- Medication administration policies and procedures
- Daily health checks and attendance recording
- Medical statements and immunization requirements
- Sanitation and cleaning schedules and procedures
- Other Health & Safety procedures/protocol

Medication Administration

Our program is approved to administer OTC (topical over-the counter), prescription, and emergency medications. The program will only approve the administration of certain medications under special circumstances with the proper documentation and in accordance with our Health Care Plan.

Accident/Incident Reports

An accident/incident report (OCFS-LDSS-4436) will be completed when a child has an injury or incident while in the care of the Program that requires reporting, first aid, medical attention, or as needed for exclusion. Diaper rashes that develop or progress while in the program which are not within the norm for care shall be additionally defined as an “incident while in the care of the Program” and as such incident report forms will be used to appropriately document and relay applicable information. The report may also be used to document if staff identify signs of abuse of a child.

- Report will be completed within day of care of the accident/incident, by the primary person that witnessed the accident/incident. Additional witnesses may be noted.
- The report will include the date of accident/incident, name of the child, details (such as time, location, and noting if other children/adults were involved without disclosing identity of additional individuals). In addition, the staff will report a full description of any and all injuries (including marks, bruises, abrasions, etc.) as well as any and all treatment/service provided while noting who administered them.
- A note referring to the incident and report is documented on the Daily Health Check Form and Individual Student Health Notes Sheet.
- If the person completing the form is not the Lead Teacher of the child’s group, the Lead Teacher must be made aware of the situation and review the form before it is forwarded to the Director/designee.
- The Director or their designee must be informed of the accident/incident at the time of the accident/incident and must review the report.
- The family must be called at the time of accident/incident in cases where the situation or family’s preference requires it. Decisions to inform parents/guardians/family immediately following the incident vs. at the end of the day are dependent on the extent and type of injuries as well as familial preference. These decisions will be made in consult with the Director and informed by First Aid Training standards.
- The original Incident Report Form is provided to the family for signature of confirmation while the situation is being discussed at pick-up. The original copy of the Incident report form is then to be filed in student’s file and a copy offered to be sent home with the family as written notification by request. As necessary, the completed incident report is forwarded to the Director or designee to provide to OCFS as the licensing agency and/or a copy may be forwarded/faxed to Program’s Insurance Company.

In the event of death of a child- immediately call 911 and contact the Director/Owner or onsite designee. Director must contact all necessary agencies and file form OCFS-4890.

Child Abuse and Maltreatment Safety Plan

The childcare Program will not allow any child to be abused, neglected or mistreated. All employees are responsible for the well-being of all children enrolled in the Program. All employees are aware that as an Early Childhood Professional they are “Mandated Reporters” of child abuse and neglect. Remember: it is not our responsibility to investigate. In an effort to ensure the well-being of all children in our care, The Lil’ School staff will report to Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment and our NYS OCFS licenser any incident/concern which causes “reasonable doubt or suspicion” that a child has been neglected or abused.

Staff who report suspicious child abuse or neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation or other disciplinary action for that reason alone, unless it is subsequently proven that the report is made with malicious intent. The following are guidelines to take action and call:

- **Corporal punishment is prohibited.** Corporal punishment is defined as physical abuse inflicted directly on the child's body or such that those actions deny/harm the physical needs of the child's body.
- **Verbal and Emotional abuse is prohibited.** Use of inappropriate and/or hurtful language will not be tolerated.
- **Neglecting a child's need is prohibited.** Neglect is defined as any action in which a child's needs are denied, withheld or ignored.

All staff receive training pertaining to Child Abuse and Maltreatment Identification and Prevention, Statutes and Regulations Pertaining to Child Abuse and Maltreatment, as well as Education and Information on the Identification, Diagnosis and Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Procedure:

The Program is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate authorities. It is the policy of the Program to provide training to its staff to properly identify and report any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment.

New York State Mandated Reporter Hotline 1-800-635-1522

- Staff must personally make, or cause to be made, an immediate report to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment by telephone, followed by a written report within 48 hours, in the form and manner prescribed by OCFS, to the child protective services of the social services district in the county in which the child resides. In all instances when the Registry is called, the Staff, Director or designee will document the call and incident on Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Maltreatment (OCFS-LDSS-2221) and place a copy of the report in the child's file and applicable staff file. Forward to local CPS and OCFS.
- After making the initial report, the reporting staff person must immediately notify the Director of the program that the report was made. In all instances when the Registry is called, the Staff, Director or designee will document the call and incident on Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Maltreatment (OCFS-LDSS-2221), place a copy of the report in the child's file and any other applicable files, and forward to OCFS as well as the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.
- The Director is responsible for implementing procedures which ensure the safety and protection of any child named in a report of child abuse of maltreatment pursuant to section 418-1.10 of the regulations.

If any parent/guardian/family member, volunteer, or visitor suspects any child in the program to be the victim of abuse, maltreatment, or neglect, please speak to the Director immediately. Non-mandated reporter concerns can also be directly reported via the **New York State Non-Mandated Reporter Hotline 1-800-342-3720**.

Responsibility regarding legal court documents

The Lil' School is bound by the law and must enforce legal court documents when it comes to the protection of a child. If a legal situation arises, the parent/guardian/legal family member must provide a copy of the court order to be read by the Director and filed in the child's permanent record. The Director will inform the staff as to what action they must take in order to comply and keep the child safe.

Emergency Policies & Procedures

Appendix F

As per NYS OCFS regulations, families will be notified of all emergencies as soon as it is safe/appropriate to do so. For program-wide emergencies, a mass voice broadcast and/or messaging alert will be sent to each family of enrolled/affected children; updates will be communicated as needed in the same manner. For individual emergencies, the program will speak directly with the parents/guardians/families of the child via phone;

emergency contacts will be notified in the event a parent/guardian/family cannot be reached. The program has access to both cell phones and a designated on-site land line. The program adheres to all precautionary and emergency measures as outlined in NYS OCFS regulations 418-1.2 (Building and Equipment), 418-1.3 (Fire Protection), and 418-1.4 (Safety).

General Information Procedures (App. F.1)

To ensure proper accounting for children and staff in the event of an emergency, important information for each child and staff member is to be maintained in each classroom (including contact information, emergency contacts, important health information, etc.) in the class Emergency Bag which is always taken with the class.

If there is a serious emergency involving a child/staff: the Program will phone 911 and parents/guardians/family/emergency contacts immediately

Emergency Bags

Important information for each child is to be maintained in the group Emergency Bag which is always taken with the group. Such documents include but are not limited to:

- Individual Student Information Sheets (printed from database) and Registration Forms
- The Lil' School "Get to Know Me" and "Infant Information" Sheets
- The Lil' School Topical Ointment Permission Form
- Medication Consent Form (OCFS-7002)
- Individual Health Care Plan (OCFS-7006)
- Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan (OCFS-6029)
- Log of Medication Administration (OCFS-7004)

In addition, these Emergency Bags should contain any additional items which may better provide for the individual needs of the children of the group such as:

- First Aid Kit stocked with approved items
- Approved, Child-Specific Emergency Medications
- Diapers for Infants; Extra Pull-Ups for children who are toilet training
- Wipes and tissues
- Evacuation Walking Ropes
- Flashlight

First Aid Kits

First Aid kits are stored in each group's Emergency Bag. Staff must take classroom first aid kits with them in their Emergency Bag each time the class leaves the room. It is expected that staff maintains adequate stock of required items in their classroom First Aid Kit with each use. First aid kits are also fully checked yearly by Director to ensure they meet standards, are complete and contain ample supply of items. *Please see Health Care Plan for additional information including which supplies must be stocked in each First Aid Kit.*

First Aid and CPR Training

The Lil' School makes every effort to ensure that all staff members are trained in Child/Pediatric CPR & First Aid and must maintain certification and knowledge of current life-saving techniques. Procedural postings pertaining to CPR and First Aid are located in each classroom, movement room, and any other indoor space where child activities/care take place.

Emergency Numbers

Emergency numbers including but not limited to 911, State Central Register (Child Abuse Reporting), poison control, and local Police/Fire Departments are displayed near each phone and are easily accessible in each

classroom, movement room, and any other indoor space where child activities/care take place. We also post updated general emergency/health information on our Family Board in the common area.

Fire Extinguishers/Alert System

The Program maintains fire suppression and alert systems in accordance with local and state Fire Code.

Emergency Evacuation and Relocation (App. F.2)

In the event that evacuation from the building is required to ensure the safety of children and staff (such as fire or building instability), the Emergency Evacuation & Relocation Plan is as follows:

- All staff and children will be informed that emergency evacuation is required (usually through fire alarms but an announcement may be made if necessary).
- Classroom staff will efficiently take attendance of all individuals prior to exiting to ensure that all children/staff are present
- Staff and children will proceed quietly and efficiently to appropriate exits as identified by their training and the written emergency evacuation procedures/maps posted beside both the primary & secondary egress routes of each room/area. Children in the Nursery School program will be evacuated in commercial evacuation cribs and/or by walking based upon developmental age/ability and compliance requirements. Preschool and School Age children will walk in line formation which is regularly practiced.
- Staff will bring their Emergency Bags with the appropriate supplies, information sheets, attendances, health checks, medications, and all other items contained in the emergency bags for such purposes.
- Classrooms will evacuate to the selected meeting point to await further instruction from the Director or designee. At this point attendance is taken again to ensure all children/staff have evacuated. Attendance is reported to the Director or designee.
- Children are reassured, kept calm, and given quiet activities to engage them.
- Notification of parents/guardians/families: Initially a mass voice broadcast and/or messaging alert will be sent to each family file for currently enrolled/affected children; updates will be communicated as needed in the same manner. Should the program need to speak directly with individual families, they will be contacted by staff via phone.
- The Program will follow specific instructions as given by the authorities.

The Lil' School has a specific emergency relocation plan which is posted in each classroom and it is both staff and family's responsibility to be aware of that plan.

The Lil' School at St. Bernard's: The Lil' School coordinates evacuation procedures with St. Bernard's School.

Primary Relocation Site: St. Bernard's Church (main building)

Secondary Relocation Site: Saranac Lake Public Library

Evacuation Drills- the Program will conduct no less than one evacuation drill each month to practice egress through alternating both primary and secondary exit routes. The drills will be conducted at different shifts of care and documentation of dates/times/duration of the drills are logged by the Director.

Shelter in Place (App. F.3)

In the event of certain natural disasters or environmental safety hazards, it is important for the Program to be prepared for emergencies where it becomes safer for children/staff to remain at the program rather than to evacuate. The program has access to emergency supplies such as food and drinking water in the event of a shelter in place emergency. In such emergencies the Shelter in Place Plan is as follows:

- All staff and children will be informed to re-enter and remain indoors. The school becomes ‘closed’ until it is deemed safe by local authorities and Director.
- Staff and children remain in their classrooms; lights will be off, blinds & windows will be closed, doors will be shut. Where possible, doors & windows will be locked.
- Staff and children will remain away from all windows and given quiet activities to do while awaiting further instruction. Children will be kept calm and staff will reassure the children regularly to ensure they feel safe.
- Classroom staff will take attendance of all individuals in the room in the event of an emergency and report this specific information to the Director.
- Notification of parents/guardians/families: Initially a mass voice broadcast and/or messaging alert will be sent to each family for currently enrolled/affected children; updates will be communicated as needed in the same manner. Should the program need to speak directly with individual families, they will be contacted by staff via phone.
- The Program will follow specific instructions as given by the authorities until the unsafe conditions have passed.

Shelter in Place Drills- the Program will conduct no less than two annual shelter in place drills for a duration of 10-15 minutes each. Families will be notified of drills in advance. Documentation of dates/times/duration of the drills are logged by the Director.

Facility Repairs, Maintenance & Compliance

Appendix G

To meet NYS requirements for Child Care facilities, all staff personnel are required to assist with the health, safety, and compliance process. Routine quality and compliance checks will be performed by the Director as well as daily safety checks performed by staff to ensure NYS Regulations and NAEYC standards are met. The following provides more specific guidelines and procedures:

Classroom & Building Cleanliness (App. G.1)

It is staff responsibility to maintain our environment in a clean and sanitary manner. It is the responsibility of the entire staff to ensure that all required cleaning routines are followed. Routine and spot-checks will be performed by the onsite Administrator to further ensure maintenance standards are met. Sanitation responsibilities are designated based on division (maintenance, support, or classroom) and each division has its own unique Sanitation Schedule which accounts for how and when various materials and surfaces are cleaned and sanitized. Please refer to The Lil’ School Health Care Plan for complete guidance.

Storage of Potentially Hazardous Items/Products

All chemicals and potentially dangerous products such as medications and cleaning supplies are stored in original labeled containers inaccessible to children (may be in locked cabinets/closets or on a high shelf as deemed appropriate given the product being used- such as topical ointments). Other materials which may cause potential harm to children such as adult pocketbooks, plastic bags, and supplies will be kept out of reach.

Materials, Equipment, and Facilities Maintenance

The program will work to ensure compliance with all health and safety code requirements. Formal monthly, and informal daily inspections are conducted to ensure all facilities, equipment, and materials are safe for use.