



**Gale River Cooperative Preschool
Member Handbook**

Welcome

The board of directors and the educators of GRCP welcome you to our community. We are so happy that you're here! At GRCP, we focus on enriching the lives of the whole-child. We know that these children will learn to advocate for their needs as they grow. We hope to light the fire for our children to encourage them to discover, explore, and learn about our natural world. Our hope is that the children develop such a deep connection with, and fond memories of, nature that as they grow they know they can call nature their home and safe place. For the guardians of these children, we hope to create an inclusive network linked by friendship, respect and children through participation and events. We will continue to collaborate with members and outside organizations to create a broad network of people who believe in the importance of early childhood education and connecting to nature.

Gale River Cooperative Preschool Member Handbook

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Gale River Cooperative Preschool's Mission Statement

GRCP fosters the individuality of each child, supporting outdoor-based, unstructured play to guide them in the development of positive relationships toward themselves, others, and the natural world.

What is a Cooperative Preschool?

A cooperative preschool is a place where adults and children learn together. The classroom experience provides parents/guardians with a valuable understanding of how their child interacts with other children and how they make choices and move through their world. Parents/guardians learn while immersed in their child's world. By helping in the classroom, parents/guardians acquire skills to support their children and meet their social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

The cooperative preschool is organized and administered by the GRCP Board of Directors and other participating parents and members. The parents/guardians assist the educators as helpers in the classroom when healthy, raise funds, hold offices, work on committees, and maintain the school. Parents/guardians enrich the program by contributing their time, commitment, talent and skills. Their participation ensures smooth operation of a high quality program

The classroom operates under the direction of the following educators: a program director/teacher and a naturalist and two educators. The educators determine the curriculum with the whole child in mind and maintain standard procedures for the school program in accordance with state licensing regulations and requirements.

Philosophy

At GRCP we believe in learning through play and feel that young children learn best in a natural setting that allows them to be active participants. The classroom provides developmentally appropriate opportunities to stimulate each child's physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth.

As a cooperative preschool, we believe that families and educators working together provide the best environment for a child's education and development. GRCP values diversity and respects differences among all children and families.

Together, we help the children become self-confident, independent problem-solvers who effectively manage their environment through language and appropriate action.

Curriculum and Daily Rhythm

The program will be geared towards experiential and emergent learning following the natural rhythm of our environment. Early literacy and early numeracy is embedded in developmentally appropriate play, as children progress through multi-model activities related to projects and interests. We will study the natural rhythm of New England (place-based) and develop routines accordingly. Structure will be built into the schedule to create routines and allow children to progress through the morning anticipating the usual sequence of activities. Daily community Morning Meetings will be held, during which skills are learned through discussions, games, presentations, movement activities, songs and books. Children will be strongly encouraged to attend these circle times, understanding that the ability to participate may be an emerging skill for some. **The emphasis will be on developmentally-appropriate learning and kindergarten readiness with activities geared toward each child's level of development. We value meeting children where they are.**

We believe in the Science of Reading and use Heggerty Phonemic Awareness and Handwriting Without Tears for curriculum in the classroom, which we keep engaging and fun. Our schedule and curriculum are meant to be flexible and activity based.

A typical day at GRCP involves the following sequence of activities. This listing is not set in stone, as the sequence and composition of activities may be tailored to better meet the needs of students in a given year:

<p>Daily Rhythm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 7:45-8:30 Staggered Drop - Off● 8:30-9:00 Community Meeting - Set expectations of the day● 9:00 Unstructured play / hike● 9:15-9:45- Morning Check - In● 9:45-10 15 Snack / Bathroom● 10:15-10:30 - Sit Spot● 10:30- 11:30 - Outside Play / Centers● 11:30- 12:15 Project Time / Group Work● 12-15-12:45 Lunch● 12:45-1:15 Wrapping up the day and community farewell	<p>EXTENDED DAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1:00- Bathroom Break / Pick Up● 1:30- Quiet/Rest Time (Hopefully outside as weather permits)● 2:15- 2:30 Snack● 2:30- 3:30 - Outside Play
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Spending days outdoors is a large part of a child's learning process at GRCP. Getting wet and dirty is a part of the process. Students are encouraged to jump, run and climb without the immediate assistance of an adult. If a student asks for help they will be encouraged to continue trying themselves (to climb to the top, dig deeper, or jump from the rock, etc.) before help is given. We believe in Risky play at GRCP. This includes using tools and props that encourage independence. Shovels, scissors, sticks, and non-bladed knives are examples of some of the tools that are used and encouraged at GRCP to promote gross and fine motor development.

The Cooperative Preschool Educator

The cooperative preschool represents a unique approach to education. Its success depends on the parents/guardians and educators working together in administering the school, with the educators in charge of the educational program.

Preschool Educators are hired by the director and are paid for their services they provide to your children. Their role is a dual one of working closely with both parent/guardian and child. Our educators have a diverse background and levels of expertise. Our team meets together bi-weekly to create an environment that enables young children to grow. Our educators create rich, intentional environments so children can grow socially as they learn to live and play with others; emotionally, as they begin to depend upon themselves; and intellectually, as they explore their environment in what may be their first step away from home. The educators find time to foster the joy of learning and share in the growth of each child with parent participation. Our educators do not function in the traditional "teacher" role in the formal classroom. Rather, the team establishes an environment suitable for preschool children, arranging outdoor spaces and equipment and providing materials to interest and challenge them. GRCP educators keep nature at the core of our curriculum; modeling care and concern for nature and the environment.

It is important that members feel free to make suggestions to our educators (either directly or to the director) about the curriculum. The group must realize however, that educational programs are designed as a whole, not in bits and pieces, and that the teachers are in charge of designing the educational program and that they are educated and experts in this area.

We are asking our families not to ask our staff to provide childcare outside of school hours. We feel that the time they have with your children during the day is important and we want to protect the school's community connection and relationships. If you need recommendations for an outside child care provider, please speak with the Cooperative Director.

All constructive grievances regarding the program should be expressed through proper channels, and only through these channels. Parents/guardians may discuss issues with the director.

Power of Play

Play is where the magic of learning happens! At GRCP our educators promote emergent and experiential learning, providing child-initiated, play-based experiences in the natural world that lead to individualized learning. In addition to our activity-based, place-based learning, children will have the chance to learn about gardening for food, composting, animals providing food for humans, life and self-help skills and ways to care for our environment. Additional activities will occur alongside our curriculum like flower/herb gardening, baking, cooking, fire-making and more. Each day your child will have a natural exploration time without structure or adult direction. This will allow time for your child to develop a deep, creative, and imaginative play.

Documentation and Assessment

Ongoing documentation and assessment support children's learning, while providing teachers with information for planning to support children's individual growth. At GRCP, teaching and learning often happens through play, requiring our educators to become astute observers in order to document and authentically assess children's learning while they are engaged in play, usually outdoors. Nature-based programs are also interested in the development of additional skills and dispositions related to the early development of environmental literacy that other programs may not be looking for as they assess children's development. And finally, nature-based programs emphasize the use of assessment and documentation to build relationships with parents and caregivers, and may use documentation to demonstrate the benefits of the nature-based approach. The following are some of the practices related to documentation and assessment that are particularly relevant to GRCP.

Practices

1. Children's progress in both standard early childhood developmental domains and domains that relate to the development of environmental literacy are included in assessment measures.
2. Our educators document and assess children's learning through observation and artifacts so as not to interfere with children's learning experiences. (Taking videos or pictures)
3. The educators engage children in documenting their own individual and group learning so children can process and reflect on their own learning over time.
4. Educators use documentation and assessment to inform the emergent curriculum.

*<https://naturalstart.org/nature-based-preschool-professional-practice-teaching>

Parent/Guardian & Educator Conferences

Throughout the year educators in charge of your child's experience will host a time for you to come and discuss your child's overall progress and goals. We send out an assessment in the fall with information collected during our documentation. Our scheduled conferences typically occur in November & at the end of the year.

Confidentiality

GRCP's educators will maintain confidentiality concerning any information about the children, their names, their disabilities, medical data/conditions, their families, and the circumstances in which they live. It is the teacher's responsibility not to share specific information about the individual children with others outside this facility. Occasionally, the director may have to bring a certain circumstance to the board of directors. However, Parents/guardians and the Board must also maintain this confidentiality, both inside and outside of the school. People and programs authorized to receive information are listed in each child's file.

Custody Arrangements

The parent / guardian who signs the enrollment paperwork is responsible for the child's enrollment in the program and all fees. GRCP does not become involved in any custody disputes. If both households are enrolling; communication will be completed through email to both households regarding all school information and absences. If a child misses school, both parties will be notified.

Board of Directors

As established by the bylaws governing the Gale River Cooperative Preschool, the Board of Directors is responsible for the property, interest, business, and transactions of the school. What that means is that your Board manages the daily and weekly business activities of the school (collecting tuition, paying bills, and so on), as well as establishing long-term policy and procedures. The Board is responsible to parents/guardians and the school as a whole; we all work together to make GRCP something special for our children.

The Board solicits encouragement, suggestions, compliments, and complaints in any areas that concern you. Board meetings are held monthly. Please check the school calendar for a schedule, but they are usually the second Tuesday of the month. The President will also email reminders of upcoming meetings. Meetings are open for all co-op members to attend but are optional for non-board members. These meetings are a great place to find out about the inner workings of the school and a place to let your opinions be heard. If you have a specific item to discuss, please get in touch with the President in advance of the meeting, so that it may be included on the agenda.

The GRCP Board is made up of active parents/guardians and/or parents/guardians of alumni. It is a volunteer board and, as such, assumes no liabilities.

2022-2023 Board of Directors

President	Colby Meehan
Vice President	Casey Wilkins
Treasurer/Facilities	Lori Alderin
Secretary	Marybeth Robinson
Fundraising Chair (s)	Aleda Stith and Shannon Keeler

Budget and Fundraising

Our budget at GRCP is primarily tuition-driven, but we also rely on community fundraisers throughout the year and our Annual Appeal as additional income that allows the school to meet its operating costs and balance the budget. This means that tuition is our primary income stream that we use to fund the expenses of the school. Operating costs include everything from payroll for our wonderful teachers to rent and utilities.

In efforts to keep GRCP affordable and accessible for all families, tuition does not cover the total expenses that are required to run the school. This means that there is a gap between the amount of tuition income and GRCP's total annual expenses. As a result, GRCP relies on fundraising to keep our school going strong. While fundraising only accounts for a percentage of the school's overall budget, it is vital to GRCP's financial health. Our annual fundraisers include: an Annual Appeal, SKIDA gear, bake sales, a mum sale, and more. We're always looking for new ideas and new volunteers to join the fundraising efforts! Feel free to contact our Vice President with any ideas for fundraising or grants that may be brought to the attention of the fundraising chair.

Admission Policy

GRCP shall provide equal educational opportunity and treatment to all students receiving services regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, political beliefs, and marital or family status.

The admission criteria for GRCP are:

- Children must be between the ages of 3 and 5 years old.
- Children must be FULLY toilet-trained; our facility is not certified to handle diaper changing. This means the child can control their bodily fluids, be the manager of themselves and not wear pampers to school. As a nature school, the ability to not wet themselves is required.
- Parents/guardians must fulfill the responsibilities of membership (see below).

GRCP has rolling admissions throughout the year as availability for students permits. If spots are available for the following school year, applications will be sent to interested families in late winter. Priority for admitting

children is based on all three of the following items: (1) date of paid registration, (2) a completed application and (3) a school visit. Due to other circumstances that might arise and at the discretion of the Cooperative Director, completion of all three does not automatically guarantee admission.

The Cooperative Director is responsible for registering all students and maintaining and updating the ongoing waiting list on a regular basis. The waiting list will be on a first-come/first-served basis. A \$150 non-refundable application fee and first month payment is required by July. If there is ultimately no space available for a child for a given school year, this fee will be reimbursed, unless the family opts to be placed on a waiting list for the next year.

For 2022-2023, three-day, four-day and five-day weekly enrollment will be offered. We have two separate classrooms operating 8-1pm and 1-3:30. The school will be in operation Monday through Friday.

Educator to Child Ratios at GRCP

Pre-K- 1:7 & Early Pre-K-1:6

*This may change at director's discretion and year-to-year.

Nature School Readiness

Finally, please consider if your child is truly ready to be at a nature preschool. Do we send our child to a nature school at the age of 3 or 4? The following are indicators that your child is ready to be part of an enrichment program like our nature-based school.

Able to walk on their own small distances without needing to be carried
Has interest in being independent; pulling up their own underwear, carrying a backpack, learn to open their lunchbox
Is able to regulate their emotions in a developmentally appropriate way
Is able to stay with the group and not run ahead / away. Stops when an adult asks them to.
Willing to attempt new tasks
Listens to simple 1 to 2 step directions fairly consistently

If you feel that your child is not ready to be at a nature-school quite yet, it is best to take some time until they are. We are not looking for all of these requests to be executed each and every time but the willingness to be a part of the process is important in order to be part of a larger community of peers.

Annual Schedule

GRCP will follow the schedule of the Lafayette Regional School District for vacations, holidays, and snow days. If Lafayette Regional closes due to inclement weather, the preschool will also be closed. If Lafayette Regional has a two-hour delay, GRCP will open at 10 a.m.; students should be picked up at the regular scheduled time. Closings and delays will be posted on local radio and TV stations, such as WMUR. Notifications will also be made to families by the Lead teacher/Director or the President of the Board via each family's through text / preferred method.

Class is held from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Upon arrival responsibility shifts to the adult picking them up. Often this is a grey area that children figure out quickly and will push limits.

Extended Care is offered for the 2022-2023 school year. GRCP offers Extended Care from 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM daily. A yearly fee is determined and incorporated into tuition according to the schedule selected. Fees are not refundable for unused time (ex. late drop off, early pick-up, missed days). GRCP closes promptly at 3:30 PM. **A fee of \$20 will be due upon pick-up after 3:30 PM. The treasurer will add any charges on to your monthly invoice. Payment will be given directly to the staff member that stayed.**

Strategies for Discipline

At GRCP we use positive discipline. Punishment, physical or verbal, is not used as a form of discipline. Behavior management focuses on helping children learn to self-regulate, both emotionally and behaviorally. We teach respectful and cooperative behavior by modeling it ourselves and encouraging the children to:

- Recognize and verbalize their feelings.
- Accept responsibility for their behavior.
- Understand the natural consequences of their behavior.
- Work out their differences with each other through conflicting resolutions.

Rules of Conduct:

1. Care For Yourself (positive self-talk, listening to your body, washing hands properly, etc.)
2. Care For Others (use kind words, help others, use gentle touches, etc.)
3. Care For the Environment (clean up after yourself, take care of class materials, be mindful of your work area, etc.) If a child continuously breaks books or toys, we will ask that they bring it home to fix/replace.

Students will learn the rules, responsibilities, boundaries, and expectations during the first several weeks of school. Our goal is to create a safe and fun learning environment for all students who attend. With the on-going support and positive feedback from the educators, your child should be able to function responsibly and respectfully each day as they become more and more comfortable with the routines and expectations. We want this experience to be a positive one for all students. When faced with a behavior that needs modifying, we see an opportunity to teach children how to use appropriate social and emotional skills and help them better communicate their needs. This helps them manage and resolve conflict and develop pro-social behaviors.

Our goal is to continue to teach our students to be kind, considerate members of our school community. In order to create an environment that honors the needs of all of our students we need to reinforce that school is a safe, comfortable place for exploration and learning.

IF a child continues to exhibit behavior that is unsafe, or continuously behaves as an inconsiderate friend to his or her classmates, “The 3 R’s Repercussions Discipline System” may be used by our teachers. The repercussions will include **R**edirection, **R**emoval and **R**estitution. Unwanted behaviors will be met with a “natural” consequence fitting of the behavior.

Examples:

Redirection: “If you continuously pour sand on your friends in the discovery table... you will need to find another activity.”

Removal: “If you continuously hit your classmates with your shovel.... you will lose your shovel.”

Restitution: “If you destroy a classmate's block tower... you will need to rebuild the tower.”

If a child exhibits behavior that the teachers feel severely compromises the safety or wellbeing of the students or staff, the parents/guardians will be called to take the child home for the day.

If a child’s behavior at school threatens the safety of other students and staff or severely impairs the ability of other children to enjoy the program, the teachers will notify the Board of Directors. Teachers and the child’s parents/guardians, and potentially select members of the Board, if appropriate, may meet to develop a plan for addressing the issue, listing a timeline for specific improvements. If problems persist beyond that timeline, the Board may suspend or expel the child from the program. Such action may be immediate and will be made at the Board’s discretion.

GRCP is committed to helping students develop fully, while maintaining the integrity and safety of the program for all.

By-laws (Article IV, Section 3):

A member and his and her child can be expelled or suspended by the Board of Directors following a serious disciplinary problem or infraction of the membership guidelines outlined in the Parent/Guardian Handbook. Such an action by the Board may be preceded by a discussion with the educators and family.

Behavior Policy

GRCP believes that all behaviors are a result of unmet needs. In order to change behaviors, we need to identify the causes and triggers of the behaviors. We strive to meet each child where they are at and support them as they develop the skills to be a happy and productive member of our classroom community. We also believe that a child's early school experiences should be safe, happy and secure. If at any point one child's behaviors compromise the safety and well being of the others, we will follow the process outlined below to support the student. An essential component of this process is the team work of parents and teachers. GRCP expects the support of the parents to observe, identify, research and create a plan to assist their student in acquiring the skills necessary to remain in our classroom community. The board reserves the right to ask a child to leave if behaviors become too disruptive for the classroom or their behavior causes concern for safety.

Steps of the Behavioral Planning and Documentation process-

1. Teachers identify and record unwanted behaviors.
2. Teachers observe and record specific incidents of the needs that are visually unmet. The observations should include triggers and environmental factors contributing to the issues. This observation takes place over the course between one to three weeks.
3. Teachers meet to discuss observations and identify triggers of undesirable behaviors. A list of behaviors and triggers are created to share with the parents/guardians.
4. A meeting is scheduled with adults to discuss the behaviors, triggers and to create a plan. The plan should be supported by techniques supported by research taking into account the class dynamic and school culture.
5. Guardians will come observe for a day at school to best understand their child's strengths and challenges in a school community.
6. Teachers and guardians work together to implement the plan. This will include regular communication via email, phone, or personal conversations.
7. Teachers and parents meet after six weeks to discuss the plan and make revisions. At this time a teacher may seek resources, such as calling a consultant and/or refer family to the public-school system, mental health services, or other supports in our community.

If after a reasonable amount of time, the steps above are not working to resolve behaviors or teachers deem necessary, the process of expulsion may be necessary. Sometimes, a reduction in a child's schedule may be tried first to see if a child can be more successful.

If a situation occurs where a child is placing themselves, other students or teachers in immediate physical danger, parents will be called and asked to remove the child for the remainder of the day.

If the director and teachers determine that a child is deemed not ready for our program after these steps have been completed, parents will be given a week's notice to find other childcare arrangements. If the child is a safety risk, the week policy will not be followed. If families would like to meet to discuss this process, the president of our board president, director and the teachers will meet together.

Payment Information

Tuition Rates 2022-2023

GRCP is a non-profit corporation with 501(c)(3) status. Yearly rates are adjusted for an annual budget. School costs include the educators' salaries; workshops/enrichment opportunities; rent; utilities; insurance; accounting and bookkeeping costs; maintenance and repairs; and school supplies.

Each year, based on enrollment numbers, the teachers and the director will determine which day options will be available to students.

Tuition is due at the first of the month. At the beginning of August, we ask for payment of the first month's tuition.

Please put the month the check is for on the memo line. Checks can be put in the tuition box inside or dropped off in the black mailbox in the parking lot.

A non-refundable application fee is required to hold a spot for your child the following year.

Tuition payments after the 15th of the month will be charged a late fee of \$20.

Tuition is non-refundable for a month which has been partially attended by the student. Holidays, vacations, and inclement weather closings were considered when the tuition amounts were set; no credit is given.

GRCP may discontinue the enrollment of a child based on non-payment of tuition or lack of consistent attendance. A student is considered to be withdrawn if tuition is more than thirty (30) days past due unless other arrangements have been made in writing, including the signature of the parent(s), Director, and two members of the Board of Directors. An account statement will be e-mailed if tuition is more than 15 days in arrears. After a total of 20 days, the family will be sent a letter requesting payment.

If a family finds that they need to withdraw their child from GRCP, they must give 30 days notice in writing to the Director. The family is responsible for the account balance calculated through the last day of enrollment.

Our school is a proud participant in the NH Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Scholarship Program. Our preschool is enrolled as a provider in this program, which offers state financial assistance toward tuition costs to families who meet income eligibility requirements.

For further information, please speak with the Director, who can help bridge the connection between families and the Department of Health and Human Services' local Littleton District Office.

Any changes to enrollment or additional days need to go through the director via email, text or REMIND app.

Member Involvement and Responsibilities

Member Involvement

Member Helping in the classroom will begin in October. We highly recommend that one member from each family visit the classroom **twice per year**. We will have other options throughout the year for you to contribute to our school community. Please pick an alternative way to contribute for the month of September while your children are learning the new routines of the school.

- One member from each family is expected to participate in fundraising activities.
- One member from each family is required to attend the membership meetings twice per year.
- One member from each family is required to attend the spring maintenance day.

Families are a critical part of the ongoing operations of the preschool and are needed to keep it running; thus, they are encouraged to volunteer to help in any capacity they are able.

Member Helper Responsibilities

As a cooperative, family participation is vital to the success of our program. At least two times a year, parents/guardians are needed as member helpers in the classroom for a whole school day. It is a remarkable experience to get to see your child in action all day at school and to get to see the other children in action as well. This time is both helpful to the teachers and helpful to your understanding of the program and your child in the program. During the alternate months, if members wish to use their skills in other ways and have a more flexible use of time, they can contribute to specific projects in coordination with the teachers or with the Board of Directors. We are so grateful for our community that helps this program to thrive!

Mask wearing for adults will be determined at the beginning of the school year.

Other Member Helping opportunities will be to fulfill maintenance tasks, purchase desired school supplies, help

organize and execute fundraising events, offer a service to the school community, contribute to the camp-fire snacks monthly, or pay \$50 to opt out. Our member helping is meant to be a way to contribute to your child's school community and is an experience that isn't offered in many other educational settings. We are so grateful for all of you!

Member Education Meetings

Member Education Meetings will be held twice a year. One prior to school beginning and one in the spring. Dates will be announced.

Creating Community

We strive to create an inclusive community among GRCP families. To facilitate that, we are looking to host several community gatherings throughout the year; including our Fall Meet and Greet, a winter solstice party, a spring gathering, graduation and end-of-the-year community work day. You will receive weekly emails or posts via email or social media throughout the school year detailing the activities your child is engaged in during the week and what they are learning.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off

Pick-up and drop-off will be staggered in order to prevent congestion in the parking lot of Copper Cannon. It is imperative that you drive **slowly** (10MPH) through the camp. Please remember, Pete, the director of Copper Cannon Camp, lives on the property and has a very old dog that appears in the driveway most mornings. Pete is known to say, "Good Morning" and ask you to slow down.

Drop-off will be done in the parking lot at Copper Cannon Camp. For pick-up, please walk down to the classroom to pick up your child when it's time. This allows you to check your child's cubby if you wish.

We ask that parents/guardians notify the director of absences by emailing or texting Nicole (603-254-8772). If there is to be a planned absence, please notify the director beforehand.

Prior to bringing your child to school, please check for any sign of illness. If illness is present, keep your child home and notify the director. You will be given a staggered drop-off and pick-up time for your child. Please do your best to limit exposure and driveway congestion by picking up and dropping off your child during your scheduled time.

If someone other than the person signing your child in is picking up at the end of day, please notify the teacher by calling or texting 603-254-8772.

Dressing and Preparing for Nature School

Families often leave a variety of slippers/sneakers/boots at school to allow choices for a variety of conditions. Please make sure they are easy for your child to learn how to be an independent dresser. Please leave them stored in a plastic bag or container at school. Please be mindful that your children will get messy. We will be spending the majority of our days outside. Consider having your child wear clothes that you know will get dirty and save any fancy clothes for outside of school.

A pair of comfortable, loose “indoor shoes” should be brought to school each day and can be left at school for convenience. A different pair of “outside shoes” appropriate for the weather conditions (e.g., sneakers or hiking shoes, rain boots or snow boots) should be worn each day.

Bring a change of *labeled* clothing for your child to leave in a plastic bag or container. It’s VERY important it’s labeled.

August, September / May, June

Rain suit or Rain Gear (School has extras if needed)

Mud boots

Sunscreen / Bug spray **applied before school**

Extra set of clothing

Closed-toe shoes

Pair of inside shoes

October through April

Rain suit or Rain Gear (School has extras if needed)

Mud boots

Sunscreen / Bug spray applied before school

Extra set of clothing

Dress in layers. In winter months your child should have underlayers on.

Waterproof mittens

Winter Hat and Neckwarmer

Snow gear when appropriate

Warm boots and wool socks

Pair of inside shoes

Please no sandals unless they are Keens or like company with proper grip and toe covering. We

recommend dressing your child for the weather at that moment and we can exchange clothing as necessary throughout the day. Communication for dressing will be sent out regularly.

Gear Exchange

GRCP has created a gear library! This is a huge step to making our program accessible to everyone. We will have two opportunities to swap out gear. (October and May). Please take what you need and leave what your child has outgrown. Any gear that belongs to GRCP, please return when you're finished. (Rainsuits etc)

Snack/Lunch

In order to respect individual diets and care for a variety of allergies, we will establish from the first day of school that children may not share snacks or lunch. We ask that each child bring their own nutritious snack, lunch and water bottle to school each day. Hard-sided lunch boxes are recommended for sanitation purposes. **Please send them with a nutrient rich food; no candy or sodas, please. We ask you to be considerate of being a nature-school. Having food items that have wrappers or cannot be closed (yogurt cups) do not fair well in the lunchbox when it's not finished!**

We do not allow children to chew gum. If there is any student enrolled with a peanut and/or tree nut allergy, or a student with a family member who is allergic to peanuts and/or tree nuts, GRCP will be nut free throughout the school year. This is indeed the case this year.

Water bottles need to be filled up each day prior to the school day. We do not have water access in the yurt.

Backpacks

A backpack should be sent each day with your student. The straps should be able to go on both shoulders and big enough to carry an extra change of clothes, water, and their lunch. Examples can be seen here. [REI](#), [Garnet Hill Jr](#), [LL BEAN backpack](#)

Birthday Celebrations

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, you are welcome to bring birthday treats. Please notify the director/classroom educator beforehand in order to accommodate all diets and give notice to those with individual diet requirements. For those whose birthdays are celebrated during school vacations or in the summer months, we happily observe "unbirthdays." Again, parents/guardians should discuss celebration days with the classroom educator/director.

Toys from Home

"We understand that sometimes children need a comfort item from home to help with new situations. Comfort items can be in the shape of a stuffed animal, a fuzzy blanket piece, or a favorite toy. We prefer that these special items stay home but understand that they might be needed initially to ease your child into their new preschool environment and routine-especially for those 4 and 5 year olds who might like one during their

scheduled rest time in the afternoon. We welcome that initial need. After the initial adjustment period we will encourage keeping any special item from home in your child's bag or cubby and only using it in time of need.

Accidental loss or damage of a special item from home would be a sad event for your child and would disrupt their fun day of learning at school and possibly ruin a good night's sleep at home! Please discourage your child from bringing valuable or small items that could easily be misplaced or lost and reinforce the importance of keeping it safely waiting at home until their return." (Prescott Farm)

Hazards and Risks

A hazard evaluation of our base camp will be done outside each day by an educator. Hazards are dangers that a child is unaware of. Because a child is unable to recognize them and take necessary precautions, hazards have the potential to cause serious harm.

Examples of potential hazards:

- Bird feeders (Hazard for students with peanut allergies as most bird food is processed in an area that contains peanuts, even if the specific mix does not)
- Water
- Thin ice
- Dead branches in a tree
- Dead trees on extremely windy days
- Unsafe plants & bugs
- Large animals

The educators will educate your children how to ID any hazards and encourage them to let the adults know when they are in the area.

Campfires

Fires will be used for heat, cooking and to hold space for creating a sense of community.

We start teaching fire safety starting in October to be ready for December when we need a fire. Following are the rules that we will follow to ensure everyone's safety:

- We will have a fire permit issued by the town of Bethlehem
- We will discuss with the class why fire is important and why fire can hurt us.
- We will have an emergency fire kit by the fire along with a bucket of water.
- We will discuss respecting the fire and why we use it for warmth and cooking.
- Children will be allowed to cook - over the fire from over the visual border. Children know not to cross the square around the firepit.

- Environment surrounding the fire will be kept clear of items that could be a tripping hazard.
- An adult is in the firepit at all times; building, maintaining, and overlooking the fire.
- The fire will always be extinguished before moving on.

Risky Play

At GRCP, we believe that children are strong and capable people. This means, through risky play, kids can learn how to judge risks and their consequences. They can learn what's safe to try and what might not work out. And they can learn how to apply these assessments to a range of different situations. [Psychologists have shown](#) that kids who engage in risky play are actually less likely to become injured because they're more adept at observing their surroundings and making good decisions. We encourage children to take healthy risks as long as their bodies feel safe. We will help guide the children who are unsure. The process may start by balancing on a log while holding our hands and walking across progressing to walking the whole length of the log without aid by the end of the year. The confidence these children gain by taking calculated risks is immeasurable and such an important part of childhood.

Sticks

As Antoinette Portis reiterates in their book; *NOT A STICK*; a stick is utilized as a fishing pole, a magic wand, a sword, a shovel, or a conductor's baton... With all the possibilities for play, sticks are an important part of outdoor education. Children are taught that sticks must be carried with one end in their hand and the other end pointing down. Sticks are required to be measured against their arm at GRCP. If it's longer, we ask that a friend join them in holding each end of this stick or if they can break the stick to the appropriate size. Sword fighting is seen as developmentally appropriate as long as the play does not involve physical contact. If play escalates to an unsafe physical or emotional state, staff will redirect the child's play. We teach each child to say stop and be an advocate for themselves during this type of play. Stick play is scaffolded from the first week of school on to support the learning process that takes place being in the woods.

Rough and Tumble Play

Rough and tumble play is physical play including wrestling, chasing, climbing and other hands on types of play. Rough and tumble play is developmentally appropriate for young children and helps them to develop self control and emotional regulation.

Like risky play, rough and tumble play behaviors should be agreed upon by teachers prior to the start of the school year. Additionally, all students must understand and agree upon the rules of play and obey the STOP rule. If anyone engaged in rough play asks others to stop, they must stop immediately. If students are not ready and do not have self-regulation skills, they may not participate in this type of play.

Resources: <https://www.timbernook.com/rough-and-tumble-play-develops-strong-capable-children/>

Messy Play (A type of Risk)

Students are allowed and encouraged to partake in messy play at Gale River. This includes play in mud, rain, dirt/sand, water as well as project specific materials like paint and glue. Through this type of play students engage their senses as they explore a variety of natural materials. Sensory work supports the development of proprioception as well as strengthening of fine motor skills.

In support of messy play, caregivers and the educators work to ensure all students are prepared for the weather each day with appropriate outdoor gear as well as ample back up clothing and gear. When children are dressed appropriately and given the opportunity to engage in this type of play, they naturally begin to explore and learn in this way. (Note: This type of play is new and uncomfortable for some students and may take them time to warm up to) Although messy play is an important part of our program and child development, it's important to help students roll off access layers of mud, teachers can wash off rainsuits, or students can change into dry clothing prior to going home. Knowing your population and educating them about this process is imperative.

Health and Safety Policies

Illness

In order to prevent the spread of contagious diseases in our school, please keep your child home if they are sick. It is important to keep your child home if they have any of the following symptoms:

- diarrhea and/or vomiting (within the previous 24 hours)
- fever (100 or greater, within the previous 24 hours)
- coughing (especially if they cannot use their cough catcher!)
- constantly runny nose (not due to allergy)
- pink eye (conjunctivitis)
- blistered and/or infected skin patches
- head lice or nits.

*Remember we are a nature school that is outside 90% of the time. **If your child isn't able to spend 6 hours outside then they need to stay home.** We understand that this may mean taking work off to stay home but it's not fair to ask your child to keep up with their friends when they're visibly ill. After wearing masks for two years combined with all new germs, we are seeing an increase in sickness. We understand that some illnesses are lengthy but it's important to keep the school community healthy. This hopefully will prevent your child from getting sick so often. Doctors notes will not be the ticket back to school. We need your child healthy without symptoms before returning. Ill children often spread germs not only to others but also the teachers which then

creates a staffing and ratio issue. Let's keep the school open!

Prior to the first day of school, families must provide their child's Health Records and Immunization Records. Updated Immunization Records are required any time a child receives an immunization. Also, any time your child has a "Well Child" visit, we require an updated Health Form. Forms need to be updated within a year of the enrollment date. Emergency contact information must be accurate and up-to-date. These items are mandatory per Child Care Licensing.

If your child is on medication, please let the teacher know at drop-off. All medications have possible side effects of which we should be aware. Our policy is that we will not be responsible for giving a child any medication except in emergency situations. If your child has an Epipen, the school must be given written instructions from your healthcare provider as to how and when to administer it.

Covid-19

Covid Protocols will be followed as suggested by the NH DHHS, CDC or as the board of directors decide. Protocols will be emailed out directly by the President.

Masks

Masks wearing will be determined prior to the start of school by the board of directors.

Head Lice (Pediculosis) Policy

In an effort to minimize the spread of head lice (pediculosis) through the school, parents/guardians should check their child at home frequently. A parent/guardian who discovers that his/her child has head lice is required to inform the school immediately and treat the condition. If a student is found at school with an active case of head lice, the student will be sent home for treatment. It is the parents/guardians' responsibility to make sure the child has been successfully treated before the child can return to school. The child must be lice/nit free, or medical documentation must be provided indicating the infestation is not active, before they can return to school. In the event that a student does have an active case of head lice, the staff may require all students to have head checks by a nurse or designee.

Tick Policy

At GRCP, we value and utilize our natural surroundings and take trips into the forest. The woods are filled with many delightful experiences, and there are some challenges, like ticks, as well. Knowing more about when and where ticks are more likely to show up, how to prevent yourself from being bitten, and what to do if you find one helps tremendously.

Checking for ticks has become a part of our rhythm for getting ready to go out into the woods and returning from the woods, so much so that it almost feels second nature. We do it to protect ourselves, so that we can

enjoy everything else the forest has to offer. We're not alarmed about getting a tick bite; we are proactive about what we do to prevent and respond to them. Co-existing, at its best.

What does this mean for your children?

The best defense is regular tick checks and appropriate clothing. As teachers, we will be checking all the children at the end of class each day. However, we can only do a superficial check.

It is up to you as parents / guardians to do a more thorough check.

Baths are always a good idea. This will serve to wash off any ticks that are still crawling around, and will give you a great opportunity to check their whole body. **Ticks like warm, moist places. Please make sure to check armpits, behind ears, on the scalp, behind knees, belly buttons, and in the groin. Despite this preference, they could be found anywhere on the body.**

In early spring, the new ticks (nymphs) are very tiny – the size of a poppy seed so can be difficult to spot. Putting clothing in the dryer on high for 10 minutes will kill any ticks on the clothing.

Tick Prevention

Before your child comes to school each day:

- Dress for coverage. Wear pants, closed-toed shoes and the ever stylish socks over your pant legs.
- Use a tick repellent, purchased or homemade, applied before school.

When headed into the woods we will:

- Avoid places where ticks hang out - i.e. fields of tall grasses or leaf piles.

After we leave the woods:

- Do a tick check. (check clothing, neck, tummy, and hair)

At home:

- Do a thorough tick check
- Have your child take a bath
- Put your child's clothes in the dryer for ten minutes

If a Tick is Found

If a tick is seen on a child it is brushed off. If a tick is attached we ask if it's okay to remove it by using tweezers or a tick key and tape it to a notecard with the location site noted and dated.

Restrooms and Potty-Training

All children should be accompanied to the bathroom by an adult. The adult will remain just outside the door unless assistance is needed. It is not appropriate for any adult to be in the bathroom with a child with the door fully closed. When we are outside, a child may need to do a “nature pee”. We will designate an area for this to happen along with a handwashing station and sanitizer.

Children must be FULLY toilet-trained; our facility is not certified to handle diaper changing and our program is a preschool facility. They cannot wear pampers to school.

It is especially important that your child is:

- capable of sleeping without a pamper/diaper if in the extended day program
- capable of pulling down and pulling up their pants. (We can work on this but a start is appreciated!)

If a child has **three consistent accidents**; we will ask that your child stay home for a month until they are ready to join our classroom again. If your child has an accident:

- First and second: we will let you know upon pick up. If it’s poop and it’s above and beyond the typical clean-up, we will call the preferred parent to come and help clean the accident up and have the student stay at school afterwards.
- Third accident: we will contact you and ask that your child stays home until they are ready to be at school.

We understand that all children are different and some regress after life changes or they simply have an accident. The issue is when the accidents become a pattern or if the child isn’t showing readiness. We believe positive reinforcement is important and we will not shame or make your child feel bad regarding the accident. If your child needs to hold off to start school, please inform the director.

Emergency Procedures

All students must have an up-to-date emergency contact form on file. This may be updated at any time by the child’s parent or guardian. This is of great importance should a family need to be contacted on any given day regarding a variety of emergencies such as minor injury, allergic reaction or illness. Should there be any catastrophic emergency such as fire, flood or acts of terrorism, the staff at GRCP will use appropriate measures to protect and insure the safety of the students at all times. Our catastrophic exit plan is to move the children to the “Lodge,” which is located on the upper side dining hall which provides electricity and phone reception. If an emergency happens on property, children will be relocated to Lafayette Regional School in Franconia, NH. The local fire and police departments visit our school regularly to familiarize the children with our local officers and equipment and will work closely with us should such an event occur. Please see the Emergency Procedures form that will be sent home with your child.

All educators are responsible for carrying a school supplied first aid kit.

- If a student or adult is injured, educators will do the following based on severity:
 - Minor cuts/scrapes/bruises: Apply bandaids and/or ice pack if needed
 - Major injuries, including head injuries:
 - If student is safe to move, student should be taken to the Director ASAP (depending on severity - you may send with another student or the entire class should accompany the student back to school)
 - If unsafe to move, notify the director of your location & extent of the injury. While waiting, have all the other students stop playing & gather in an area to ensure everyone is under supervision.
- All injuries should be reported to the director and parent/guardian should be notified. Parents/guardians sign an injury report form that is sent directly to the state.

We are looking forward to another wonderful, engaging year.
Please let me know if you have any questions..

Sincerely,

Nicole MacKay
Director

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