



## **2025-2026 Gorham Cooperative Preschool Family HandBook**

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Hello GCP Families,

Welcome to preschool, a place for you and your children to grow together!

It's official; you are now a member of a cooperative organization. Our families share their time, talents, and energy to create a unique preschool community that serves up to 24 children and their families.

Our preschool is a safe and supportive place for children. The magic of Gorham Cooperative Preschool lies in the unique opportunities created when children, families and teachers play and learn together.

This handbook explains our program philosophies and policies. Details about the practical workings of the school are all addressed - class schedules, safety information, details about family participation, snack preparation and more. Whether you're new or returning for your second, third, or even fifth(!) year at GCP, please read this entire handbook. This handbook is an essential resource. Prior to your child's first day of school you will be required to sign a form stating that you have read and agreed to follow all the policies found in this handbook and the GCP ByLaws

While the handbook serves as a guide to our school, it's far from comprehensive. When you're unsure, please ask! Your teachers, board members, and fellow co-op parents may have answers.

We look forward to sharing the year with you at Gorham Co-op!

Sincerely,  
Executive Board  
Gorham Cooperative Preschool

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## OVERVIEW OF GORHAM COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

### History of GCP

The Gorham Cooperative Preschool was established in January 1968 by a group of parents who shared an interest in a quality preschool experience for their children. The Preschool is a non-profit, non-sectarian, non-discriminatory organization licensed by the state of Maine.

Cooperative preschools are organized and administered by families of enrolled children. Working together to provide the best possible school environment is the shared goal. To achieve this goal families operate the school on a non-profit basis keeping costs to a minimum by doing much of the work themselves, raising funds, holding offices, working on committees, assisting in the classroom and maintaining the school and equipment. Professional teachers are hired to develop, review and implement the curriculum. The role of treasurer is currently a paid position but all other board positions are filled by volunteer members of the Parent Body.

### Philosophy Statement

The **mission of the Gorham Cooperative Preschool** is to provide a safe, nurturing, play based program, governed by the parent body and taught by professional early childhood educators with assistance from families. A strong sense of community is created by active family involvement. Each child's unique social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth is supported as they learn to adjust to a structured school environment. Children participate in a variety of hands-on developmentally appropriate activities.

### Available Programs

**2-Day Program** The 2-day morning program meets on Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30 – 11:00 a.m. The recommended age for children in this program is 3 years old by October 15<sup>th</sup> of the school year. Children must be potty trained. This program can accommodate ten children.\*

**3-Day Program** The 3-Day programs meet on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. The recommended age for children in this program is 4 years old by October 15<sup>th</sup> of the school year. Children must be potty trained. This program can accommodate fourteen children.\*

\*With board approval the total students in a class may be increased by one. With teacher approval exceptions to the recommended age are allowed.

### School Hours of Operation

The preschool will be in session:

8:30 - 11:00 a.m.	Tuesday/Thursday	2 Day Class
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Monday/Wednesday/Thursday	3 Day Class

GCP generally follows the same holiday schedule as the Gorham Public Schools system and is guided by their “no school” announcements with a few exceptions. GCP asks families to refer to the GCP Calendar at the rear of this handbook.

### Tuition

Tuition for all programs is recommended by the Executive Board and voted on by the Parent Body each year. Tuition may increase slightly in order to meet operating expenses. Tuition may only be increased by a majority vote of the Parent Body at an All Parent Meeting.

Currently tuition is \$230 per month for the 2 Day Program and \$345 per month for the 3 Day Program. A one month tuition payment deposit is required upon enrollment and will be used to pay tuition for June.

### Tuition Payment Policy

Tuition may be paid electronically using the link on the monthly invoice or via PayPal on the Preschool's website. There is a small fee charged for the convenience of paying electronically. Tuition can also be paid with cash or a check made out to Gorham Cooperative Preschool. Checks can be placed in the tuition box at the Preschool, or mailed to:

Gorham Cooperative Preschool  
28 Ball Park Rd.  
Gorham, ME 04038

DUE DATE: 1<sup>st</sup> of each month (except for September tuition - the due date is the first day of class)

For every child who is registered in the Preschool, a deposit of one month's tuition must be paid by June 1st and will be counted as the following June's tuition. Monthly tuition is payable on the first of each month. Monthly tuition not paid by the 10th of each month will be assessed a late fee of \$10 or an amount to be determined by the Executive Board. If tuition is not paid by the 10th of the month, a warning will be given by the Treasurer. If tuition is not paid by the 20th of the month, as a second warning, a written notification will be sent by the Secretary. Failure to pay tuition within the 30-day delinquency period, without approval of the Executive Board, may be grounds for expulsion. All financial commitments must be fulfilled by the end of the school year. The Preschool will not release a child's portfolio - a collection of work samples, photographs and assessments - until all financial obligations are met.

In extenuating circumstances, families experiencing financial hardship may appeal to the Executive Board for special tuition arrangements. Members with multiple children enrolled in the preschool will receive a small discount. Any charges incurred by the preschool due to check(s) being returned "non-payable for insufficient funds" will be paid by the member.

The Preschool community is dedicated to its members and offers assistance to our member families experiencing financial hardship. Limited hardship scholarship funds are available for families who are experiencing difficulty. Families seeking scholarship should request an application from the teachers. Information will be kept confidential. Final approval is determined by the Executive Board.

### Bylaws

The Gorham Cooperative Preschool Bylaws provide a framework for how the school is governed and how school conducts business. The Bylaws can be found on the school Website. All members are required to be familiar with the contents of the Bylaws. A hard copy is available at the school. Bylaws can only be amended by a majority vote of the Parent Body.

### Registration and Enrollment

To be fully enrolled in GCP families must first register and secure a spot for their child in one of the two programs. Registration for an upcoming school year opens the first day of February for current families and alumni. Registration opens the first day of March for the general public. The registration fee is \$45. Enrollment paperwork and deposit are due on June 1st or within two weeks of acceptance if registering after May 17th. Families can request to be put on a wait list if no spaces are left in a program. Waitlist families will be contacted if space opens up.

### Withdrawal

No refunds including the June deposit are provided if a family withdraws their child from GCP after the school year has begun. If the withdrawal takes place before the school year begins the deposit will be returned if the resulting open space is filled. Appeals can be made to the Executive Board.

### Scholarships

There is an internal hardship scholarship that families can request if unforeseen financial circumstances occur during the school year. See a teacher for details.

### Meetings

There will be three scheduled Parent Meetings each school year. At least one adult from every family must attend. If no one in your family can attend, let your Class Coordinator know. Agendas will be posted by way of email prior to each meeting. During these meetings changes to the Bylaws are made, elections for the Executive Board are conducted and tuition prices are approved. The Executive Board may add additional Parent Meetings if needed.

Executive Board Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month and all current members are invited to attend. Agendas will be posted for review by way of email prior to each meeting. If you have anything you want to discuss at either a Parent Meeting or an Executive Board Meeting, please reach out to the Chair or your Class Coordinator. Often these meetings are conducted online.

The minutes of all meetings will be issued by the Secretary, with a hard copy filed at the Preschool. Members are encouraged to contact their Class Coordinator or an Executive Board Member to resolve any concerns or questions they have about the proceedings of a meeting.

### Parent Helper Days

Every family will be assigned about seven Parent Helper days over the course of the school year. Any family member or caretaker who has filled out the required background forms, completed the state mandated fingerprint background check and has been approved can be a Parent Helper. Further details about Parent Helper days are provided on page 16.

### Committees

Members are required to serve on the Executive Board or work on an assigned committee. Committees include cleaning, maintenance, fundraising and events/marketing.

### Reimbursement Policy

Any purchases that are made for the Preschool should be approved by a teacher, the treasurer or the Chair prior to purchase. Receipts should be provided for reimbursement in a timely manner. Reimbursement forms are available at the Preschool.

### Fundraising

Fundraising is vital for the financial stability of the Preschool. Participating in fundraising activities is a great way to meet other GCP families and to help raise money for your child's school. Through fundraising the Preschool is able to build strong community ties and ensure reasonable tuition rates. Funds raised allow the Preschool to absorb unexpected expenses and address budget shortfalls when enrollment is not at capacity. Funds can also go towards enrichment programs and the purchase of materials for the playground, office and classroom. Participation in fundraising activities is mandatory. Details of required participation will be determined by the Executive Board during the start of the school year.

### Membership Responsibilities

Understanding that everyone is acting in the best interests of the Preschool, members should keep an open mind, exercise informed judgment, and if disagreements occur, disagree with ideas and motions, not individuals.

To be considered a member in "good standing" a member must fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. Elect an Executive Board. Each family is entitled to one vote regardless of the number of children enrolled.
2. Sign a Confidentiality Agreement and a Criminal Conviction Disclosure Statement.
3. Participate as Parent Helper on assigned days (6-7 over the course of the school year).
4. Attend All Parent Meetings. Members are the governing body of our school; therefore, attendance is mandatory. (3 All Parent Meetings are scheduled for this year)
5. Hold a minimum of one position as either an Executive Board member or a committee member, regardless of the number of children enrolled.
6. Provide transportation to and from school and for field trips.
7. Participate in school fundraisers. In order to keep the cost of tuition affordable, participation in fundraising events is imperative.
8. Satisfy all financial responsibilities.
9. Provide up to date immunization records for your child. Inform teacher(s) of any allergy or infectious disease information.
10. Conduct themselves in a professional and rational manner at all times while on Preschool property or while attending a Preschool function.
11. Be familiar with school Bylaws and contents of the Family Handbook.
12. Voice any issues or concerns to an Executive Board member.
13. Be familiar with the Preschool's emergency YIKES procedures.

Membership responsibilities include but are not limited to the aforementioned. Failure to meet the membership requirements as stated above, without approval from the Executive Board, will result in the



member receiving a letter from the Secretary as a reminder of membership responsibilities. Loss of “good standing” will occur upon receipt of a second notification and the member will be required to meet with the Executive Board to discuss membership responsibilities. Membership may be terminated without a refund of paid tuition by vote of the Executive Board for failure to comply with the obligations aforementioned.

### Confidentiality

All Board Members, Teachers and Parent Helpers are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement, which remains on file at the Preschool.

When you assist in the classroom it is essential that events pertaining to particular individuals remain confidential. Please refrain from discussing the behavior of specific children. If you have any questions or concerns about a particular child, please speak directly with a teacher.

## COMMUNICATION

### Daily Communication

Teachers, Class Coordinators and other Board Members use **email** as a routine form of communication. Please check your email on a regular basis. The website (GorhamCoopPreschool.org) is the main location where you can locate electronic copies of the Handbook, Bylaws, and other useful files. Keep your Class Coordinator, Teachers and the Chair updated with any changes to your email address &/or contact information. Teachers also use SeeSaw to share photos and videos. Class coordinators use Google Calendar to organize the parent helper schedule.

### “GCP News, Notes and More” Weekly Email

During the school year, teachers will send out a “GCP News, Notes and More” weekly email to all families. This weekly email will include classroom highlights, plans for the upcoming week, reminders, upcoming dates, teacher insights and other important information. Please be sure to read this email.

### Pick Up Alternatives

If a child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent or routine caregiver, the Teachers must be notified in advance. This includes days when another parent in your class is picking up your child. Teachers will use the daily attendance form for recording the date, name(s) of involved children and name of person who will be picking up.

Use of the form and notification of the Teachers is for the safety of your child. *Please also discuss with Teachers if there are persons with whom your child should never have contact.*

### Absences

Please call the school or email the Teachers before the beginning of the school day if your child will be absent (839-4706). Please let the Teachers know ahead of time regarding vacation, travel and other plans affecting your child’s attendance in school.

Tuition is not prorated for absences. If an extended absence resulting from an illness or emergency causes financial burden, members can appeal to the board for a tuition adjustment.

### **School Cancellations**

Preschool classes may be canceled due to inclement weather. In such an event, the Preschool will follow the closing of the Gorham Public School system. If Gorham Public Schools are closed, the Preschool will be closed. A “one hour delay” of Gorham Public Schools means a “one hour delay” for the Preschool. A “two hour or more delay” of Gorham Public Schools means the Preschool will be closed. If there is a weather related early release of the Gorham Public Schools the Preschool will also release early after communicating with families. Snow days will not be made up. The final date of school and the date of graduation will not change. If Gorham is not in session for any reason, staff will decide whether or not to close and notification will be sent through email by 7:30 a.m.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences and Portfolios**

Conferences are held twice a year in November and April. There is no school on these days. If you have a particular concern about your child, feel free to request a meeting or phone call with the Teachers. Please remember that the Teachers are working for and with children during regular school hours. Try to keep conversations with Teachers brief during school hours. For longer conversations families are welcome to request that time be set aside before or after class. Teachers document student learning through notes and photographs that are compiled into a digital student portfolio.

### **Program Evaluations**

During each school year, families are encouraged to complete a program evaluation survey. This helps us to improve the quality of our program, set goals for the following school year and make sure our program is meeting your child’s needs. A summary of the results will be presented to the Parent Body.

### **Photograph Sharing**

Please be aware that some families do not want their child’s photograph or name on Facebook/social media. Class Coordinators will let you know which children have photo restrictions. Teachers privately share classroom photos through the app SeeSaw. Details about how to sign up will be shared by the Teachers.

## **OUR CLASSROOM**

### **Play Based Philosophy**

Learning is a natural phenomenon, which occurs when we interact with other people and the environment. As young children play, they develop strategies and form relationships that enable them to create a world that makes sense. At Gorham Cooperative Preschool, we believe it is our responsibility to provide opportunities for preschoolers to explore, experiment and grow in a safe, nurturing and age appropriate environment. Because parents are the first and ultimately the best and most influential teachers we embrace their participation in the classroom.

## Goals of the Program

Our program has the following goals

- Help children develop and maintain a positive self-image
- Create a stimulating environment that fosters a love of learning
- Provide an environment that promotes trust, communication, kindness and responsibility
- Encourage children to problem solve both individually and as a group
- Aid children in successfully communicating their thoughts, feelings and ideas through language, art, music and dance
- Expose children to colors, shapes, letters, numbers, science activities, math activities, name recognition, simple writing and much more
- Promote the growth and development of social, emotional, cognitive, language, creativity, fine motor, gross motor and self-help skills

## Inclusion And ADA Compliance

The Preschool strives to create an inclusive classroom where children with varied needs and backgrounds are welcomed. Every family and child should feel a sense of belonging and support from their school community. In order to meet the needs of children, Teachers may use the referral process to obtain support. Confidentiality will be maintained by both staff and volunteers. GCP will comply with ADA (American with Disabilities Act) standards and not discriminate based on disability. Reasonable modifications will be made unless doing so would fundamentally alter the program.

## Referral Policy for Developmental Delays or Other Concerns

In the event that a student or family needs assistance that the Preschool cannot provide, Teachers will make or recommend appropriate referrals to a specialist. Gorham Cooperative Preschool reserves the right to refer any party to an appropriate agency outside of the school when GCP staff cannot provide a needed or recommended service like speech therapy. The Preschool primarily makes referrals through Child Developmental Services (CDS) which is a free service provided by the state of Maine. Once referred to CDS, families must approve of any evaluations or services provided. If they have developmental concerns families can directly refer their child to CDS by using <https://www.maine.gov/doe/cds/referrals>.

## Areas within the Classroom and Preschool

The preschool classroom, building and playground are designed to be open and flexible while also providing clear areas for specific materials and activities.

<i>Art Area</i>	Supplies for art stored together and are kept easily accessible. Students have free access to these materials during free choice time. Freedom of expression is encouraged. Adults assist only when needed. Drying racks are nearby.
<i>Easel</i>	The easel will be supplied with either paint, chalk or markers. Students may need help taking down finished work.

<i>Block Area</i>	This area provides a place for building with a large assortment of blocks. Materials that work well with blocks, like cars or dollhouse items, are made available and changed according to children's interests and the needs of the classroom.
<i>Train Table</i>	Often there will be a small train table near the block area. This table is a great height for a variety of activities. The specific materials available will vary throughout the year but will include things like trains, spinning tops, magnetic blocks and more.
<i>Alone Space</i>	The alone space is a small, cozy nook with a sheer curtain. This space can be used by one or two children if they want some space or privacy.
<i>White Boards</i>	Near the block area and alone space are both mounted and loose white boards that children may use.
<i>Free Choice Table &amp; Shelving</i>	Near the block area is a table and some shelving that can be used for a variety of materials. These materials typically include puzzles, blocks, science equipment and simple games.
<i>Dramatic Play Area</i>	This area is where children pretend to engage in realistic life experiences through the use of dress-up clothes, playhouse appliances, pretend food, dolls and other props. The materials for this area may change according to the current interest of children.
<i>Play Dough Table</i>	Next to the dramatic play area is a rectangle table that is perfect for using the playdough that is stored on the nearby shelving unit. The play dough can be used at this table or brought to dramatic play. Play dough should not be used anywhere else.
<i>Sensory Tables</i>	The sensory tables contain various materials for students to use and manipulate. Examples include sand or wood pellets along with scoops and funnels. Sometimes one of the sensory tables will be used for messy art or science projects like making goop or practicing pouring water.
<i>Light Projectors</i>	Occasionally one of the sensory bins will remain closed so we can use our "old school" overhead projectors and have fun exploring color, light and design.
<i>Book Area</i>	Books are found throughout the classroom but most will be located on the shelves next to the gray reading rug. There are also cozy bean bags available here and several headphones for listening to stories on CD.
<i>Writing Table</i>	Located near the book area, the writing table provides paper, pencils and various office supplies. An alphabet display is located above the table.
<i>Butterfly &amp; Cubby Room</i>	This separate room will be used primarily for gross motor activities like crawling, throwing, jumping and more. The room is named for the butterflies that decorate the rug and walls. Access to this room will be routinely provided. This room is also where students will have their personal cubby to house spare clothes.
<i>Office</i>	This area provides storage for the Teachers' materials, seasonal items, crafts and supplies, as well as equipment such as the copier, microwave, and laminator. This area is off-limits to the students.
<i>Outside Equipment</i>	The playground equipment is specifically designed for the needs of preschoolers. While supervising this area, please follow safety guidelines.

### Cubbies and Hooks

Each child has a cubby marked with his/her name and a picture. Cubbies are designed to hold spare clothes including indoor slippers if desired. Each child will also have a hook to hang outerwear and bags. Hooks are shared between classes. Anything hung on a hook should go home each day.

### Toys From Home

Although we understand that children want to share their toys and new possessions with their friends, we ask that toys from home **not be brought into school.** Our classroom materials and supplies are selected for their developmental and educational merit. When toys are brought in from home, the focus changes. Children will have the opportunity to share an item from home through the Show and Tell Bag on their Parent Helper day. Comfort items are allowed in the classroom.

### Substitute Teachers

The Preschool tries to have at least two qualified substitutes who can work when a Teacher is absent. If neither substitute is available school will be canceled for the day and members will be contacted as soon as possible.

### Giving Tree

The Giving Tree in the hallway was designed to provide a space for hanging notes that describe suggested classroom materials that can be donated like stickers and card stock. An alternative online version of the tree may be created. Helping to supply wish list items is optional, but greatly appreciated.

### Daily Schedule

**Arrival \*\*the arrival process will begin no earlier than 8:20 a.m.\*\***

A Teacher will greet families at the front door. Families can say goodbye at the front door and a Teacher will then assist with hanging up belongings and washing hands. If desired or if teachers are busy, families can help their child hang up belongings and wash hands before saying goodbye. If a child has trouble separating, a Teacher can help a child use the “waving window” to say one last goodbye. Children can begin playing once their hands are washed.

### **What’s New Today?**

Once everyone has arrived, teachers will invite students to gather together to find out what’s new today. This short meeting may include a quick song or game but the primary purpose is to describe new materials or activities available for that day.

### **Play and Explore**

Children are allowed to choose where to play and what to explore. Often one Teacher will be leading an optional activity or game. The other Teacher will be acting as a play facilitator - challenging children to think up new play ideas, coaching children through problem solving and conflict resolution, ensuring children have the needed supplies to carry out ideas, answering children’s questions, and ensuring children are being respectful of materials and peers.

## **Clean Up**

Prior to story time, children will be asked to stop playing and help clean up materials. During “play and explore” time children will be encouraged to be mindful of putting away materials if they are done using them. Cleaning up is a skill that children are still learning. Maintaining an orderly environment is a shared responsibility. Adults will encourage, model and assist with cleaning up.

## **Story & Show and Tell Time**

Children will gather together to hear a story. During this time the Parent Helper cleans the two U shaped tables and prepares the snack. The child of the Parent Helper can assist with set-up using age-appropriate tasks and washing hands prior to helping. Before the story, the Parent Helper child will show classmates what he/she brought for Show and Tell. After the story all students will be dismissed to wash hands.

## **Snack Time**

When all children are seated, they will enjoy a daily snack. If possible the Parent Helper should sit with children at one table and a Teacher will sit with children at the other table. Snack should be passed out by the adult at the table. Children are encouraged to clean up their own spills and pour their own water. When children are finished with their snack they place their plate, cup and leftover food in the appropriate locations and prepare to go outside.

## **Outdoor Play**

Class ends with time spent outdoors. If the weather is too cold or rainy indoor gross motor activities will be provided. Parent Helpers should help dress children for outdoor play and then stay inside to clean up from the day’s activities. One Teacher will stay in the building until all children have finished snack and are dressed for outside.

## **Dismissal**

Weather permitting children will be outside when families arrive for dismissal. Parents or caregivers should wait outside the gate near the white shed. Teachers will gather the children for a goodbye circle and then dismiss students by calling out student names and helping students through the gate to meet their parent or caregiver. Families are welcome to spend time on the playground after dismissal. If dismissal happens indoors families should form a line outside the front door and a teacher will bring your child to the door for dismissal.

## **Late Pick-Up Policy**

GCP has a three strike policy for late pick up. A late pick up is defined as arriving more than five minutes past pick up time. The first and second late pick up will result in a teacher providing a warning that details the time of pick up and reason given for being late. A third late pick up will result in a final written warning and all three warnings will be sent to the board for review. The board may decide to charge a fee that will not exceed a dollar per minute past the expected pick up time. This fee may be applied to all of the late pick ups depending on the reasons for being late. A late pick up that extends beyond thirty minutes will be treated like a third warning and the board may impose a fee depending on the circumstances. Not paying the fee or continuing to be late for pick ups may result in dismissal from the preschool.

### Clothing

Parent Helpers and children should wear washable, comfortable clothes, appropriate for sitting on the floor and doing messy activities. Families are asked to send in an extra set of clothing (underwear, pants, socks, shirt, etc.) to leave at school during the year in case children need to change their clothes during the day. PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOUR CHILD'S CLOTHING IS LABELED WITH HIS/HER NAME. The spare clothes may need to be swapped out occasionally to match the season.

### Outdoor Play

Families are responsible for equipping their children for outdoor weather. When needed sunscreen and/or insect repellent should be applied to your child before they come to school. Teachers will not be applying sunscreen or insect repellent to children. Families are asked to send children to school in appropriate outdoor attire (e.g., boots, mittens, hat, snow pants, coat ....). This year we may play in light rain. A bag for winter gear will be provided prior to the start of cold, snowy weather.

### Playground Use and Safety

Members are allowed to use the playground after school. Children should be supervised at all times while on the playground. Please keep a close eye on your children. We ask that parents and caregivers encourage their children to follow the same playground rules that teachers use.

We may play Tag with our friends but we tag gently and we never pull on clothing.

We may rough house and wrestle if peers agree and a safe space is used.

We only throw balls and never throw sand or rubber chips.

We only go up the slides if no one is trying to go down.

We may not jump off the slides or climb up high on the outside of the play structure.

We may not climb on the chain link fence, tree or rock wall.

We may not use cars, trucks or other hard toys on the slides (only balls and babies).

We may dig only in the sandbox.

### Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of the curriculum. The children look forward to these special days. Trips are discussed at Parent Meetings or communicated by Teachers and Class Coordinators via email. Siblings are welcome to attend field trips. Families are expected to attend field trips with their children unless the trip is to the library or Robie park. Please inform a Teacher if your child is not participating in a field trip.

### Holidays

Holidays are a special part of our heritage. We celebrate them in Preschool with food, games and activities. Please share any concerns regarding holiday celebrations with a teacher. We understand that not all families celebrate the same holidays and follow the same traditions. Teachers are happy to give you and your child the chance to share your own family traditions. Some celebrations will only involve students and some celebrations may include an invitation for families to join the festivities.

### Class Pets

The classroom currently has gerbils that are kept inside a cage with a lid.



### Birthday Celebrations

A child's birthday is always special. To celebrate we sing 2 special Birthday songs. Parent Helpers are assigned to assist on or near their child's birthday. While we normally encourage nutritious snacks, special treats are allowed for birthdays. Please refer to the Allergy and Snack Policy located at the end of this Handbook for the current treat options. If your child has a summer birthday, families are given the option of choosing a day near the end of the school year to celebrate their child's special day.

### Book Club

Participation in the Scholastic Book Club is optional but participation helps our school earn free books and other educational materials. Brochures for books and audio materials offered by Scholastic Book Clubs will be placed in backpacks. We encourage members to place orders online via the Scholastic Book Clubs website. If using the paper form to order, checks can be written to "Scholastic Book Clubs" and turned in to the Teachers by the deadline indicated. Cash can not be accepted by Scholastic.

### School Pictures

If desired by membership, the board will arrange for school pictures to be taken in the fall and/or spring. You will be notified in advance of the date. Purchase is optional.

## PARENT HELPER GUIDE

### Parent Helper Schedules

Parent Helper schedules are prepared by Class Coordinators. We understand that in some instances you may not be able to fulfill your scheduled day. In such cases, you are responsible for notifying your Class Coordinator who can help you swap your day with another family.

If illness prevents you from attending school on your Parent Helper day please try to find a substitute from within your class. Class Coordinators can be contacted to help find a substitute. Please call the school after arranging a substitute and let the Teachers know of the change.

### The Role of a Parent Helper

Assisting and being with your child in class is one of the joys and privileges of being in a cooperative preschool. The Teachers are there for you if you have any questions or concerns. The Parent Helper is encouraged to interact and help throughout the classroom. He/she may help with crafts, read books to children, play games, or escort children to wash their hands. Parent Helpers and other adults are welcome to give gentle reminders about rules and expectations but Teachers are the prime providers of guidance in the classroom. If a Parent Helper is unable to easily resolve a conflict, a Teacher should be summoned to handle the situation. When interacting with students, parent helpers must only engage in age appropriate discussions that honors the Rights of Children. Please discuss any guidance concerns with a Teacher. Parent Helpers do not assist children in the bathroom or handle first aid needs.

Parent helpers are not considered staff and do not count towards our staff-child ratios. Parent Helpers are never left alone with children. To ensure the safety of our students, staff will monitor parent helpers to ensure they are interacting safely and appropriately with students. GCP requires all parent helpers to fill out a Criminal Conviction Disclosure Statement and a Confidentiality Agreement. GCP reserves the right



to run a State Bureau of Investigations Report based on the Statement provided or based on concerns reported by staff. Results will be reviewed by the board to determine whether or not to allow that person to be a Parent Helper. In addition Maine licensing regulations require all classroom volunteers including parent helpers to complete and pass a fingerprint based background check conducted by the Maine DHHS. Teachers will provide information about how to complete this process.

### Start of Class Preparations for Parent Helpers

- If possible try to be one of the first to arrive at 8:20 a.m.
- Dress in clothes that are comfortable, can get messy and are appropriate for the weather.
- Bring a healthy fresh fruit or vegetable to share with the class, a roll of paper towels and your child's item for the show n'tell bag
- You and your child/children should wash hands upon arrival

### Snack Time

Parent Helpers prepare their fruit or vegetable and set up the room for snack while the Teachers conduct story time. Remember to wash your own hands in preparation for snack time. All members must read the Allergy and Snack Policy for guidance on how the school manages food allergy risks and dietary restrictions. Except for special occasions the Preschool will provide the dry snack. Snacks are distributed when everyone is seated. If possible the Parent Helper should sit with children at one table and a Teacher will sit with children at the other table. Snack can then be passed out by the adult at the table. Snack time can offer important learning opportunities:

- To try new foods, and explore how they look, feel, sound and smell
- To develop social skills by talking and being with others
- To discuss how food is produced, prepared, its importance to growth, etc.
- To learn age-appropriate table manners
- To share special events like birthdays or holidays

Cleaning Duties (A summary of helper duties will be posted above kitchen sink for easy reference)

### **On-Going**

Ensure that spills that could be a safety concern are cleaned up. If possible, involve children in the cleaning of spills. Refresh wipes, toilet paper and paper towels as needed. Wash hands as needed (upon arrival, before snack, after blowing nose or using the bathroom).

### **Snack Time**

Tables should be cleaned before and after snack time. Only adults should use the cleaning solution but your child is welcome to put out paper plates, cups and placements. Children are encouraged to clean up their own spills. When finished eating children take care of their plate, cup and leftover snack.

### **End of Class**

Once students are outside on the playground or participating in indoor recess activities the parent helper will clean the classroom. Use the following list for cleaning ...

- Wipe down all classroom tables and clean the countertop and sink area

- Sweep and vacuum floors.
- Put away any stray toys.
- Clean all dishes and other items used for food preparation. Store in appropriate location.
- Clean bathroom – wipe down counters, sink, soap dispensers and toilet.
- Wipe down door knobs and light switches to control germs.
- Gather trash from the bathroom, compress all trash into one bag and discard in the dumpster located in the corner of the parking lot.
- When the recycling is full, dispose of the items in the recycling container next to the dumpster.

## **GUIDANCE IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **Philosophy of Child Guidance**

Guidance is the means by which we help children learn about working together, self-control, decision making, problem solving and conflict resolution in an encouraging atmosphere that maintains their self-esteem. Young children are just learning how to get along in a group. The role of the Teacher is to help children learn acceptable ways to express and meet their needs. Our overall guidance policy is aimed at creating an encouraging classroom environment that helps children develop social skills.

### **Guidance Strategies**

There are many guidance strategies used by Teachers at the Preschool. Some strategies help children learn important skills and knowledge. Other strategies increase the likelihood that children will cooperate and behave in a safe, kind and responsible manner. Most strategies do both. None of the strategies work one-hundred percent of the time. All of the strategies work best when expectations are age-appropriate. Here are some of the guidance strategies you will see in the classroom.

#### **Establish Guiding Principles and Make Expectations Clear**

Our classroom uses 3 guiding principles...

We take care of ourselves

We take care of others

We take care of our classroom

In addition to guiding principles, teachers also provide specific expectations for the various activities in our classroom. Children are more likely to behave appropriately when they understand what is expected.

#### **Keep Children Engaged**

Even though waiting patiently is a useful skill, we think children should spend most of their school day actively engaged in projects and activities. Active engagement maximizes children's learning.

#### **Follow a Consistent but Flexible Schedule**

A consistent schedule helps children feel secure because they know what to expect. When following a consistent schedule we allow room for novelty and flexibility.

#### **Encourage Group Participation**

Being part of a group requires a willingness to follow the group's plan. Following the group's plan instead of your own plan can be challenging. Using appealing activities, offering encouragement and teaching skills like listening and waiting your turn helps children learn to be part of a group.

### **Promote Self-Regulation**

Self-regulation requires children to consciously control their own behavior. Playing games like Simon Says, singing songs, using obstacle courses and dancing to music all help children develop self-regulation. Meeting children's sensory needs also promotes self-regulation by helping children feel calmer and more able to focus.

### **Build a Sense of Community and Belonging**

There are many ways to build a sense of community and belonging. Here are a few .... allowing children to express opinions, creating class books, displaying children's photographs and artwork, sharing celebrations, engaging in teamwork activities and welcoming a child to school.

### **Foster Children's Social Skills**

Problem solving, conflict resolution, assertion and successful entry into play are some of the social skills Teachers foster in young children.

### **Read Books and Facilitate Class Discussions**

Reading books where characters face and solve problems helps children think about how they might solve similar problems.

### **Offer Choices**

Allowing children to make choices helps them feel empowered and increases their willingness to cooperate. Teachers may ask children to choose one of two acceptable options.

### **Use Humor, Songs and Games to Make Undesirable Activities More Appealing**

Young children like to laugh, sing and play games. Using humor often lightens the mood for everyone. Turning a command into a game or song makes the required activity more appealing.

### **Offer Encouragement**

Encouragement is used when children need a boost of confidence. A child might be frustrated with a task, feel unsure how to fix a problem or embarrassed by a mistake. Words of encouragement include ... "You'll figure this out" or "Don't worry it takes practice"

### **Ignore and Entice**

Ignoring a child's behavior and enticing him/her to engage in a fun but more appropriate activity can be an effective strategy especially for very young children. Safety is never compromised.

### **Acknowledge Feelings and Desires**

Children are usually more cooperative when their feelings, opinions and desires are acknowledged. Teachers help children express their feelings in acceptable ways. Teachers also allow children to communicate preferences and desires but *do not always accommodate* those preferences and desires. Learning how to be flexible and cope with disappointment is an important life skill.

### **Use Narration**

Narrating what is happening in the classroom can be a great teaching tool. Narration allows Teachers to point out the negative and positive effects of behavior, teach emotional vocabulary and help children self-reflect. Teachers may describe a child's body language or make a guess about a

child's motivation by saying something like "When you pushed her, I think you were trying to tell her you needed more space. Try telling her with words instead."

### **Use Communication Methods That Are Clear and Effective**

Using a pleasant tone or even a neutral tone when addressing unkind or unsafe behavior undermines the message. Teachers use a tone that reflects frustration or disapproval when needed.

To communicate expectations Teachers focus on what children should be doing as opposed to what children should *not* be doing. In other words they use positive language like "walking feet" as opposed to negative language like "no running."

### **Enforce Logical Consequences**

Teachers use logical consequences where the relationship between the consequence and the behavior is clear. Often the consequence involves having a child fix a problem or repeat a behavior in a more appropriate fashion. Examples include having a child clean up the toys he/she just dumped or having a child ask for an item with words instead of grabbing.

If a child refuses to cooperate with a logical consequence Teachers employ another logical consequence. They may have the child miss out on a favorite activity until he/she has complied with the original request or they may place a desired toy out of reach. If during this process a child exhibits strong emotions and engages in unsafe behavior a private space for cooling down may be used. Safety concerns are the only reason Teachers use physical restraint in the classroom.

### **Use Rewards Sparingly and Avoid Relying on Punishments to Change Behavior**

Rewards can add a little extra incentive when children are struggling or when they are learning a new skill. Offering words of encouragement and praising effort and friendly behavior are the two types of rewards most frequently used by Teachers.

Teachers always use logical consequences rather than punishment but sometimes a consequence seems like a punishment because it is both logical and undesirable. An example would be not allowing a child who keeps knocking over other people's block structures to continue playing in the block area.

### **Avoid Shame**

Teachers do not use behavior management systems that publicly display which children have been good and which children have been bad. These systems use shame to motivate children.

### **Cooling Down Protocol**

Children can experience very intense feelings such as anger, sorrow, or excitement. Sometimes these feelings are so strong that children can no longer control their behavior. They may kick, scream, hit or sob uncontrollably as they express these strong emotions. When this happens Teachers will be patient, supportive and firm in their efforts to help children regain control. In these situations, Teachers may implement a "cooling down" protocol. Cooling down means just what its name implies, children take a break from the busy classroom to regain their composure privately.

The “cooling down protocol” works as follows:

1. The Teacher may take the child to a quiet place in the room, or immediately outside of it. Taking the child to a quiet place will limit the opportunity for peers to stare at the child. When children are upset, privacy helps calm them down. An audience can prolong the difficulty.
2. Once the child is in the quiet place the Teacher will say something like “You’re still very upset. When you are calm we can talk about what’s bothering you”.
3. The Teacher will remain with the child and if necessary carefully restrain the child from hurting himself/herself or the Teacher. If possible, a Teacher may offer materials or activities that help meet a child’s sensory needs.
4. Once the child has calmed down, the Teacher will discuss the original concern with the child and accompany the child back to the classroom.
5. Later in the day the Teacher will make sure to have some positive contact with the child to show that the Teacher does not dislike the child because he or she lost control. The purpose of the cooling down protocol is to help children regain control, not to punish, shame or blame children in any way.

*“Cooling Down Protocol” is the ultimate discipline strategy used. Adults DO NOT slap, spank or ridicule children in an effort to maintain order in the classroom. GCP maintains zero tolerance for any kind of abuse of children, staff and volunteers.*

### **Bullying**

With limited experience and newly developing social and emotional skills young children sometimes engage in behaviors that fall into the category of bullying. They may aggressively pursue their own needs, pushing and hurting others in order to get what they want. They may also experiment with name calling and various negative behaviors to gain the cooperation or attention of peers and adults. Teachers will routinely help children see the negative impact of such behaviors and they will teach children appropriate alternatives. Teachers will also coach children how to appropriately assert themselves when treated disrespectfully.

### **Expulsion Policy**

The goal of preschool is to help children develop the skills needed to succeed in both school and life. A child who is expelled from preschool is denied important opportunities to develop these skills. Removal from a program also can delay the identification of and services for developmental delays and mental health issues. Our Behavior and Discipline Plan aims to use expulsion only as a last resort when there are serious safety concerns that cannot be reduced or eliminated with reasonable modifications. The school recognizes that children eligible for IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Act) may not be subject to exclusionary discipline due to behavior related to a disability. Unless the safety concerns are extreme the school will follow the procedures outlined in the Behavior and Discipline Plan.

### **Behavior and Discipline Plan**

Young children sometimes express strong emotions in an unsafe manner especially when they have conflicts with peers. Teachers will encourage peaceful conflict resolution. They will also praise and

recognize positive behavior, while discouraging and constructively addressing mistaken behaviors. We believe discipline is not about punishment, but rather about teaching appropriate forms of behavior. Positive methods will be used to redirect a child's mistaken behavior into more acceptable modes of interacting with peers and expressing emotions.

A child may be asked to take a break from the group for a short period of time to regain their composure privately (See *Cooling Down Protocol*). Behavior that results in the need for the *Cooling Down Protocol*, behaviors that repeatedly impact peers in a negative manner or a behavior that results in harm to another child will be brought to the attention of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

If, after an appropriate length of time (to be decided by the Teachers, dependent upon the child's age and maturity), the mistaken behavior still continues, the Teachers will do the following:

1. Discuss the situation with the Parent(s) or Guardian(s) privately.
2. Implement a written Student Action Plan ("SAP") with input from the Parent(s)/Guardian(s). The plan may include referrals for the student. Such referrals will be kept confidential between Teachers and the involved family.
3. Begin documenting behavior and how it is addressed. This documentation will be shared with families.
4. Email Co-Chair(s) with pertinent information and the SAP.
5. File an Incident Report if, at any time, the child harms themselves or another person. The harmed child's Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be notified of the incident at pick-up, if feasible, or as soon as possible thereafter.

In the event that there is (A) no improvement in the mistaken behavior after an appropriate length of time (to be decided by the Teachers, dependent upon the child's age and maturity), or (B) if an Incident Report is filed, then the steps below will be taken:

A conference will be scheduled with the Teachers, the Co-Chair(s), and the Parent(s)/Guardian(s). Together, they will do the following:

1. Review the mistaken behavior taking place and review the incident report if applicable
2. Discuss other issues that may be affecting the child.
3. Develop a written three-week Behavior Modification Plan ("BMP") for the classroom. During this period the Teachers will document the child's behavior and how it is addressed.
4. Review additional resources, such as reading materials.
5. Come to an understanding that the goal of the BMP is to modify the child's behavior for continued success after the three-week timeframe and throughout their enrollment in the Preschool.

At the end of this **three-week period** the Teachers and the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will meet. The child's behavior will determine further action, as follows:

a) If the child's behavior improves, Teachers and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will review, modify and/or terminate BMP, as decided by the Teachers. The original SAP may remain in place for the remainder of the student's enrollment in the program.

b) If the same behavior occurs, Teachers and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will reassess and modify the BMP, changing it for greater impact if necessary, and begin another three-week period.

*If at any time during this three-week period an Incident Report is filed, the Teachers, the Co-Chair(s), and the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will immediately meet to determine the student's status in the preschool.*

*Removal from the preschool may occur if no satisfactory solution can be determined. (See Student Status Review Procedure below)*

**At the end of the 2nd three-week period (six weeks total):**

a) If the child's behavior improves, Teachers and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will meet to review, modify and/or terminate BMP, as decided by the Teachers. The original SAP may remain in place for the remainder of the student's enrollment in the program.

b) If the same behavior occurs, Teachers, Co-Chair(s) and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will meet to determine the student's status in the Preschool. Removal from the Preschool may occur if no satisfactory solution can be determined. (See Student Status Review Procedure below)

### **Student Status Review Procedure**

A summary of the information regarding the student's behavior will be provided to the Executive Board for review. The Executive Board, based on recommendations provided by the Teachers and Co-Chair(s), may vote on the student's removal from the Preschool. The removal may be either:

1. Temporary – The amount of time away and conditions for return will be determined by the Executive Board.
2. Permanent – As approved by the Executive Board.

## **RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

Children receiving childcare from GCP and all other Child Care Facilities in the state of Maine have the following rights.

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
2. Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the Child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.
3. Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards found in the licensing rules for Child Care Facilities in the state of Maine.
4. Each Child must be provided child care services without regard to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the Child Care Facility.

6. Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the Child Care Facility.
7. Each Child has the right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to Child Care Facility policies and practices.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES**

### **YIKES Emergency Plan**

As required by licensing the Preschool has a detailed emergency plan specific to our school. Members should review this plan, sign an emergency transportation agreement and be familiar with the basic procedures described in the plan. The full YIKES emergency plan can be found at the end of this handbook.

In the event of an emergency children will be evacuated to either a safe room or an off-site location. Staff will cooperate with emergency officials. The school will provide information about the specific off-site locations to families prior to the start of school. This information is vital but confidential. Every effort will be made to communicate with families in a safe and timely manner. In the event the Preschool needs to close due to power loss, loss of heat or water and/or severe weather warnings, families will be called or texted to pick up their children.

### **Smoking Restrictions**

Smoking is prohibited in the preschool building, on school grounds and at any preschool function. If a person is seen smoking, the person who witnesses this should ask them to extinguish the smoking material and remind them that smoking is prohibited.

### **Weapons**

Firearms, hunting knives, bows and arrows, and other weapons are prohibited on the premises of GCP.

### **Daily Safety Protocols**

#### **Attendance**

Teachers will note the time of each student's arrival, the time of each student's dismissal and the name of the person who picked up. Families will not need to sign children in or out but may be asked to fill out a brief form if someone else is picking up their child.

#### **Doors**

The front inside door will be locked when the arrival process is completed. Doors are equipped with a sound device to help alert teachers that a door is being opened. The back door and cubby room door will remain locked unless the class is outside. When outside Teachers may choose to keep the back door locked in order to ensure children won't leave the playground without permission. In this case, the cubby room door will be unlocked instead. Children can not easily access the cubby room door because of the child-proof gate and adults can use this door to re-enter the building when needed.



### Head Counts

During the morning and especially during transition to the playground Teachers will “count heads” to ensure that everyone is safe and secure.

### Outdoor Dismissal Routine

Teachers will gather children for an outside goodbye circle about 5-10 minutes prior to dismissal. Families are asked to stay outside the fence until the goodbye circle is completed and dismissal begins.

Belongings/backpacks will be outside with the students. Families should not enter the building without permission.

### Indoor Dismissal

If dismissal happens indoors families should form a line outside the front door and a Teacher will bring your child to the door for dismissal. If you need to pick up your child early please call the school or let a Teacher know your plans in advance.

### Alternate Pick Up Arrangements

Please inform a teacher when someone other than a parent or the consistent adult (grandparent/nanny) will be picking up your child. Teachers will record this information and your signature may be required. If needed you may call to give permission to have someone else pick up your child and then provide a signature at a later time. Teachers will ask for ID if a person is unfamiliar to them.

### Dismissal of the Parent Helper Child

If a Parent Helper is still cleaning at the time of dismissal he/she is welcome to ask another parent/adult from the class to watch his/her child and then let a Teacher know. Otherwise the Teachers will bring the Parent Helper’s child back inside the classroom at the time of dismissal.

### Non-Enrolled Siblings

If you are the Parent Helper and you have a younger child with you please keep that child inside with you while you clean. You may ask another family to care for your younger child but staff members of a licensed preschool can only supervise enrolled children.

### Late Pick Ups

Call if you are going to be late but please be safe- do not call while driving. Children and Teachers like reassurance that an adult is on his/her way. Often you will have to leave a message if the whole class is outside. See page 14 for the late pick-up policy.

### Evacuation and Fire Drills

The Preschool will have emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis and such drills shall be conducted according to policies and procedures, which are posted in each room utilized by children. A record of drills shall be available for inspection by the State Fire Marshal's Office and local fire inspectors. Teachers shall record drills.

In the event of a fire or fire drill, the teachers will initiate the evacuation procedure.

1. Assistant Teacher will guide the main body of children out to the nearest exit.
2. Lead Teacher will check the other areas of the Preschool building including the bathroom, cubby room and office. Lead Teacher will enter all the rooms that can safely be entered and lead any people found to the nearest exit.
3. Lead Teacher will take the attendance sheet, emergency backpack and cell phone with her.
4. The children will be taken to line up on the back fence located in the playground area. Another site will be chosen if this spot is unsafe. If there is a real fire or other emergency children and adults will move to the off-site evacuation site.
5. In the event of a real fire, the Lead Teacher will call 911.
6. The children are to remain outdoors until directed to return to the building by the Teacher.

### Staff Training

Both teachers and substitutes are required to review all Health and Safety procedures annually and when changes are made. Both teachers are certified in CPR and First Aid trained as required by DHHS.

### Emergency Contact Information

Emergency phone numbers that include the name, address and telephone number of the health care consultant, the fire department, police, ambulance, nearest emergency health care facility, poison control center, telephone number and address of the school, including the location of the school will be immediately visible and posted by the school's telephone.

Emergency information for each child will be hung up inside the kitchen cabinets and also kept in a binder. This binder will be kept in the emergency backpack. The school will keep a complete set of first aid supplies on site. The supply will be restocked as needed and assessed at least annually. A first aid kit will be taken on all field trips and all emergency evacuations.

PLEASE KEEP US INFORMED AND UP TO DATE ON PHONE NUMBERS, EMERGENCY NUMBERS AND OTHER PERTINENT DATA SO THAT WE MAY ACT QUICKLY.

### Accident Procedures

In the case of an accident or a medical emergency, a child will be given immediate first aid and the Preschool will then attempt to reach a parent or guardian. If Teachers cannot reach a parent or guardian, they will contact the child's doctor. If necessary, the school will also call an ambulance. Access to emergency services will be made by using 911. Until the arrival of a parent or guardian or the arrival of a doctor or ambulance, the Teacher will be responsible for the care of the child. If the emergency warrants a trip to the hospital, and a parent or guardian is not available, a Teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance and into the medical center. The remaining Teacher with assistance from the Parent Helper will then assume responsibility for the class.

### Injury Report

Any incident which requires emergency care will be documented by the attending Teacher using the school's Injury Report form. The Injury Report will be signed by the injured student's parent or guardian and the attending Teacher. The report shall be filed in the child's file and a copy shall remain in the school files. Any incident requiring minor First Aid (a small bandage or a short time with an ice pack) will be recorded in the student's injury log, reported to parents/caregivers during dismissal and require a parent/caregiver signature.

Incidents that result in death or serious injury requiring medical services will be reported to DHHS within 24 hours of the incident.

### Allergies

We are always a PEANUT and TREE NUT free school. Additional allergens may be banned if needed. For detailed & current information refer to the Allergy and Snack Policy at the end of the Handbook.

### Hot Beverages

During school hours or when children are present, hot beverages such as coffee or tea shall only be permitted if their container has a screw top lid. Beverages must follow the current Allergy and Snack Policy.

### Adult Purses, Bags and Medications

Staff, parent helpers and other adults must store their purses, bags and medications in a place inaccessible to children. Space will be provided in the office or adults can use the "hooks for grown-ups" that are high up and located behind the butterfly room door.

### Administration of Medications

The Preschool shall administer prescription medication only upon written order from a physician or according to the labeled instructions on the original medicine container and with a written, signed and dated request from the parent or guardian. Only the Lead Teacher and the Assistant Teacher will administer medicine. Parent helpers and substitutes will not administer medicine except to their own child. The Preschool shall record the administration of all medications, including the amount, time, date and signature of the administration of the medication.

The Preschool shall not administer any non-prescription medications to a child without written, signed and dated parental permission naming the medication and dosage. In an emergency verbal permission is allowed if the Teacher makes a written note or the parent/guardian sends an email or text. The parent/guardian must then provide written and signed permission as soon as possible.

### Illness at School

If a child becomes ill at school, a Teacher will stay with the child and the child's parent/guardian or designated emergency contact will be notified. Children who vomit, have diarrhea, or a fever will be sent home. It is the family's responsibility to pick up their child early when their child becomes ill at school. Again, the staff is not permitted to administer any medication without appropriate permission.

### Communicable Diseases - see Covid-19 Safety Protocols for additional information

Please notify the Preschool as soon as possible if your child has contracted a communicable disease. Health Department rules must be followed concerning exclusion from school. If children in the Preschool have been exposed to a communicable disease, all parents will be notified.

Please keep your child home if he/she has any of the following:

A fever or has had one within the previous 24 hours.

\*To return to school a child must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reduction medicine.\*

A constant cough or heavy nasal discharge or bouts of sneezing.

The child is fussy, cranky and "not himself/herself".

Is overtired from unusual activity such as travel, company or holidays.

The child has symptoms of a communicable disease

Diarrhea within the past 24 to 48 hours and/or Vomiting within the past 24 hours.

A rash that has not yet been identified by the child's physician.

Please also note:

- If your child has Strep, wait until your child has had three doses of antibiotic or 24 hours has elapsed before sending your child to school.
- If your child has Chickenpox, wait until all scabs are dried up before sending your child to school.
- If your child has Conjunctivitis (pink eye) you must consult a physician to determine treatment and your child may not return to school until 24 hours after the start of treatment.
- If your child has Lice it must be treated, all mites should be dead and removed from your child's head, and there should be no visible nits before the child may return to school. Your child's Teacher and GCP Co Chair(s) should be notified immediately of any case of lice so that the GCP community can be notified. Your child's name will be kept confidential.

### Immunizations

All immunization records must be up to date and a copy of your child's record must be provided by the start of school. Medical exemptions are allowed. A medical exemption will require a form to be completed signed by a doctor. Maine law no longer allows philosophical and religious exemptions. If a child is behind on their immunizations that child will be allowed to attend Preschool if the family has worked with their primary care provider to create and follow a plan to obtain the required vaccines using a safe and efficient time frame. The plan must be signed and a copy given to the Preschool. A list of required immunizations can be found online using the following link:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/documents/Daycare-Immunization-standards-revised.pdf>

## Insurance

The Preschool has accident insurance that covers teachers, parents and children while at Preschool. Further details of this insurance policy may be obtained from the Chair or a Teacher.

## Infection Control Procedures - see Covid-19 Safety Protocols for additional information

Disposable gloves will be used to assist any child who is bleeding or vomiting in order to assure protection of both child and caregiver. Used gloves will be thrown away in a lined, covered container. Staff will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after cleaning up the soiled area. Soiled clothing will be sealed in a plastic bag with the child's name and returned to the parent or caregiver at dismissal time.

All items and surfaces used for food/eating will be cleaned and disinfected after every class.

All cleaning supplies and disinfectants will be stored in a secure place and out of the reach of children.

All Teachers, Parent Helpers and children will use hand sanitizer or soap and water to cleanse their hands including but not limited to, the following times:

- Upon arrival at the preschool.
- After coming in contact with bodily fluids and discharges. (e.g. blowing your nose)

All Teachers, Parent Helpers and children will wash their hands with soap and water including but not limited to, the following times:

- Before and after eating and handling food.
- After toileting.
- After coming in contact with bodily fluids and discharges.
- After handling school animals or their equipment.
- After cleaning.

Facilities used for hand washing after toileting will be separate from facilities and areas used for food preparation and food service.

## Parking

Street parking is available along the front of the Preschool, in the sandy lot next to the dumpster and in the Municipal Parking lot. Please do not park on the corner or along the playground side of the Preschool. Please drive slowly in the parking lot, especially when driving past the Preschool. Parents must always supervise their children closely in and around the parking lot.

Gorham Cooperative Preschool asks that the rules of the road be followed by all individuals accessing the preschool. This not only includes drop off and pick up times, but any other time when individuals are visiting the preschool. Please note the following:

- Left Tire to Curb Parking: Parking must follow the flow of traffic and not against it. This means no parking with the driver's side of vehicles on the left hand side of the road. The town of Gorham may issue you a ticket and a fine for violations.

- Leaving Children Unattended In A Parked Vehicle: No children shall be left unattended in a parked vehicle. This can result in a serious offense. The fine is up to the discretion of the police officer on duty. Your plates will be run and the officer will bring this violation to your attention.
- The Preschool will make every attempt to keep members aware of any changes to parking regulations issued by the town of Gorham.

### Licensing

A hard copy of the State of Maine DHHS Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities is kept at school. The licensing requirement are also available online at:

[https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/10-148%20Ch.%2032%20Child%20Care%20Facility%20Licensing%20Rule%20Effective%209-27-21\\_jpf%20edits.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/10-148%20Ch.%2032%20Child%20Care%20Facility%20Licensing%20Rule%20Effective%209-27-21_jpf%20edits.pdf)

Having a safe classroom is very important to all of us. If you notice a possible violation to the rules that govern our school, please inform your Class Coordinator or the Chair. They will work with the Teachers to remedy the situation.

If you feel that violations have not been resolved or you want to report violations directly to DHHS, you may contact the following phone number which is staffed 24 hours a day.

DHHS Office of Child and Family Services - Child Protective Intake

1-800-452-1999

TTY (for hard of hearing) 1-800-963-9490

This number will be posted on the family bulletin board.

### Licensing Reports and Notifications

A copy of the latest licensing report showing the findings of the most recent inspection conducted by DHHS will be hung in the entrance way and made available to all members upon request. The state of Maine is planning to post these reports online as another way to access the information. If the inspection shows a need for a Directed Plan of Action to address a rule violation this Plan of Action will also be hung on the parent bulletin board and members will be informed of the plan.

Members will be notified within two business days of any actions taken against GCP by DHHS including but not limited to, decisions to issue conditional license, refusal to renew a license, or to impose fines or other sanctions.

### Mandated Reporting of Suspected Abuse and Neglect

All child care providers are mandated reporters. Mandated reporters are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. Abuse and neglect may include but are not limited to the following

- Physically harming a child (beyond spanking in a reasonable manner)
- Sexually abusing a child
- Exposing a child to substance use, domestic violence, or other unsafe conditions

- Failing to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, or medical care
- Exposing a child to unsafe or unsanitary living conditions
- Threatening to harm a child
- Chronically calling a child names or putting them down

If the Lead Teacher or Assistant Teacher suspects abuse or neglect the suspicion must be immediately shared with the other Teacher and with the Chair. A Mandated Reporter Worksheet will then be used to create a written record of the suspicion and action taken. The Teacher who suspected the abuse or neglect must call Child Protective Intake and fill out the Worksheet. The other Teacher and the Chair will provide assistance as needed. All documentation of the suspected abuse or neglect will be kept in a confidential file separate from the student file. Substitute Teachers must share suspicions of abuse and neglect with the Lead Teacher who will then work with the Substitute Teacher to follow the above protocols.

Notification of the parent/guardian is not required to make a report to Child Protective Services. The Teacher who suspects abuse or neglect will consult with the Chair when deciding whether or not to inform the parent/guardian. The decision to inform will be recorded and will be based on the best interest and safety needs of both the child and the Teacher who is reporting the suspicion.

Reports of abuse and neglect are made by calling the following number  
 DHHS Office of Child and Family Services - Child Protective Intake  
 1-800-452-1999      TTY (for hard of hearing) 1-800-963-9490

This number will be posted on the family bulletin board.

Anyone who suspects abuse or neglect can call this phone number. Maine Law prohibits reporters from civil and criminal liability for the act of reporting or participating in an investigation. If a member shares a suspicion of abuse or neglect with a Teacher, the Teacher will encourage the member to directly make a report. The teacher will also ask the member if the member's name and contact information can be shared if the Teacher decides a report should be made based on the information shared.

### **Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Made Against GCP Staff**

All children attending the Preschool will be protected from abuse and neglect while in the program's care and custody. The term 'Abuse and Neglect' means a threat to a child's health or welfare by physical, mental or emotional injury or impairment, sexual abuse or exploitation, deprivation of essential needs or lack of protection from these, by a person responsible for the child.

To prevent incidents of abuse and neglect GCP Teachers and Substitute Teachers must complete a state-mandated background check before being allowed to care for students. The Lead Teacher and the Assistant Teacher are also required to complete a yearly health and safety training and complete a mandated reporter training once every four years.



Allegations of abuse or neglect against a member of the GCP staff can be shared with either a Teacher or the Chair. Reports can also be made directly to the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services using the following phone number.

DHHS Office of Child and Family Services - Child Protective Intake  
1-800-452-1999 TTY (for hard of hearing) 1-800-963-9490

This number will be posted on the family bulletin board.

Teachers must inform the Chair of any allegations made against staff. The Chair will confirm that a report has been made to DHHS. The Chair will then hold an emergency board meeting and inform board members of the allegation. If either DHHS or the board determines that the allegations are both credible and cause ongoing concern for the safety and health of students, the accused staff member will not be allowed to work with children until these concerns are resolved. Resolution of concerns will require the completion of any investigations by DHHS and approval by the board. A plan of action will be designed to address concerns and ensure the safety of students. The board will terminate the employment of any staff member who is found to have engaged in gross negligence or misconduct.

If the Chair is the person who makes the allegation, the Chair's role in leading the response to the allegation will be given to a class coordinator. In a manner consistent with confidentiality requirements, membership will be kept updated of any allegations that occur.

GCP will cooperate in all investigations of abuse and neglect, including identifying staff members currently or previously employed: providing consent for disclosure to DHHS of information from, and allowing DHHS to disclose information to any person and/or agency DHHS may specify as necessary to the prompt investigation of allegations and for the protection of children.

### **Background Checks for Staff and Volunteers**

The Office of Child & Family Services (OCFS) has implemented a criminal background check process to include fingerprinting that meets federal and state requirements for all child care providers delivering direct care services including volunteers (parent helpers). Prior to caring for students all staff and volunteers must provide GCP a letter stating that they have completed the background check and have been found by OCFS to be eligible to work as a childcare provider. This process must be repeated every five years.

Staff and volunteers are required to disclose to the board any new legal proceedings, arrests, convictions and investigations by Child Protective Services. Staff and volunteers must also disclose any changes in their mental or physical health that impacts their ability to care for students.

### **Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Made Against GCP Volunteers or Visitors**

To ensure the safety of our students, staff will monitor parent helpers and all volunteers and visitors to ensure they are interacting safely and appropriately with students. Except for approved substitute teachers who maintain a full employee file with GCP, no volunteer or visitor will ever be left alone with a student who is not their own child. Reminders of health and safety protocols will be provided. Teachers will



document failures to follow health and safety protocols and share their concerns with the Chair. These failures may result in losing the privilege to volunteer and the termination of membership.

Any volunteer or visitor seen abusing or harming a child will be immediately required to leave the Preschool. The incident will be documented and shared with the Chair and with the families of any children involved. DHHS will be notified. If abuse is suspected but not directly seen, the details of the suspected abuse will be recorded and shared with the chair. Reports and suspicions of abuse can be made by both staff and members. The Chair and the board will investigate and may contact DHHS. GCP will fully cooperate with any investigations conducted by DHHS. No person suspected of abusing a student will be allowed on Preschool property until any investigation by the board and DHHS is complete.

### Sexual Misconduct Policy

GCP strives to maintain a harassment-free environment for all teachers, administrators, volunteers and others. Sexual harassment is a violation of this principle and is never permissible. Under the law, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions
- Such conduct has the effect of interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating or offensive work environment

Examples of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include but are not limited to:

- Suggestive remarks, jokes, slurs, or degrading comments of a sexual or gender nature
- Unwelcome sexual advances, hugging, touching, or kissing
- Requests for sexual favors
- Unwelcome sexual flirtation or proposition

### Reporting Procedures

The Preschool supports and encourages reporting of all incidents of sexual harassment, regardless of the identity of the offender. If you believe you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you should promptly report the incident to the Chair or the Executive Board. If you witness conduct that you believe is sexual harassment, that conduct should be reported as well. All complaints of sexual harassment will be investigated and treated seriously.

### Response to Reports of Alleged Sexual Harassment

The Preschool upon receiving the information will establish a response committee. The response committee will promptly conduct an investigation into, and review of the allegations. Investigations will be conducted expeditiously, with due regard for the sensitive and serious nature of the allegations. The investigation may include interviewing the alleged victim, potential witnesses and the alleged harasser. The response committee may also receive any documents or other evidence produced by the investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, the response committee will conclude with a report as to the nature of the complaint and any recommended actions involving the parties involved.

Employees who complain of harassment in good faith will be protected against retaliation of any kind.

### **Resources for Victims of Abuse**

If you or your child are victims of abuse you can contact Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Center <https://www.cacmaine.org/> 1-800-871-7741 or find other resources using <https://www.accessmaine.org/>

## **ALLERGY AND SNACK POLICY**

### **Allergy Policy Statement**

Gorham Cooperative Preschool recognizes the potentially serious consequences of allergen exposure to children with allergies. Severe reactions may include a condition known as anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction caused by exposure to certain foods or other substances.

The Preschool does not purport to be, nor can it be deemed to be free of food items and non-food items that may lead to a severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction. The Preschool will make every reasonable effort to reduce the risk to children with severe allergies or anaphylaxis as detailed in this policy.

Creating an environment that reduces the exposure risk for severely allergic or anaphylactic children requires the cooperation and understanding of all members and staff of the Preschool. In order to attain the utmost safety for all our children it is essential that all severe or anaphylactic allergies be reported to the Preschool before the student enters school grounds.

### **Identification of Children at Risk**

It is the responsibility of the family to inform the Preschool that their child has allergies or is anaphylactic or potentially anaphylactic. Staff and the Chair will be made immediately aware of any life-threatening or severe allergy concerns. Any family whose child has allergy concerns should make these concerns known prior to the start of school or as soon as new concerns arise. Upon learning of these concerns the Lead Teacher will engage with the family and ensure all necessary forms are filled out and ensure that the needs of the child are fully understood. This information will be shared with the Executive Board and used to update the Annual Allergy Safety Plan.

### **Allergy Action Plan**

The parents or guardians along with the child's doctor or Allergist, must complete an Allergy Action Plan, form annually. The form must be signed by a doctor or allergist prior to the child's first day of Preschool. In addition, the form must be updated and signed by the doctor and a parent or guardian if there are any updates to the child's allergy status. The Lead Teacher will discuss the child's allergies with the family prior to the child's first day of Preschool.

### **The Allergy Action Plan will include the following:**

- List of specific allergens
- Protocol for ingestion of food allergens with no symptoms
- Protocol if symptoms are swelling/tingling/itching of face/mouth/tongue/extremities; skin hives; itching; rash; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; tightening of throat; hoarseness; hacking cough

Protocol if symptoms are shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, weak pulse; low blood pressure; fainting; paleness or blueness

Included in the above mentioned protocols will be contact information, emergency contact information, as well as specific information pertaining to the administration of medication (e.g., Benadryl, inhaler, etc.) in a non-emergency situation and use of an EpiPen Jr. in an emergency situation.

### Availability and Location of Allergy Medications and EpiPens

Families of an anaphylactic child must provide an EpiPen Jr. to be left at the Preschool, along with any other allergy medications their child may need. Teachers and the child's family will check the EpiPens and medications monthly to ensure they have not reached their expiration date. Families must promptly replace the EpiPen Jr. and other medications when the expiration date is reached. The Child will not be permitted to attend Preschool if an EpiPen Jr. or medication is expired. Staff is trained to administer the EpiPen Jr. and other medications.

Epi-pens, other medications and a copy of the Allergy Action Plan are stored in a secure but unlocked location easily accessible by Teachers to ensure prompt availability in the event of an allergic emergency at the Preschool. This location will be labeled using the child's name.

Children who are no longer allergic, or no longer require an EpiPen Jr. and other medications, must present a signed and dated letter of explanation from their doctor or allergist so their name may be removed from the Preschool's allergy lists.

### Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction

A person experiencing an allergic reaction may have any of the following symptoms:

- Trouble breathing, speaking or swallowing.
- A drop in blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, loss of consciousness.
- Flushed face, hives or a rash, red and itchy skin.
- Swelling of the eyes, face, lips, throat and tongue.
- Anxiousness, distress, faintness, paleness, sense of doom, weakness.
- Cramps, diarrhea, vomiting.

The reactions can vary and may range from mild to severe depending on how the child's body responds to allergens, as well as how much of the allergen(s) was ingested. Reactions can also occur from skin contact with, or inhalation of certain allergens. Teachers will follow the protocols listed in the Allergy Action Plan and alert parents or guardians immediately upon noticing any symptoms.

### Anaphylactic Treatment Protocol

Teachers are trained in the management of an anaphylactic emergency. If there is an anaphylactic emergency, the protocol is as follows:

1. Lead Teacher will administer EPIPEN JR. (Note time of symptoms and time of injection).
2. Assistant Teacher will call 911. Assistant Teacher will call the parents or guardians. If no parent or guardian can be reached, the Assistant Teacher will call the Alternate Emergency Contact.
3. Parent Helper will help maintain control of the class.

4. Lead Teacher will remain with student, as well as provide emergency care until 911 arrives.
5. Any student who has been given epinephrine must be transported to the hospital via emergency services personnel. If the parent or guardian is not available, a Teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance and into the medical center. (Note: Take used EPIPEN JR and GCP Allergy Action Plan to the hospital).
6. The remaining Teacher and Parent Helper will then assume responsibility for the class.

### **Risk Reduction – Classrooms**

The Preschool is always peanut and tree nut FREE. Other allergens will be banned as needed. Depending on the severity of an allergy, packaged snacks which bear a warning that they were processed in a facility with, shares equipment with or processed on a line with peanuts or tree nuts or other allergen may not be acceptable. See this current year's Annual Allergy Safety Plan at the end of the handbook.

Dry snacks provided by the Preschool will be reviewed and initialed by the parent or guardian of any child with food allergies prior to serving. Families of a student with allergies have the option of providing written consent for teachers to review ingredient lists rather than initialing all pre-packaged food. Food items not reviewed and approved will not be served.

Celebratory Snacks brought into the classroom for class parties and birthdays must meet the requirements of the Annual Allergy Safety Plan, and should include full labeling information. No student with a food allergy will be allowed to eat any food not specifically approved by his/her parent or guardian.

Classroom activities that involve the use of food, either for craft or educational purposes, require advance permission from the parent or guardian of a child with food allergies.

Members are not permitted to bring food items into the Preschool or on Preschool grounds unless these items fully comply with the Annual Allergy Safety Plan.

Teachers will post a notice in their classroom regarding the presence of students with food allergies, as well as all locations of the appropriate medications. This will enable anyone who comes into the classroom as a substitute to be prepared for an allergic emergency.

### **Risk Reduction - Hand Washing**

Upon arriving at the Preschool all children will wash their hands with warm soapy water upon entering the classroom. All adults will wash their hands upon entering the classroom. All classroom occupants (students, teachers and Parent Helpers) will wash their hands before snack and may need to wash hands after snack depending on the current year's needs.

### **Risk Reduction – Field Trips**

Field trips, especially those involving food consumption or contact, should be communicated in advance to families of children with food allergies. If food will be used or consumed as part of the field trip, the family of children will have to grant permission in advance and may provide a substitute food or activity.

One designated person (parent or guardian) should supervise a student with a food allergy during a field trip. This person will be responsible for carrying a cell phone, emergency medicines and instructions, and

the phone number of local emergency services and should be familiar with the symptoms of anaphylaxis as well as how to administer an EpiPen or Twinject as applicable. This designated person should accompany the child for the entire field trip.

### **Risk Reduction – Preparing for an Emergency**

All school staff will be trained in how to recognize life-threatening allergic reactions. The Preschool allergy emergency plans must include coordination with local EMS on emergency response in the event of anaphylaxis. Allergy-free foods and access to epinephrine must be ensured in plans for fire drills, lockdowns, etc.

### **Daily Snacks**

The Preschool provides a daily, nutritious, allergy friendly “dry” snack and water. The dry snack is purchased by a staff member or by a board appointed “Purchaser” who is a member of the Preschool. Parent Helpers supply a fresh fruit or vegetable snack for the students to enjoy on their scheduled Parent Helper day.

In order to keep all children safe families and staff will comply with the Annual Allergy Safety Plan and the Annual Snack Protocols. Both can be found at the end of this Handbook.

### **Food Intolerances and Dietary Restrictions**

During the enrollment process families whose child has food intolerance(s) or other non-allergy related dietary restrictions should make these concerns known. If new concerns arise during the school year families should inform the Lead Teacher. If a student or student’s family has food restrictions or preferences that make certain foods unacceptable the teachers will avoid serving those foods to that student and the family may provide their child with alternative snacks. These alternative snacks must comply with the Annual Allergy Safety Plan. Space will be made available for storing snacks that belong to a child with dietary restrictions. Families may request to review and sign their approval for food served at the Preschool.

### **Celebratory Snacks**

On birthdays or other celebratory days, a special snack time treat is welcome. This treat must comply with the Annual Snack Protocols. Depending on the nutritional values of a celebratory snack, teachers will limit the amount children consume in order to promote healthy habits.

If the Annual Snack Protocols allow sharing of food from home members must communicate with a teacher prior to celebrations. The teacher will facilitate the sharing of information with families whose enrolled child has food allergies and/or food restrictions. Food should be left in the original packaging. If snacks are taken out of the packaging at home, the package must be brought to the Preschool. Recipes with clear ingredient lists for any home-made snacks must be provided. No food will be served to a student with a food allergy without written approval. Families of a student with allergies have the option of providing written consent for teachers to review ingredient lists rather than initialing all pre-packaged food. Food items not reviewed and approved will not be served.

## ANNUAL ALLERGY SAFETY PLAN 2025-2026

### **Banned Allergens**

Products containing any of the following are not allowed at the Preschool ...

PEANUTS

TREE NUTS (common examples include almonds, walnuts, & pecans)

EGGS (and containers that once held eggs)

WHEAT

SESAME SEEDS/SESAME OIL

CHICKPEAS

SHELLFISH

Foods that indicate they “May Contain...”, “Manufactured in a facility that also produces...”, or “Processed using equipment that also...” with the above allergens are not allowed.

### **Other Allergens**

The Preschool does not allow PETS in the playground area or inside the building with the exception of the class gerbils. If a service animal needs to be brought to Preschool let the Lead Teacher know.

### **Food Preparation**

To avoid potential cross contamination Parent Helpers must prepare their fruit or vegetable snack at the Preschool on their Parent Helper day. The Preschool provides a colander, knives and cutting boards for use. If needed you may arrive early to prepare your fruit or veggie. Fruits or vegetables pre-cut by a grocery store are not allowed. Pre-packaged fruits and vegetables will need approval.

### **Food Brought from Home (including beverages other than water)**

Bringing food from home is discouraged. All food brought to the Preschool must be kept in the original packaging. Ingredient list must be shown to teachers and receive approval even if your child is the only one consuming the food. Written approval by the family or families of students with food allergies will be required if those students will be present when the food is consumed.

### **How to Read a Label**

In the U.S. all food manufacturers are required to list the top eight most common allergens in their ingredients list (milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat & soy). This information can usually be found under the ingredient list. They are not required to list possible cross- contamination with other food allergens during production, although many companies do list this information voluntarily. Some of this year’s allergens are not part of the top eight.

### **Hand Washing/Limiting Exposure**

Pay special attention to items and clothing brought into the school to avoid accidental exposure. Allergic reactions can be caused by simple skin contact. Be especially cautious if you or your child consumes food items containing the banned allergens prior to the start of school. Be mindful of the need to clean teeth, hands and face to remove any allergens. Wash hands at the sink upon arrival at school.

## ANNUAL SNACK PROTOCOLS 2025-2026

These protocols were designed to ensure safety and make strict compliance with the Annual Allergy Safety Plan easier for both staff and families.

### **Daily Snacks**

- During the daily snack time students will be offered a dry snack and a fruit or vegetable. Do not send your child with additional snacks unless an alternative snack is needed to address food restrictions like an intolerance or religious prohibition.
- The Parent Helper will supply the fruit or vegetable for all students in the class. The fruit or vegetable must be prepared at the Preschool and can not be prepared in advance at home. If the fruit or vegetable is pre-packaged it will require approval. Fruits and vegetables prepared by a grocery store will not be approved. No additional food items including dips should be brought to the Preschool by Parent Helpers.
- The Preschool will supply the “dry snack” that has been approved by the families of children with allergies. These dry snacks can be found in the white cabinet above the classroom sink. Only teachers will restock the white cabinets. Let a teacher know if an item is running low and needs to be restocked.

### **Alternative Snacks**

If a student or student’s family has food restrictions or preferences that make certain foods unacceptable the teachers will avoid serving those foods to that student. Families can provide alternative snacks for their child and space will be made for storing these snacks. These alternative snacks must follow the Annual Allergy Safety Plan.

### **Celebratory Snacks (Birthdays)**

To celebrate a birthday, families can have their child choose a pre-approved sweet treat to share with classmates. There will be at least two pre-approved sweet treats stored in the office. To guarantee the safety of students with allergies, celebratory snacks prepared at home will not be permitted. Teachers will limit the sweet treat to a small serving. If you prefer your child not be offered a sweet treat let a teacher know. If you have an alternate idea for a sweet treat, work with teachers ahead of time to determine if the foods involved will be allergy safe.

### **Celebratory Snacks (Holidays)**

To ensure everyone’s safety, food items used to celebrate holidays (Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Valentine’s Day) will be planned by the teachers and discussed with the families of children who have food allergies and food restrictions. The focus will be on serving healthy safe food in a fun manner. A small safe sweet treat may be included.

### **Snacks for Special Events**

Any food served at an event happening inside the Preschool or on the playground must be pre-approved and follow the Annual Allergy Safety Plan. The Preschool may not always be able to or willing to ban allergens from events and fundraisers held off-site.



## GORHAM COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

### COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS

This document was revised August 2025

#### **Overview**

The Gorham Cooperative Preschool (GCP) staff and executive board members used guidance from the *Maine Department of Health and Human Services* (DHHS) and the *Center for Disease Control* (CDC) to create Covid-19 protocols. These protocols have been updated to reflect current guidance and conditions.

#### **Covid-19 Prevention Measures**

- **Outdoor Drop Off (start of school day)** During drop off GCP staff will continue to meet your student at the front door if possible. If you need to come inside you will be allowed.
- **Outdoor Playspace** When the weather is seasonable teachers may set up the outdoor space with some of the materials normally used indoors.
- **Learning Materials and Cleaning** Teachers will be on the lookout for items that end up in children's mouths or items/surfaces contaminated by coughs and sneezes. These will be cleaned in a timely fashion or set aside for cleaning at a later time. In addition to daily cleaning of commonly used surfaces, more extensive cleaning will be completed over the weekend. This cleaning has always been done at GCP and will continue.
- **Snack** Snacks are served on disposable paper plates and paper cups. All tables will be disinfected prior to snack. Students will be using a shared water pitcher for the initial pouring of water.
- **Dismissal** Weather permitting, students will end their day outside. Families should wait by the gate on the shed side for their child to be dismissed. For inclement weather families should wait by the front porch. Families are welcome to stay after class and use the playground space.
- **Handwashing** Handwashing will be done at the start of school and before snack. Sanitizer will be available both inside and outside to be used for cleaning hands when using a sink is not feasible. Sanitizer or hand washing will be required any time a student, staff or visitor contaminates his or her hands with bodily secretions.
- **Masks** Wearing a mask may be encouraged depending on recent exposure and illness. Otherwise families can decide whether or not to have their child wear a mask. Please let a teacher know if you expect your child to wear a mask.



- **Vaccination** Surrounding our students with people who are vaccinated helps reduce the risk of students being exposed to Covid-19. GCP encourages but does not require all members, volunteers, guests and staff to be fully vaccinated against flu and Covid-19.
- **Field Trips and Special Guests** Outside locations for field trips will be prioritized. Special guests like a firefighter or a library outreach educator are important parts of the preschool experience and will continue.
- **Fundraising and Community Events** Fundraising and community events may be limited to outside or off-site locations.
- **Child Development Services** GCP has always worked with families to obtain services that teachers are not qualified to provide. These services are primarily provided by Child Development Services and are often required to be provided in a school setting. GCP will continue to support the use of these services.
- **Ventilation** One way to decrease transmission while inside is through the use of ventilation and air purification. When the weather is mild windows will be kept open. When the weather is too cold for wide open windows, the Preschool will use an air purifier.
- **Fire Drills and Emergency Procedures** Monthly fire drills will continue. All emergency procedures as described in the GCP YIKES Emergency Response plan will be followed. These include sheltering in place inside the Preschool office or relocating to a different site if needed. A copy of the YIKES plan will be provided before the start of Preschool.
- **Substitute Teachers** GCP tries to maintain full employee files for at least two people willing and able to work as a substitute teacher. Without an available substitute teacher, class will be canceled. If both teachers are absent, class will be canceled.

### **Daily Screening Questions**

Families and staff are expected to use the daily screening questions to help determine if attending preschool is allowed.

The following screening questions will be used for all students, as well as siblings who will be participating in a parent helper day.

- Does your child have any of the following symptoms - a fever, a persistent cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, congestion, chills, body aches not caused by a physical injury, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, unexplained fatigue, nausea/vomiting or diarrhea?
- Has anyone in your child's household been recently exposed to Covid-19 and is now experiencing signs of illness?
- Has your child tested positive for Covid-19 in the past 10 days?
- Has your child come into contact with anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19 within the past two weeks?

The following screening questions will be used for all staff and visitors

- Do you have any of the following symptoms - a fever, a persistent cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, congestion, chills, body aches not caused by a physical injury, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, unexplained fatigue, nausea/vomiting or diarrhea?
- Has anyone in your household been recently exposed to Covid-19 and is now experiencing signs of illness?
- Have you tested positive for Covid-19 in the past 10 days?
- Have you come into contact with anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19 within the past two weeks?

#### Review Process for Answering Yes to Any of the Screening Questions

If you answer yes to any of these questions notify the Preschool by calling or sending an email to **teachers.gcp@gmail.com**. Provide as many details as possible. You or your child may still be allowed to attend Preschool depending on specific circumstances. Always let staff know why your student is absent - we are required to record absences caused by illness.

#### **COVID-19 Exposure Protocols**

The CDC defines an exposure as spending 15 minutes or more in close proximity to a person infected with Covid-19. Exposure includes contact with someone who tests positive or shows symptoms within 48 hours of having spent time with you.

For exposures to Covid-19 that involve being exposed to an infected person outside of your household for a fairly short amount of time, use the following protocol.

**Mask, Test and Monitor for Symptoms** Continue to attend preschool if asymptomatic. During the ten days after exposure wear a mask when at the preschool except during snack. If not able to wear a mask, a test for Covid-19 three days after exposure is strongly encouraged. If symptoms develop anytime during the ten days following an exposure stay away from the preschool for at least 48 hours and then test negative using an at-home test before returning to preschool. If symptoms develop and testing is not feasible, please consult the lead teacher to determine when to return to preschool.

For exposures to Covid-19 that involve being exposed to an infected household member there is a greater chance of becoming infected and the following stricter protocol should be used.

**Student Protocol** A student can continue to be at the preschool provided they show no symptoms and test negative using an at-home test prior to each day of preschool for at least the first five days following an exposure. If able, students are encouraged to wear a mask for the ten

days following an exposure. If symptoms develop anytime during the ten days following an exposure the student should stay away from preschool for at least 48 hours and then test negative using an at-home test before returning to preschool. If symptoms develop and testing is not feasible, please consult the lead teacher to determine when the student can return to preschool. Interactions with the infected household member should be limited. If limiting interactions is not possible or if testing is not feasible, a student should stay away from the preschool until all household members are free from Covid-19.

**Adult Protocol** An adult can continue to be at the preschool provided they show no symptoms and wear a high quality well fitting mask for the ten days following an exposure. If symptoms develop anytime during the ten days following an exposure the adult should stay away from preschool for at least 48 hours and then test negative using an at-home test before returning to preschool. A test three days after exposure is encouraged even if asymptomatic. This protocol assumes the adult is limiting interactions with the infected household member. If limiting interactions is not possible, the adult must be asymptomatic and wear a high quality well fitting mask when at preschool until all household members are free from Covid-19.

## **Illness Protocols**

### **General Illness Protocols**

After experiencing symptoms of illness, students, staff and volunteers should be symptom free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medicine prior to returning to the Preschool. Families are encouraged to test for Covid-19 if symptoms warrant a test. For positive test results, follow Covid-19 Infection Protocols.

Everyone is expected to use their best judgment and, if needed, consult with a teacher or a health care provider when determining the safety of attending Preschool if others in their household are experiencing any signs of illness.

### **Suspected COVID Infections While at School**

If a student begins to display possible symptoms of Covid-19 during the school day, that student will be isolated from others. A teacher will remain with the student for supervision and support. The student's family will be contacted and expected to arrive early to pick up their child. The student's family will be encouraged to test their child for Covid-19. Families will be required to update staff regarding the status of any follow up testing.

### **Testing for Covid-19 Based on Symptoms**

For identifying Covid-19 after noticing symptoms, an at-home rapid antigen test or a PCR test can be used. Results for an at-home test are more reliable when taken twice 24-48 hours apart. If using a PCR test, do not return to Preschool until negative results are received.

### **COVID-19 Infection Protocols**

Positive test results for students and for individuals who have recently spent time at the Preschool must be quickly shared with the Preschool staff. **The quickest way to share positive Covid-19 test results is by calling or texting Karen's cell phone at 207-239-1178.**

An individual who has tested positive for Covid-19 in the past five days must not be on Preschool property. Five days after testing positive, there are two options for returning to preschool. (For determining when five days have passed, the day of the positive test or the start of symptoms is considered day zero)

**Complete A Full Ten Day Isolation** Continue to stay away from the preschool for an additional five days. You must be fever free for at least 24 hours and be experiencing either no symptoms or symptoms that are mild and improving before returning to preschool. Testing is optional after completing a full ten day isolation.

**Shorten Isolation by Testing** Beginning on day six, an at-home test can be taken to determine if the infection has cleared. Do not return to preschool until the at-home test shows a negative results or a full ten days have passed. You must be fever free for at least 24 hours and be experiencing either no symptoms or symptoms that are mild and improving before returning to preschool. If returning before a full ten days have passed, a mask is encouraged especially if minor symptoms are lingering despite testing negative.

#### Positive Covid-19 Cases Associated with GCP (Student, Visitor, Volunteer or Staff)

When there is a known positive Covid-19 case associated with GCP, the Preschool will enforce the following procedures.

- If the person who tested positive for Covid-19 was at the Preschool while symptomatic or during the 48 hours prior to symptom onset or the taking of a Covid test, anyone who was exposed will be contacted and required to follow GCP exposure protocols. The name of the person who tested positive will be kept confidential. Class will not be canceled.
- Even if a student has not recently been at school, families still must inform a teacher if their child tests positive for Covid-19.
- GCP staff will not be informing families of positive cases associated with the Preschool if the person who tested positive for Covid-19 was not at the Preschool while symptomatic and was not at the Preschool during the 48 hours prior to symptom onset or the taking of a Covid test.
- Anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19 must follow GCP Covid-19 Infection Protocols before being allowed back on Preschool property.

#### **School Closures, Extended Absences and Distance Learning**

We are hopeful that GCP will remain fully open for the entire school year. Tuition is the primary source of income for Gorham Cooperative Preschool. Policies regarding tuition are designed to be both fair to members and fair to GCP.

- GCP will not automatically prorate tuition for school closings resulting from Covid-19
- If there have been a significant number of canceled school days resulting from Covid-19 the board may choose to compensate families by adjusting tuition
- Members whose individual child is required to stay home for an extended period of time will not have their tuition prorated. Teachers will keep in touch and provide some outreach.
- Extended school closures beyond a two week period will automatically result in the implementation of distance learning and adjusted tuition fees.

### Distance Learning

We are hopeful that distance learning will not be needed. Tuition will be adjusted for distance learning. Tuition for distance learning will be \$100 per month for both the 2-Day and the 3-Day class. Tuition fees will be prorated depending on the length of time the school utilizes distance learning. Failure to pay the distance learning tuition could result in the loss of your child's spot in the Preschool.

The distance learning tuition will provide for ...

- A weekly packet of hands-on projects (to be delivered or picked up at the Preschool)
- Online videos of teacher led songs, stories and activities
- A once-a-week virtual class meeting
- A weekly list of at-home suggestions

Payment of the distance learning tuition will help ensure that Gorham Cooperative Preschool will be able to re-open. Fees for rent, utilities and insurance will continue even when students are not physically present. Staff will need to be paid to ensure that administrative tasks are completed. Staff will also be investing time in the preparation of distance learning. Your financial support is appreciated.

## **YIKES EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN**

### **Gorham Cooperative Preschool**

**A one page summary of the communication procedures, the reunification procedures and the specific location of evacuation sites will be provided to all members during orientation. Members should find a secure but accessible place to keep this summary. A photograph of the summary stored in a members phone may be the best way to always have easy access to this important information.**

This plan defines emergency response operations including communications plans, student release procedures, general emergency actions, and hazard-specific procedures. This plan will be reviewed by all preschool staff annually.

#### **GOALS**

The primary goal of this plan is to develop effective crisis and security plans that will promote the safety and welfare of students and preschool staff, protect preschool property, and regulate the operation of the preschool during an emergency. This plan will prepare students and preschool staff to take appropriate actions in response to natural, technological, or other hazards. This plan also provides families with accessibility to the policies, guidelines and procedures utilized during an emergency.

#### **SCOPE**

Preschool crises are organized into two categories: critical incident and medical emergencies. A critical incident or medical emergency can vary in scope and intensity. Situations can range from a non-emergency school crisis involving a single student to a life threatening situation affecting the entire preschool.

Critical incidents are events requiring an immediate response by public safety agencies. These events are managed by the preschool staff only until public safety officials arrive. They may include natural and technological disasters, or security emergencies that adversely affect the operation of the preschool. Examples include: tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding, severe thunderstorms/weather incidents, terrorist attacks, fire, hazardous material spills, situations involving a hostage or kidnapping, threats involving weapons, explosions, and fugitive or suspect being pursued near the preschool by law enforcement.

Medical emergencies are those possible life threatening situations arising from health conditions as well as unintentional injuries. Examples include cardiac arrest, serious illness or condition, seizure, playground accidents, and acts of violence that require emergency medical treatment. Preschool staff and local emergency medical personnel have primary responsibilities in responding to medical emergencies. Acts of violence will also require law enforcement involvement.

## **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

The staff of the Gorham Cooperative preschool will strive to preserve and protect life, reduce emotional trauma, minimize personal injury, and cooperate with the local emergency preparedness agencies. If an emergency occurs during preschool hours the first priority is the safety of students and staff. Staff will contact families as soon as safely possible. Staff will first send out a mass text to all families involved and then make individual phone calls if need be. If students are evacuated to a different site a note will be hung on the front door indicating that staff and children have been moved to site A or site B. Remember that during an emergency staff are not allowed to dismiss children until emergency officials have given permission. Do not drive to the school unless it is safe to do so and you have been directed by the preschool staff to pick up your child. During an emergency communication may be difficult because of damage to phone lines or cell phone tower outage. Tune to news media for information. In order to be prepared for emergencies families are encouraged to sign up for CodeRED.

## **EVACUATIONS**

The preschool has three evacuation sites - a safe room inside the school building, a location that can be reached by walking and a location that requires transportation.

### **Safe Room/Shelter in Place**

Shelter in place is where students and staff are evacuated from their classrooms to a central “Safe Room” in the preschool. Safe rooms are located in areas that maximize the safety of occupants. A Safe Room is used when evacuation would place students at risk. The safe room may be used in response to a tornado warning, outdoor structural hazard, outdoor environmental hazard or outside dangerous activity. The safe room will be used when there is a threat of violence or serious incident that could jeopardize the safety of students/staff including intruders, shootings, hostage incidents, gang violence or civil disturbance. Safe Rooms may change depending on the necessity and emergency conditions. Families will be provided the exact location of the GCP safe room prior to the start of school.

### **Safe Room Protocol**

Lead Teacher will initiate a Safe Room Evacuation by verbally communicating to the assistant teacher, other adults present and students. If warranted Lead Teacher will shut off heating, ventilation and air conditioning to stop inflow of outside air into the building. Lead Teacher will shut and lock doors and windows to the outside if no threat is posed by doing so. Assistant Teacher will immediately lead children and other adults to the Safe Room. Lead Teacher will bring current attendance list and cell phone to the safe room. Teachers will secure and lock the safe room door/window and take attendance. Teachers may need to announce a change in status (drop, cover and hold). If necessary teachers will use plastic sheets and duct tape to secure doors and windows from possible exposure due to hazardous air. No students,

staff, parents, or guests will be allowed outside the room or building until the “All Clear” is given by emergency officials.

### **Evacuation Site Within Walking Distance (Site A)**

An off-site evacuation site is used in response to a natural disaster, facility hazard or bomb threat (including incidents at the High School) in which the preschool building is damaged or considered unsafe. The location of the preschool’s walking distance evacuation site will be shared with members prior to the start of the school year. Children and Staff will walk to this location and remain there until emergency officials declare that the preschool is once again safe. If given the “All Clear” signal, children and adults will return to the preschool and resume normal operations. If the preschool is unlikely to be declared safe within a short time frame the teachers will work with emergency officials to determine when to begin the Family Reunification protocol.

### **Evacuation Site Requiring Transportation (Site B)**

When people rush to an emergency site to check on loved ones, streets become congested and emergency response can be hampered. To prevent this problem emergency officials may require preschool staff and children to move to a more remote site. Staff and children may also be relocated to a more remote site in situations requiring a complete area evacuation due to toxic spill, explosion, gas leak or other imminent danger. Transportation to this remote site will be provided by a Fire Department vehicle, a teacher’s personal vehicle or a Gorham Recreation Department van. The location of the preschool’s remote evacuation will be shared with members prior to the start of the school year. In the case of an event that necessitates a large scale evacuation our local government agency will determine the mass shelter locations.

### **Evacuation Site Protocol**

Lead Teacher will advise all adults present of the decision to implement an Off-Site Evacuation. Lead Teacher will gather the current attendance list, cell phone and emergency backpack. Assistant teacher will lead all adults and children to the back fence located in the playground area. Lead Teacher will then take attendance and account for all children and adults before evacuating the preschool grounds. If the situation requires evacuation to the remote site Lead Teacher will notify the Fire Department/Law Enforcement (911) that children and adults need to be moved to a remote location as soon as possible. If emergency vehicles are not available teachers may use personal vehicles to transport everyone to the remote site. Once at the evacuation site Lead Teacher will again take attendance and account for all adults and children. Once at the site and after attendance is taken, teachers will utilize emergency communication to keep families informed. After an emergency and once it is deemed safe to pick up children, families will be directed by preschool staff to the pickup location for family reunification.

### **Family Reunification Protocol**



The Family Reunification Protocol is used to ensure a safe and secure means for reuniting parents/guardians with their children when the preschool facility or grounds is rendered unsafe and use of an evacuation site is needed. Teachers will either call each family to notify them where to pick up their child or send a mass text with instructions. Teachers will set up an area for parents/guardians to sign-in and have identification checked. Students will be escorted to this area to meet their parent/guardian and sign out. Staff will only release students to authorized persons after checking proof of identity and signing a student out. Staff are required to stay with all students until reunification with families is complete.

## **DRILLS**

Within the first month of the school year teachers and students will practice a drill involving evacuation to the safe room and a drill involving evacuation to the walking distance off-site location. In addition to these two drills the school will practice monthly fire drills and will repeat evacuation drills after six months.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

In order to ensure that vital medications and medical accessories are added to the emergency backpack there will be a bright note attached to the backpack reminding staff to add these items prior to leaving the building. The backpack will contain copies of all student's medical and emergency forms.

## **SPECIFIC EMERGENCY EVENTS**

The following events are examples of emergency situations that may occur.

### **Fire Evacuation**

Fire evacuation is when staff and students must leave the preschool facility because the fire alarm indicates a possible fire or there are other signs of a fire. Teachers will activate fire alarm or otherwise alert others if a fire is suspected. If safe to do so, Lead Teacher will gather current attendance sheets, cell phone and emergency backpack. Assistant Teacher will lead children and adults safely out of the building to the back fence located in the playground area. If this area is unsafe, the Assistant Teacher will choose an alternate location. If caught in smoke, everyone will drop to hands and knees and crawl to exit. Clothing can be pulled over the nose and mouth to use as a filter for breathing. If clothes catch fire, STOP, DROP, & ROLL until the fire is out. If necessary, the Lead Teacher will check areas where children may be located or hiding before leaving the building. Lead Teacher will take attendance once everyone is lined up on the back fence. Lead Teacher will then call 911 from outside of the building. No one will re-enter the building until it is cleared by the fire department. If needed children and staff will evacuate to an off-site location.

### **Bomb Threat**

Upon receiving a message that a bomb has been placed in the preschool staff will notify 911 immediately. All adults and children will evacuate the building following the same protocol as a fire evacuation. A decision to relocate to an off-site location will be made with advice from law enforcement. If the bomb threat is communicated through a phone call the adult answering the phone

will use the Bomb Threat Checklist in order to gather more information. This checklist will be kept near both phones at the preschool (see Appendix A).

### **Suspicious Item**

If a suspicious item is found – DO NOT TOUCH IT. If a suspicious item is located teachers will notify law enforcement, order an immediate evacuation and select a route away from the suspicious item. Teachers and staff will leave doors open when exiting. Under guidance from emergency officials students and staff will evacuate to an off-site location. Lead Teacher will grab the emergency backpack, cell phone and class attendance sheet. Lead Teacher will take attendance before and after being evacuated. No one may re-enter the building until emergency officials declare them safe. If given the “All Clear” signal, children and adults will return to the building and resume normal operations. If not teachers will prepare for Family Reunification procedures.

### **Intruders**

Once all students have arrived the doors to the preschool will be locked in order to minimize the likelihood of an intruder. If an unknown or unauthorized person enters the preschool the following protocol will be followed. All adults in the building will be notified without alerting intruder if possible. If an intruder has entered the playground area Assistant Teacher will lead children into the building. If available, the Lead Teacher will ask another adult to accompany her before approaching the guest/intruder. Lead Teacher will politely greet the guest/intruder, identify herself and ask guest/intruder the purpose of the visit. If the intruder's purpose is not legitimate, Lead Teacher will ask him/her to leave and accompany the intruder to the exit. If the intruder refuses to leave, Lead Teacher will signal for the Assistant Teacher to begin the Safe Room evacuation and call 911. The Assistant Teacher will give a full description of the intruder, keeping the intruder unaware of call for help, if possible. If an intruder at any time indicates a potential for violence Lead Teacher will walk away and initiate a Safe Room evacuation.

### **Hostage Situation**

If hostage taker is unaware of your presence, do not intervene. If possible notify all adults and staff. Lead Teacher will begin a Safe Room evacuation and call 911 giving dispatcher details of the situation: description and number of intruders, exact location in the building, and that the school is in LOCKDOWN. Everyone should remain in Lockdown until given the “All Clear” by a uniformed law enforcement officer. If taken hostage adults will follow instructions of hostage taker, try not to panic, calm children if they are present, treat the hostage taker as normally as possible, ask permission to speak and avoid arguing.

### **Utility Loss or Failure**

Utility failure is the loss of interruption of electrical power, natural gas, water or sewage services to the school. Upon notice of loss of utilities, the teachers will initiate appropriate immediate response actions, which may include Off-Site Evacuation. The teacher may shut off utilities, as deemed necessary. Lead Teacher will contact the local utility company and determine the anticipated duration

of the outage. Lead teacher or co-chair will determine whether the school should be closed. If so, families will be notified to pick up their children. In the event of a gas leak, Lead Teacher will call 911, give name and exact location of the school, state the emergency, identify affected area(s) of the building, and announce the school is evacuating to Off-Site Location.

### **Terrorism**

The federal Department of Homeland Security tries to communicate the level of threat by using a system called the Homeland Security Alert System (HSAS). Teachers should always be on the lookout for unusual persons or things such as: unusual unsolicited deliveries, suspicious items left around the outside of the facility, individuals “hanging around” for no apparent reason. Bear in mind that the criminals/terrorists may have multiple attacks planned. Call 911 as soon as possible. Follow evacuation plans if it is safe to leave the building or shelter in place. Seek advice from the police department.

### **Pandemic Flu/Contagious Disease**

We will enforce illness exclusion policies for children and staff - sick children and staff must stay home or will be sent home. We require all staff and families to follow good hygiene protocols including keeping sick children home, using a tissue (or a sleeve, in a pinch) to catch a sneeze/cough and washing hands often including after using a tissue or helping a sick child. School will be closed as necessary due to pandemic illness. Monitor local and state Public Health websites and other news media for current pandemic flu status information, recommendations, and instructions.

### **Medical Emergencies**

In the case of an accident or a medical emergency, a child will be given immediate first aid and staff will immediately attempt to reach a parent or guardian. All staff is trained in first aid and CPR, as required by DHHS. If a parent/guardian can not be reached, the child's doctor will be contacted. If necessary, a teacher will also call 911 and request an ambulance. Until arrival of the parent, doctor or ambulance, teachers are responsible for the care of the child. If the emergency warrants a trip to the hospital, and a parent is not available, Lead Teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance and into the medical center. Assistant Teacher will then assume responsibility for the class. In the event of an accident or medical emergency, the teacher involved will complete an Injury Report. The Injury Report will be signed by the injured student's parent/guardian and the teacher involved. The report shall be filed in the child's file and a copy shall remain in the school files. Injury Report forms and school log are kept in the preschool. The preschool shall not administer any nonprescription medications to a child without written, signed and dated parental permission naming the medication and dosage. Verbal permission is allowed in emergencies if the provider makes a written note and then gets written permission from the parent as soon as possible.

## GORHAM COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL 2025-2026 SCHOOL CALENDAR

August 6: Executive Board Meeting  
 August 27: Executive Board Meeting  
 August 28: Popsicles on the Playground 6 pm

*September 1: Labor Day*  
 September 2: 2-Day Orientation  
 September 3: 3-Day Orientation  
**September 3: All Parent Meeting 7 pm**  
 September 4: First Full day for 2-Day Class  
 September 5: First Full day for 3-Day Class

October 1: Executive Board Meeting  
*October 13: Indigenous People's Day*  
 October 18: Pumpkin Painting  
*October 24: Teacher Inservice Day*

November 5: Executive Board Meeting  
*November 11: Veteran's Day*  
*November 20: Parent/Teacher Conferences*  
*November 21: Parent/Teacher Conferences*  
*November 26-28: Thanksgiving Break*

December 3: Executive Board Meeting  
*Dec 22-Jan 1: Holiday Break*

January 7: Executive Board Meeting  
*January 19: Martin Luther King Jr. Day*

February 1: 1st Day of Alumni Enrollment for 2026-2027  
 February 4: Executive Board Meeting  
**February 11: All Parent Meeting 7pm**  
*February 16-20: Winter Vacation*

March 1: 1st Day of Open Enrollment for 2026-2027  
 March 4: Executive Board Meeting  
*March 19: Teacher Inservice Day*  
 March 27: Easter Egg Hunt

April 1: Executive Board Meeting  
*April 16: Parent/teacher Conferences*  
*April 17: Parent/teacher Conferences*  
*April 20-24: Spring Vacation*  
**April 29: All Parent Meeting 7 pm - Voting for 2026-2027 Executive Board**

May 6: Executive Board Meeting  
*May 25: Memorial Day*

June 1: DEPOSITS DUE (FOR RETURNING STUDENTS)  
 June 3: Executive Board Meeting  
 June 10: Last day for 3-Day class  
 June 11: Last Day for 2-Day class  
**June 12: Graduation Celebration**

### Calendar Notes:

- \* *Italics - no classes on these days*
- \* **Executive Board Meetings** are held at 7 pm in the "fishbowl" room at the rec department or via Zoom.
- \* **All Parent Meetings** are held at the Gorham Recreation Center or via Zoom
- \* **Tuition is due the 1st of every month**  
 (September's tuition can be brought to orientation)

