



**Here Wee
Grow!
Preschool**

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Parent Handbook



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Hello and Welcome to Here Wee Grow! Preschool

It is with great pride that I welcome you to our school. We like to think of Here Wee Grow! as a place that children and adults consider their second home.... A place where they are accepted and loved...a place where laughter and play are cherished...a place where children can grow and learn at their own pace.

Selected for their knowledge of child development as well as their strong interpersonal skills, each member of the staff brings a different set of talents to share with others. They enjoy young children and take pride in seeing each member of their class as well as other children in other classes succeed. When visiting HWG take time to listen, to watch and to learn from this unique group. You will be enriched.

Please read the handbook and become familiar with the information inside. This handbook has been written to orient you to the preschool program and to provide you with policies and procedures. The administration of the preschool reserves the right to modify or amend this handbook and its policies at any time.

If you have questions, concerns or suggestions please remember that my door is always open to you. We are pleased that you have chosen Here Wee Grow! for your child's educational experience. Together we can create a successful learning environment for your child.

Phyllis Phelan, Director HWG

History of Here Wee Grow! Preschool

Here Wee Grow! opened its doors in 1995. Its purpose was to be an outreach to the community by offering a preschool program for young children and their families. Here Wee Grow! is sponsored by Hazardville United Methodist Church. We are not a religious school, but do incorporate into our daily activities such moral issues as kindness to others, respect for other people, their beliefs and feelings, respect for personal belongings of other people, caring for our school friends and helping when we can.

Here Wee Grow! first received its National Accreditation (NAEYC) in 1997. We have been accredited by NAEYC since that time.

We are governed by a Board of Directors consisting of seven to twelve members selected from the congregation. The Pastor of the church and the Director of Here Wee Grow! are ex-officio members of the board. Board members generally serve for a period of three years.

Our Facility

As a program of Hazardville United Methodist Church (HUMC) Here Wee Grow! is fortunate to have many spaces available to us. The top floor consists of five classrooms and the Director's office. The main floor has an additional classroom, as well as the fellowship hall which is used for music and movement and as the 'gym' when we cannot go outside due to the weather. At various times during the year the kitchen is also used.

Telephones are portable and are carried for emergency contacts in areas in which children play and adults work. The sextant of the church cleans areas used by the school when children are not present.

Prior to HWG opening some renovations were completed to better meet the needs of the children and staff members. The outside play area is completely surrounded by a five foot fence. The gate is for an adult to open only.

For safety/security reasons the doors of the church are kept locked. In order for you to enter ring the bell that is located up and to the right of the door and a church/school employee will answer. There are times that the church minister has meetings, bible study or other occasions, at these time staff are made aware of the times and the groups that will be in the building.

Parking

We ask that parents closely supervise their children in the parking lot. It is recommended that as children exit from cars, they be offered a hand to hold. Have children walk beside you or hold their hand as you make your way to the door to enter school.

We ask that you park in a designated parking spot upon arrival and pick-up. Safety is an issue when cars are parked behind other parked cars.

Children's Arrival and Departure

Adults are to wait outside the entrance door with your child until the door is opened by a member of the HWG staff. At that time please say good-bye to your child and the child will walk inside to meet his/her teacher and classmates. Together children and their teacher(s) will make their way upstairs to the classroom. If you need to speak with your child's teacher, please do not hesitate to walk in with your child. Please remember that school begins at 8:45 a.m. in the morning and 12:30 p.m. in the afternoon. It is important for children to be on time so as not to miss important segments that begin the school day.

Children's Dismissal

Children will return to you in groups. Each child's teacher will lead the children down the stairs to the door you entered that morning. An adult must come to the door to retrieve the child and that adult must be named on the list in the school office of people who may take the child from school. If a person comes to pick up the child and the name is not on the list and we have no verification from the parent that day that this person will pick up, the child will remain at school with HWG staff until a parent can be notified.

If you have made an arrangement to have a friend or other family member picks up your child, please be sure that you inform the teacher or office. Remind the person coming that they are required to show a photo ID. No adult will be allowed to pick up any child if the adult appears unable to safely drive or safely take care of the child.

Please stay with your child upon pick up and walk them to the car holding their hand or having them walk beside you.

ALL CHILDREN SHOULD BE TRANSPORTED TO AND FROM PRESCHOOL IN A CHILDCARE SEAT OR CHILD RESTRAINT SANCTIONED BY THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT. Children will not be released if the person picking up your child does not have a car seat.

Open Door Policy

Here Wee Grow! has an open door policy. This means you are welcome at school anytime during school hours

We welcome parent suggestions and comments. The Director's office door is always open please stop in at any time. Annually, parents will have the opportunity to evaluate our program through a questionnaire. We appreciate your efforts in helping to complete this process; our ongoing reflection is what allows us to be on the leading edge of our field.

Curriculum and Assessment:

Here Wee Grow! uses the Emergent Curriculum which emphasizes that planning needs to emerge from the daily life of children, particularly from children's own interests. A child's work is play and it is through play that children discover, create and learn on their own. There is also a curriculum that emerges from the children's interests and planning by the teachers.

Here Wee Grow! uses the CT Preschool Assessment Framework for assessing children's progress and development. We gather information through observations, check lists and small group

activities. We use the new CT Early Learning and Development Standards for planning our learning environment and experiences which support individual children and their developmental needs.

Staff will meet with parents to discuss the findings of the above assessments in January and May; however, meetings can be scheduled at any time during the year.

Confidentiality Policy

A confidential file for every child is maintained in the Director's office. This file contains registration information, health records, emergency contracts, individual care plans and other information pertaining to the child and family. The file is available to the Director, and will be shared with teaching staff as necessary. Medical records are also accessed by the nurse consultant for the purpose of immunization tracking and meeting individual needs, as in the case of allergies or medical restrictions. This information is shared with the teaching staff when necessary. Parents have the right to access their child's confidential files at any time upon request. Access to children's folders will also be granted when the school goes through its accreditation process by a NAEYC validator.

Developmental assessments and documentation on each child is kept in a child's portfolio in the classroom. These are shared with parents at scheduled parent conferences held during the year. This information will not be shared with agencies or personnel outside the school without written permission from parents

Our Disciplinary Approach

Children at Here Wee Grow! are treated with respect and kindness. It is our premise that the children who attend our school also learn to respect other people, children and adults, to show kindness and understanding that helping another person, no matter how small or simple the task, is an act of kindness and friendship.

Children who have conflicts or problems with others while at our school will be encouraged to verbalize their feelings and concerns. Here Wee Grow! uses strategies taken from Responsive Classroom. It is our belief that staff members be a helper to positive problem solving. Our staff members view discipline as guidance, not punishment.

We want children to value cooperation and teamwork. We help children to learn peaceful approaches as ways to getting along.

Our rooms are set up with preventative measures in mind. Verbalizing feelings, redirection and explaining to children what they may do are some of the techniques we use.

Children whose behavior endangers others will be supervised away from other children. The child with a staff member and /or the Director will talk to all parties about what happened and how we might remedy the conflict. We do not use time out at HWG. We have found that talking and sharing ideas as to how we can work on the problem is a more beneficial method to all parties. Giving children an opportunity to correct the problem with a staff person as a mediator helps the children to work together to solve the difficulty so that in the future they can begin this process on their own.

Please refer to the Behavior Plan handed out separately

Biting

Biting is a stage and age appropriate for young children. Even with close supervision of children biting may still be unavoidable. Biting is usually a temporary condition. The safety of the children is our primary concern. Children who bite might be tired or frustrated, trying to get attention, or for no apparent reason.

The following steps will be taken if a biting incident occurs:

- The bitten child will be comforted
- Staff will remove the biter from the situation
- A staff member will remain with the biter
- The wound of the bitten child will be assessed and cleaned
- Parents of both children will be notified of the biting incident
- Appropriate forms will be filled out.
- The bitten area will continued to be observed

Our Staff

Here Wee Grow! employs people who are mature, warm and nurturing who understand child development, who can apply their knowledge in the classroom and who respect each child as an individual. We seek employees who value working as a team with parent, colleagues, and volunteers.

We select staff carefully to provide the best possible care and education for the children. We try to hire staff members who have an early childhood degree or working toward such a degree. Please

refer to our web-site (herewegrow.org) to view staff biographies. All HWG staff have had a background check, (State LAW) proof of a physical examination and trained in CPR and First Aid.

Parent Involvement

We welcome parents to share their interests and talents with the classes. Parents may talk with their child's teacher to set up a time that is convenient to visit the school and share with their child's class.

Staff meets with individual parents to talk about a child's progress throughout the year. Conferences are usually scheduled for January and May; however, they can be scheduled at any time during the year. If you have a suggestion or concern, please do not hesitate to call or stop in to talk with your child's teachers. No appointment is needed if it is before or after children have left for the day.

Parents will receive information regarding their child's classroom events, progress, or other interesting information weekly.

HWG has a Parent Group. Information about this group will be sent to you the first week of school. The Parent Group raises money to offset the cost of extra programs and in-house field trip at HWG. (Ex: Mad Science, Authors and Mystic Aquarium) The Parent Group also volunteers to put together the Winter Carnival which is held in February each year. Volunteers are always needed. Contact the school office and we'll set you up with the group leader

Parents also have the opportunity to join us during the year for our school parties such as, our fall party, Thanksgiving feast, holiday sing a long, Valentine's Day celebration, and Easter egg hunt. Extra hands are always needed.

If parents have concerns or need assistance related to classroom/teacher, etc. please talk with the teacher first. If you are not satisfied, you may discuss your concerns with the Director.

Parent surveys are completed twice a year in order to see how we are doing and where we might make changes/improvements. Your input in these surveys is necessary for us to make those improvements.

Communication:

Good communication between staff and home is essential. There are several ways for parents to communicate with us. E-mail, note in the backpack, a phone call or verbal communication at drop-off or pick-up is encouraged.

Teachers should be informed about changes in home life, (EX: parents going out of town, illness or death of relative or pet; a new sibling; some change in the household.) Situations, such as these listed, may cause changes in a child's behavior. An informed teacher can be more sensitive to the child's needs.

Separation:

We understand that some children have difficulty with separation. We want to reassure you that we are always ready to comfort you and your child. At the beginning of the school year we have volunteers who assist where needed.

It is important for the parent to say good-bye, give a hug or a wave. Tell your child to enjoy their day and that you will want to hear all about it when you pick them up. Be consistent and follow the same routine and always say good-bye. Remember that prolonging the good-bye will only make it harder for you and for your child.

The separation adjustment is normal and we have the experience of helping you and your child ease through this transition time.

Schedules:

Although each classroom's daily schedule are not exactly the same, activities vary between quiet and active, free play, small group time and large group time. During these times children are engaged in math, science, literacy, music, art activities and outside play.

A general schedule might look something like this (morning and afternoon):

8:45 Arrival- wash hands

8:50-9:05 Morning meeting

9:05- 9:55 Free Play

10:00 Bathroom Time

10:10 Snack Time

10:35 Outside Play Time (weather permitting)

*Fellowship hall is used when weather does not permit outside play

10:35-10:45 Transition to the classroom-bathroom time

10:45 Music and Movement

11:10 Story Time and Small Group Time

11:40 Backpacks...ready to go home

11:45 Departure Time

What to Bring/What Not to Bring

What to Bring:

Each child should have a backpack to carry personal belongings to and from school

The child's back pack must contain a two-sided folder to carry correspondence to and from school, a full change of clothing, and a nutritious snack. (ONE item to eat and a drink)

Children sometimes bring in items from home to show their classmates. A notice will be sent home when it is your child's turn (Example: If your child is the leader, bring an item from home to show and share with classmates)

Children will need a coat/hat on cold days. They will play outside every day as long as the temperature is 40 or above.

What Not to Bring (Please also check with the child's teacher)

- Toys of violence
- Candy
- Chewing gum
- Money
- **Food that has nuts or is processed where these products are produced. HWG staff will not open food items that have a trace of any nut product. The snack will be sent home.**

Hours /Days of Operation:

Monday through Friday

8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The Before and after school hours are: 7 a.m.-8:45 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Classes

The Three Year Old Program

This program is for children who are 3 before December 31 of the present year. Children will remain in this class for the entire school year even after they turn four. We offer classes 3 days a week (MWF) or (TTF) mornings and/or afternoon.

The Four Year Old Program

This program is for children who are four years old by December 31 of the present year. Children will remain in this class for the entire school year. We offer this class 3 days a week (TWT) morning and/or afternoons. If there is a need for a child to attend three days morning and afternoon, please speak with the Director to see what might be available to you. If you choose to add two days by moving your child to the pre-kindergarten class, this can be done providing there is a spot open in the Pre-K class.

The Pre-Kindergarten Program

This program is for children who are four years old by December 31 of the present year. Children in this class attend 5 mornings a week. Afternoon programs are available to these children also. Please speak with the Director to see what might be available to you.

Transitions

Transitions can be difficult for some children. Staff gives warnings to all children during the day such as: "We have 5 minutes until it is time clean up time." "We have 3 minutes until it is clean up time." "It is time to clean up." Also, when we have visitors we might say something like, "After our story, the firefighters will come to talk to us about fire safety so we'll go downstairs to the big room". "The firefighters are here so we are going down to the big room."

When children are given information about what is going to happen and when it is happening it makes the transitions less stressful.

Field Trips

We no longer go outside our school for field trips however, we do bring in outside events. The events vary from year to year. Some past events are Mad Science, Forest Park Zoom, Mystic Aquarium.

Health

The State of Connecticut requires that a current health form be on file when the child is enrolled. This health form will need to be updated during the year and it is the parent's responsibility to do so in a timely manner. Health forms will need to be signed by the appropriate health personnel.

It is important that your child be healthy when attending school. Should your child show symptoms requiring exclusion from school he/she will be removed and the parent or other authorized person by the parents will be notified immediately to pick up your child. There can be no exceptions since illness spreads quickly among young children.

The symptoms of illness for possible exclusion shall include, but are not limited to any of the following:

- The illness prevents your child from participating comfortably in the school environment
- The illness results in a greater care need than we can provide without compromising the health and safety of others or the child has any of the following conditions:
- Temperature
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness - such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing
- Uncontrolled diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider determines the condition is noninfectious
- Rash with fever or behavior change
- Head lice, scabies or other infestation until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and no fever.
- Chicken pox, until at least 6 days after onset of rash or until all sores have dried and crusted

- Unspecified respiratory illness if it limits the child's comfortable participation in activities or if it results in a need for greater care than can be provided without compromising the health and safety of to the children

Injuries may occur however, children are closely supervised in an attempt to prevent injuries. With any injury an accident report is completed by the staff member with your child. This will require your signature and be returned to the school office. If a serious injury does occur, you will be notified immediately. If an injury is very severe, 911 will be called for assistance before the parent is called. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency contact list will be used. **Please remember to keep this card up-to-date.**

Clothing

Children are to dress for play realizing that we will be outside on the playground and inside painting at the easel. Even though we wear paint smocks we don't always keep the paint on the paper or the smock. We prefer children to wear closed toed shoes due to the fact we climb flights of stairs and are outside on the playground. While sandals and clogs are cute, they are not the best shoes for climbing up and down the stairs or playing outside. Safety is an issue.

**Picture Day is the only day we do not have paints out since most children dress up on this day.*

Toilet Training

We encourage toileting independence where appropriate. Communication around toileting issues is important, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you and your child.

Due to our not having changing tables, we cannot take children who wear diapers. Pull-ups may be worn. We of course, recognize that some children are in transition and may not make it to the bathroom in time; this is why we request an extra set of clothing to be kept in the child's backpack.

Please be aware that your child will grow during the school year and as this happens new clothing that fits will need to be added to the backpack.

Children do not go to the bathroom unattended at any time.

Nutrition

Nutrition education is one of the components of our program. We continue to educate ourselves and others in the preparation of well-balanced snacks and lunches. At school, snack and lunch times

are pleasant social learning experience for children. Conversation is encouraged, self-help skills are fostered and good nutrition habits are promoted.

Snack time is only about ten to fifteen minutes in length. Please send in one snack and a drink.

Here Wee Grow! Preschool is a 'nut free' environment and never serves nuts or their by-products. Likewise, we will not serve snacks brought in which have nuts or processed where nuts products are processed.

Special days, such as birthdays, parents may send in special snacks. We ask that you notify your child's teacher prior to this day. Some children who have allergies may need an alternative snack. When we know in advance we can notify that child's parents, who may send in a special snack appropriate for their child's health issues.

Safety

We ask that parents closely supervise their children in the parking lot. It is recommended that as children exit from cars, they be offered hand to hold. Children are to walk beside you as you make your way to the entrance or even better would be to hold your child's hand until they are at the door to enter school.

Children are released only to persons for whom the staff has written permission from the parents. Parents must keep the pick-up list current with person designated for pick up. We may release children to either parent unless there is a restraining order or custody arrangement of which we have a copy. No child is ever left alone or unsupervised.

At arrival we ask that parents remain with their children until the doors are opened and children may enter with their teachers. Accident reports are completed whenever first aid is given. Admittance to the building is by a doorbell located to the right of the front and rear entrance.

There is always immediate access to a phone. Telephones are located in the office, in the main hallway and in most classrooms. Smoking is not permitted in the building or on the church grounds. The church sextant, along with teaching staff cares for the cleaning of the school.

HWG staff is mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse or child neglect. All teaching staff has training to recognize sign off neglect and abuse. We will report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

Emergencies:

Fire:

Here Wee Grow! Preschool has monthly fire drills at varying times and are documented by the Director. The procedures are rehearsed and a description of what we will do and why we are doing the drill is talked about with the children before the drill takes place.

Weather Alert:

- HWG will receive notification from the Enfield Police Dept. of possible weather emergencies. Children are escorted to the downstairs hallway on the parking lot level as far away from potential flying window glass as possible.

Accident:

- The first aid kits are located in each classroom and in the kitchen. Emergency numbers are located by each phone. Emergency numbers for children are in each classroom and in the Director's office. All staff has First aid and CPR training.
- In a serious emergency, 911 is called and then the parent. Transportation will be by ambulance. When going for treatment a child's file will be taken. This contains a summary of current medical history as well as medical emergency permission forms. The staff person will remain at the hospital until the parent arrives or longer if needed.

Closings:

- Emergency closings may occur when weather is severe or there is a problem in the church/school building. Parents will be notified as soon as possible. Staff will remain with the child until parent or designated person arrives. (Please note that if the Enfield Public School close, Here Wee Grow! will also close)
- Policies for Managing Emergency Preparedness due to national disasters are available on request.

Financial Information

Fees are determined by the HWG Board of Directors. Here Wee Grow! is a church sponsored program and thus we are nonprofit. The tuition is a yearly tuition which we divide into ten equal

payments to make it easier for our parents. You may also speak with the Director to make other arrangements for payment if needed. A copy of the fee schedule for your child's program is sent to you the first week of school. Fees may be paid by check or cash. You may also make arrangements with your bank to send the tuition payment each month. Fees are due between the first and the seventh of the month in order to avoid a late fee. A late fee is \$10 unless the time extends beyond a week and then late fee will be \$20.

If tuition is not received by the last school day of the month, you may be asked to keep your child at home, until tuition payments can be brought current. In all cases, the first payment is due by the first day of school.

The registration fee is non-refundable. If you choose to remove your child from HWG before school begins, written notice must be received prior to August 15th to receive a refund of September's tuition. If you choose to remove your child from HWG during the school year, a two-week notice in writing must be given to the Director. You will be responsible for tuition for two weeks.

Vacations and Absences:

Here Wee Grow! Preschool's tuition is a yearly tuition. There is no reimbursement for vacations taken during school time or for days out due to illness.

Parent Grievance Policy

Differences and disagreements are a part of life. Here Wee Grow! recognizes the need for healthy communication and a way to mediate grievances. If you have a grievance, go directly to that person first and explain your situation. If you feel the issue is unresolved, then go to someone of higher authority. (Director, Pastor of HUMC, Board Member) The purpose of implementing this process is to establish an open and healthy line of communication between all parties involved.

Closing Statement:

We hope that we have created a home away from home for your child. We appreciate feedback from our families in order to make improvements. We are pleased to elaborate on any facet of our program. If you know of someone who would like a tour of our facility, please contact the Director and a date and time will be setup.

Thank you again for choosing Here Wee Grow! Preschool . We look forward to working with you this year.

Important Phone Numbers:

- Here Wee Grow! Office (860) 749-2458 (e-mail will reach Mrs. Phelan)
- Hazardville United Methodist Church Office (860) 749-7098