



Bethlehem Preschool, Inc.
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Bethlehem Preschool Handbook

Welcome to BPS!

The staff and directors of Bethlehem Preschool are pleased and excited that you have chosen to become part of the Bethlehem Preschool family. We are proud of our program and our ability to work with parents to meet the needs of our families.

We recognize the need for teachers and families to work together positively and respectfully to help your child grow. Any questions and concerns that you have regarding your child's care should first be brought to his/her teacher's attention. The directors are available for discussions either by phone or in person and welcome your comments. We feel that individual meetings are the most effective way of negotiating difficulties and differences when they arise.

Information for parents on the Preschool's policies and programs is most often communicated through our monthly newsletter and informational notes placed in your child's mailbox. Please check your child's mailbox every day for these notes and read them carefully. Your comments and questions are always welcome. We ask parents to complete a family questionnaire every June to provide a better understanding of your needs.

The staff of Bethlehem Preschool is aware of the great responsibility that we assume by caring for your child, and we look forward to working closely with you. In order to best support your child and family, we hope that you will

work closely with the staff, providing information about your child's health and development and responding promptly to our concerns about your child. We expect that you will follow our health exclusion guidelines, as they are in place to protect your child as well as others in the program. We recommend that you have back-up arrangements for your child's care in the event that he/she is ill.

Again, we thank you for choosing Bethlehem Preschool, and we look forward to helping your child grow.

The Program

Bethlehem Preschool, Inc. is a not-for-profit, early childhood education center established in 1975. Our goal is to provide the best possible environment for the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of each child. We strive to have staff, parents and administration work collectively for the benefit of each family.

Our program is based on the belief that children will grow and develop to their potential in an environment that is caring, nurturing, child-centered and developmentally appropriate. The Preschool is divided into class levels, or groups, to help achieve the goal of individual development of each child according to his or her needs and abilities.

The program for each group includes age appropriate learning activities such as:

-  free expression art activities
-  creative music, dance and movement
-  cooperative and educational games
-  language arts
-  hands-on math
-  children's literature
-  dramatic play



cooking

Learning experiences are planned to focus around themes, or study units, covering interests, such as the community and its resources, outer space, and manners. Experiences are non-bias, related to the children's daily lives and include all cultures. Children, parents and community members are encouraged to share their family traditions, cultural heritage and other areas of interest with the class. We strive to give children the opportunity to discover and explore new things about themselves as well as others.

Each child develops at his/her own rate, and our teachers are trained to use observation and their knowledge of child development to identify the developmental level of each child. Although the program is set up to help each child achieve his/her potential, the staff may feel that a child has needs that we cannot meet. In that case, we bring our concern to the parents and ask that they seek outside evaluation and, if appropriate, intervention to help the child. The staff and directors are very familiar with this process and are eager to help in any way necessary. Many developmental issues can be addressed at Preschool, but some developmental needs may be beyond our ability, so other child care arrangements may be necessary to best help the child.

Discipline Policy

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services requires that child care centers establish written disciplinary guidelines. Bethlehem Preschool's discipline policy has been established to help children develop self-control and learn acceptable forms of social behavior. Appropriate arrangement of the environment, supervision, clear, consistent and fair limits for classroom behavior and redirection are a few of the methods used to help children develop self-control. Copies of the complete discipline policy are available at the front desk.

Health

The spread of illness is a concern to both the staff and parents in any child care setting. Despite our best efforts for “germ control,” illnesses will occur. The staff will quickly become familiar with your child’s needs and personality and will readily know when your child is not acting like his/her normal self. The child may still be well enough to attend Preschool, but there will be occasions when the child requires more care than the staff can provide, even if the child is not diagnosed with a particular illness. We expect parents to make back-up arrangements for your child’s care in the event that he/she is ill or needs to be picked up during the day. We ask that you respond promptly to requests for symptoms to be cleared by a physician and that you respect the exclusionary guidelines below. If you are not able to abide by these guidelines, or do not trust our judgment when excluding children based on illness, you may need to investigate other child care arrangements.

Each child entering Bethlehem Preschool must provide the Preschool with a written statement signed by a health care provider stating that the child is able to participate in child day care, currently appears to be free from contagious or communicable diseases and is receiving health care, including appropriate health examinations. This statement may be documented on the Health Examination Form (Form DSS 4433) provided by the Office of Children and Family Services. After the initial entrance examination, a yearly check-up is required for continued enrollment.

Evidence of age-appropriate immunization must be provided at the time of enrollment. This must include evidence of immunization against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella, Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib), varicella, hepatitis B, pneumococcus and any other inoculations required by

regulation at the time of enrollment. The only exception to these immunizations is when the child's health does not permit him/her to maintain the required schedule of inoculations because of allergic reactions, or due to religious beliefs and practices. In the event of a health related exemption, the health care provider must sign an exemption form for that particular immunization.

Each child is evaluated **daily** for signs of illness, injury, maltreatment or abuse. **This health check is conducted when the child first arrives in the program and again whenever their behavior or appearance warrants another evaluation.** The health check includes, but is not limited to: signs of illness or complaints of not feeling well; the child's behavior and activity level; and skin rashes, itchy skin and itchy scalp. All staff members are trained to observe the children for these and other signs that a child is not well through health care seminars, consultation with the health consultant and first aid / CPR courses. The teachers will bring the child to the administrator in charge who will determine whether the child may remain in care.

The following are guidelines for the exclusion of ill children from Preschool attendance. Please remember that these guidelines are used for the protection of all of the children and staff in the program, including your child. If you are not able to abide by these guidelines, or you do not trust our judgement when excluding children based on illness, you may need to investigate other child care arrangements.

Children at Preschool will be excluded for the following:



Any illness, or the child's reaction to it requiring more care than the staff can provide, or an illness that compromises the health and safety of others

- 👍 Significant fever, as defined as axillary (armpit) temperature of over 100°. **The child must be fever free without use of medication for 24 hours before returning to Preschool.**
- 👍 Persistent diarrhea or liquid stool (two or more bouts in the past 24 hours). **The child must be free from diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to Preschool.**
- 👍 Any vomiting accompanied by other signs of illness or dehydration, or vomiting two or more times in the past 24 hours. **The child must be free from vomiting for 24 hours before returning to Preschool.**
- 👍 Undiagnosed rashes.

Children at Preschool will also be excluded until a medical evaluation allows inclusion for the following:

1. lethargy
2. uncontrolled coughing
3. persistent abdominal pain
4. discolored urine
5. refusal to eat or drink
6. irritability
7. persistent crying
8. difficulty breathing
9. wheezing

10. green nasal discharge for more than 10 days
eye discharge or extreme redness

If a child is prescribed an antibiotic for a contagious disease or infection, including, but not limited to, conjunctivitis or strep throat, the child must remain out of Preschool for 24 hours after the first dose of medication.

Parents should inform the Preschool if their child is exposed to a contagious disease or infection. Some of these include conjunctivitis, chicken pox, bronchitis, fifth disease, Coxsackie virus, lice, scabies, measles, mumps and impetigo. Childhood illnesses are of concern to us all. **Please remember that the above guidelines are used for the protection of all the children and staff in the program, including your child.** It is important to keep him/her at home until the child recovers or has been cleared for return by his/her physician.

Outdoor play is an important part of the day. A child should be well enough to go outdoors before he or she returns to school.

The Bethlehem Preschool staff will not administer medication to a child, prescription or over-the-counter orally-administered medication, **without a written order from the child's physician and written permission from the parent.** Written consent must be documented on the OCFS “**Written Medication Consent Form**” provided by the Preschool. This is the only form that Bethlehem Preschool will accept as a written order. This form must be completely filled in by the physician and parent; **Bethlehem Preschool will not administer prescription or orally-administered over-the-counter medication to the child if this form is incomplete.** A separate form must be completed for each medication and each time the same

medication is prescribed; the form must be updated every 6 months. It is the parent's responsibility to accurately complete this form. **Preschool will not accept medication consent from a physician or parent over the phone.**

Only the parent's signature on the "Written Consent Form" is required for **over-the-counter topical ointments**. One form for each over-the-counter topical ointment is required.

According to NYS OCFS regulations medications may be administered in a child care setting **only by staff members who are MAT certified (Medication Administration Training certified.)** Bethlehem Preschool plans to have MAT certified staff available to administer medication from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM, Monday thru Friday. Please note this schedule so you can plan to have medications given during these hours. Outside of these hours or under circumstances beyond our control when a MAT certified person is not on premises, you will be notified that no one is available to administer the medication. You will be responsible for the administration of the medication in these situations. In a life-threatening situation, emergency personnel (911) will be called to administer life saving medications if no MAT staff are available.

All medication must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name, medication name and dosage information (amount, time to administer and), expiration date and, for prescription medication, the prescriber's name and license number. Package inserts describing possible side effects must be supplied by you if the prescriber has indicated this on Question #8A and/or #10A of the "**Written Medication Consent Form**". If medication has expired or is left over, it will be returned to you. If you do not respond to the request to remove the medication, it will be properly disposed of. Medication is stored in a locked cabinet in the kitchen, or for medication

that requires refrigeration, in a marked box in the milk cooler. Be sure to notify your child's teacher of required medicines.

Children with special health care needs such as asthma, diabetes, or any other chronic illness or condition lasting more than 12 months must have an individual health care plan on file at Bethlehem Preschool. The plan must be completed on the form “**Individual Health Care Plan for a Child with Special Health Care Needs,**” provided by NYS OCFS. Bethlehem Preschool will collaborate with you and your child’s physician to write the plan describing the child’s health care needs. The plan will include the identified triggers, signs and symptoms of the illness or condition, the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency and any additional training for caregivers that is needed to care for the child. Parents of children with special health care needs should be aware of the hours that MAT trained staff will be available to give out medication, and if MAT staff are not available, emergency personnel (911) will be called to administer life saving medications.

As a child care provider, Preschool is a mandated reporter of child abuse and maltreatment. Mandated reporters are those individuals who must report, or cause a report to be made, whenever they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them, in their professional or official capacity, is abused or maltreated. Bethlehem Preschool follows the procedures and guidelines provided by the Departments of Children and Family Services and Child Protective Services.

Parent Involvement

We offer parents several different avenues to be directly involved in their child’s education program.



Volunteer to drive and chaperone on field trips

(older classes only.)

- 👍 Volunteer your time to share an area of knowledge or interest, such as career, family tradition, travels, etc.
- 👍 Send in books, tapes, items of interest or props relating to the class' theme.
- 👍 Donations of used computer paper, old shirts for smocks, dress-up clothes and props for dramatic play.
- 👍 Participation in fundraisers.

Of course, your questions, comments and concerns are always welcomed by the teachers and directors.

Parent/Teacher Communication

Teachers provide valuable insight to your child's development and needs. A positive and respectful relationship between parents and teachers is an important part of a successful early education experience. **Daily communication** is crucial to this relationship. Each classroom has an information board for parents to find out basic information about the day. More importantly, teachers are available at the beginning and end of each day for short conversations about your child's day. If more detailed information needs to be shared, phone conversations at nap time or face-to-face meetings can be arranged to discuss areas of concern.

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled once a year during the winter months, but other conferences are encouraged whenever you or the staff feels that your child would benefit from a meeting.

Parent Education

Parenting is a very challenging and demanding job. Parents may seek helpful hints from BPS in several different ways.

- 👍 Borrowing resources from our **parent library**.
- 👍 Attending **parent seminars**.
- 👍 Obtaining **professional referrals** from the directors.
- 👍 Speaking with our experienced staff and directors about any questions or concerns.
- 👍 Participating in **parent /teacher conferences**.

Meals

Bethlehem Preschool participates in the USDA food program for children. We serve morning and afternoon snacks as well as lunch to all of the children. Because we are part of the USDA food program, we are required to serve specified amounts of each of the required foods (including milk.) If your child has special dietary needs, be sure to discuss those needs with one of the directors upon enrollment. In the case of a rigidly, controlled diet, such as one for allergies, we will ask for a doctor's note and request that the child's parents send a lunch and snack from home for him/her.

Birthday Parties

We love birthday parties at Bethlehem Preschool. You are welcome to bring special refreshments for your child's birthday. However, we ask that you **avoid snacks that are high in sugar, fat or contain chocolate**. We have compiled a list of alternative birthday treats. Speak to your child's teacher to make arrangements and obtain a list of birthday party suggestions.

Other Celebrations

Bethlehem Preschool is a non-sectarian, non-discriminatory early education center. Therefore, we make an effort to provide children with a sample of holidays from many cultures. Consequently, we will not stress a particular religion or culture. Each class discusses several themes throughout the year, which may include specific

“holiday” celebrations that are tailored to the age-appropriate level of understanding and ability of each class. Children, parents and community members have the opportunity to share their traditions and cultural heritage with the class through stories, dance, cooking and other items of interest. Parents are always welcome to join us during a holiday party.

We recognize that children get very excited about many of the holidays. We share in their enthusiasm and thank you for your support. Emphasizing the importance of a child-centered classroom, all food, cards, masks and costumes are made in school rather than brought from home. Please do not send:

-  Valentine cards
-  Halloween masks or costumes

Children's Supplies

1. **Infants** need a sturdy cloth bag to transport their possessions each day. Please provide a vinyl bib, two or more changes of clothing, a blanket for nap time and any other favorite piece of equipment, such as a pacifier or crib toy, at school. You will also need to bring diaper changing materials, such as baby wipes, cream or powder. All items must be labeled and left in a common storage area set aside in the room.
2. **Toddlers** need to leave at least one vinyl bib as well as a complete change of clothing, a blanket for nap time and any favorite sleep toy or pacifier at school. If your toddler is not toilet trained, diaper changing materials, such as baby wipes and cream, need to be brought from home.
3. **Older children** need:
 - a. A complete change of clothing, labeled and stored in a shoe box. This clothing is stored at Preschool. Check your child’s clothing box regularly to assure that it is complete and seasonally correct.
 - b. A small blanket for rest time. All children are

required to rest each day. The length of time varies with the age and needs of the individual child as well as the group. **Pillows are not permitted due to our limited storage space.** Blankets are sent home for washing every Friday afternoon.

c. **Toys and other personal belongings must be left at home.**

Please encourage your child to wear play clothing. **Sneakers are a must.** Sandals or dress shoes are dangerous on the playground and should not be worn at Preschool. Warm clothing is needed for outdoor play in the winter.

All items brought to Preschool must be labeled in an indelible marker with your child's name.

Calendar

The child care center is open from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, 52 weeks per year, with the exception of certain holidays or scheduled staff training days. A school calendar showing days we are closed is available.

Every effort is made to keep the early childhood education center open. Should we be forced to close due to severe winter weather or another emergency, the closing will be announced on local radio and television stations.

Attendance

Children must be signed in when they arrive at Preschool and signed out when they leave. Parents must do the signing in, not the child, because it is a permanent record.

No child will be allowed to leave the Preschool with someone other than a parent or guardian unless the person has the written consent of the parent or guardian and shows a photo ID when he/she picks up the child.

Due to staffing needs, a child may attend school only on his/her assigned days. If you wish to add a day,

please consult one of the directors. There is an additional charge if a child attends on a day other than his/her assigned ones. Unused time may not be applied to another day.

Summer

Because Bethlehem Preschool operates on a year-round basis, summer programs are developed each year to provide children with new learning experiences. Summer fun consists of exciting themes, picnics, water play, special events and field trips (older classes only.) Due to the many people waiting for child care openings, it is not possible to guarantee fall placement for a child whose parents wish to keep him/her home for the summer.

Tuition & Fees

A contract will be signed when your child is enrolled, stating the registration fee, the tuition deposit and the weekly tuition fee. ***All registration fees and tuition deposits are non-refundable.*** The tuition deposit is applicable to your last week's attendance when proper withdrawal notice is given.

Tuition is payable in advance on the first day your child is in attendance each week. Tuition is charged for holidays that the center is closed. The Preschool reserves the right to charge tuition in the event of an emergency school closure. A calendar, with the dates of holidays indicated, is available at the beginning of each school year.

Children enrolled in both full and part-time programs pay full tuition the first two days of any absence. When a child is absent for more than two consecutive days, a holding fee is required to maintain his or her enrollment. This policy may be applied to absences for a maximum of two consecutive weeks per absence. Only two (2) weeks of vacation (8 days of the holding fee) is allowed during our summer program.

Any payment that is in default will bear interest at

the rate stated on the tuition rate sheet from the due date until paid. The promiser hereby waives demand notice of presentation. In the event it is necessary to refer this matter to an attorney for collection, it is mutually agreed that the prevailing party shall be entitled to reasonable attorney's fees and that the venue of any action shall be Albany County, NY.

A fee is charged for non-negotiable checks returned by the bank.

Due to the long hours the Preschool is open, it is imperative that you **pick up your child and leave the building by 6:00 p.m.** Bethlehem Preschool will charge an additional fee for every 10 minutes of care given after closing time. **Overtime charges start promptly at 6:00 p.m.** In the event of an unavoidable emergency, please inform the school of the situation at the earliest possible time.

(Please see tuition rate sheet for all Tuition and Fees).

Withdrawal Procedures

If a child will be withdrawn from the Preschool, we ask that you notify us in writing as soon as possible. Your contract **requires a minimum of four weeks written notice.** Four weeks tuition is due if the required notice is not given. Contracts are on a year-round, not school year, basis.

History of Bethlehem Preschool

Bethlehem Preschool, Inc. was established in 1975 by Eleanor Howell and Patricia Swanson. Bethlehem Preschool has been located in the Bethlehem Center School Building since 1976. The Preschool has grown and changed with the needs of the community, adding care for infants in 1982 as well as the recent expansion of our pre-kindergarten programs.

Mrs. Swanson retired in June of 1992, and Mrs. Howell retired in January of 1995. The present Co-directors are Catherine Halayko and Mary Morrill.

A Brief Profile of the Directors

Mary Morrill is a graduate of Cornell University with a degree in Human Development and Family Studies. She has a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education from the College of Saint Rose. She previously taught at the New London Day Nursery in New London, CT and at the Garden of Children Early Childhood Development Center, Ltd, in Williamsburg, VA. Mrs. Morrill was also Assistant to the Director at the Council for Children's Services in Williamsburg, VA. She is the mother of four children and has been employed by Bethlehem Preschool since 1989.

Catherine Halayko is a graduate of Cornell University with a degree in Consumer Economics. She has a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the State University of New York at Buffalo. She is a Certified Public Accountant. Mrs. Halayko was previously affiliated with Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co. and was Comptroller for New York State Automobile Dealers, Inc. She is the mother of two children, and has been employed by Bethlehem Preschool since 1990.

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