



Rivendell
Interstate School District

Rivendell Early Childhood Program Parent Handbook



Philosophy

At the Rivendell Early Childhood Program (RECP), we believe that early education is an essential building block for children's later success in school. We value each child and their family as unique and important community members. We welcome and celebrate diversity.

We consider each child within the context of their family and work closely together with family members to enable children to reach their full potential. We believe that all educational experiences, including those of the children, teachers, and family members, should be filled with laughter, warmth, and mutual respect.

What Makes RECP Unique?

The Rivendell preschool program holds a unique place within the school district. Although our four classrooms are physically located in the elementary schools, and we are very connected to the elementary communities. We also maintain a separate identity due to the developmental level of our children. Our program is distinctive because:

- * Our practice is child centered and child directed.
- * The activities provided are experiential, open-ended, creative and interactive.
- * Throughout the day we strive to provide an educational environment that is intimate, warm and home-like.
- * Parents and family members are always welcome and have access to our program at any time without prior notification.

* Our program is regulated by the Vermont Department of Health and Human Services in addition to the Department of Education.

* Our classrooms hold the highest level of Vermont (STARS) accreditation.

* We value outdoor learning and spend a great deal of time in our outdoor classroom

Curriculum

The RECP curriculum is research based and supports children in the acquisition of skills that will promote success in kindergarten and beyond. While we plan activities that impact every developmental area of learning, our program reflects the wider Rivendell School District in its emphasis on literacy, numeracy and personal/social development. While high quality preschool promotes long-term academic achievement, we recognize that young children learn best in experiential environments and most of our curriculum is embedded in open-ended play. Our materials and teaching style reflect our emphasis on exploration, creativity and problem solving, using the children's natural curiosity to motivate them to stretch their imagination and sharpen their reasoning skills.



Enrollment and Attendance

The Rivendell preschools are tuition free from 8:00 to 11:30. Parent can also chose to pay for our extended day programs from 11:30 to 3:00 or 11:30 to 5:00. A certain number of spaces in our morning program are reserved for children identified as in need of special education services and the remainder are allotted to children living in the school district whose families seek a high quality early education experience for their children. Enrollment for the following year is in the latter part of the previous year.

There is absolutely no discrimination as to race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic group or national origin at RECP. Our policy is to have complete respect for, and acceptance of, each family's individual and cultural background and beliefs.

We encourage parents to work on toilet training with their child before entering our program. Children that are enrolled in a full day schedule should be able to rest quietly, or engage in quiet activities on their mats (such as looking at books), during the afternoon rest time period.

To ensure quality programming, children may not make up an absence on a day that they are not scheduled to attend. If a child is chronically absent they may be dropped from the program to give another child the opportunity to attend.

Mealtimes

Lunch and snacks are times when we all sit together, relax, enjoy

each other's company, and practice positive language and social skills. Half-day students need to bring one snack and drink to school. Full-day students need to bring two snacks, one lunch and enough drinks for all meals. We strongly encourage that parents provide healthy foods such as whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables. For parents that are interested, breakfast and lunch prepared at the school are also an option.

Arrival and Departure

Parents and caretakers who drop off children must sign in on the classroom attendance sheet indicating actual time of drop off, anticipated pick up time (and, later, write the actual pick up time) and who will be picking up that day. We will only allow children to leave with a person designated as a pick up person unless parents directly notify us otherwise during the day.

Please be on time for arrivals and departures. The program starts for all children at 8:00. After arriving, parents should help their children to put their things away, wash their hands, sign in, and read the morning message before they become involved in program activities. Pick up time is 11:30 for half-day students and 3:00 for full-day students and 5:00 for after school students.

Toys from Home

We ask that children not bring toys from home. If they forget they will be asked to leave them in their cubbies. If children stay for rest time, they are allowed to have "comfort toys" such as a stuffed animal or doll, to help them relax while they rest.

Leadership Opportunities

Your child will have special opportunities to be the leader of a variety of preschool activities - including helping jobs, line leader, and assisting during meeting times.

Birthdays

To avoid hurt feelings, invitations to birthday parties should not be delivered at school unless everyone in the group is invited.

Sometimes parents send special snacks for birthday celebrations (or other special occasions). These are very welcome. Please let staff know ahead of time so that we can accommodate children with allergies and special diets.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are offered twice a year. At these sessions we will tell you about your child's progress at school, answer any questions you may have and find out how things are going at home.

Reminder! You don't have to wait until parent conferences to touch base with us. A phone call to the classroom teacher, a quick chat at pick up or drop off time, or a scheduled time for a longer conversation are always options open to you. When teachers work in partnership with parents, children make the greatest gains!



Parent Opportunities and Responsibilities

Field trips are an opportunity for parents and children to enjoy new experiences together. Parents (or designated adults) are expected to transport and accompany their children on trips. We're happy to help parents arrange field trip transportation and supervision with another parent if needed.

The **Preschool Steering Committee** meets a few times during the school year. The work of the Steering Committee is to:

- * Plan "beyond the classroom" activities.
- * Support and provide enrichment opportunities
- * Facilitate events that include children and families from all of the Rivendell towns.

All parents are encouraged to serve on the Steering Committee. Our goal is to have representation from each town. Your voice is important.

Parents must supply a **complete change of clothes** for their child. Remember to send in a replacement if an item of clothing is used. Children that stay all day need a crib sheet and small blanket for their mat during rest time.

Parents supply pull-ups and wipes if needed.

Volunteers are always welcome in our classroom. Do you have a special activity you enjoy and would like to share? In the past, volunteers have read to the children, made holiday crafts, coordinated a cooking activity, sung and/or played an instrument, shared information about their jobs, and many other things. Whatever your idea might be, we will welcome it! If you are planning on volunteering please let the teacher know so we can assist you. If you would just like to visit and observe that is fine too. Our door is always open to you.

Children should have **adequate outdoor clothing and comfortable indoor clothing** that can get messy. Children must wear footwear at all times (except rest time) indoors. Boots restrict movement and are uncomfortable to have on all day.

If your child will be **absent or late** please notify us as early as possible!

Teaching Positive Behaviors

By supporting pro-social behaviors, teaching respect for people and property, establishing clear and consistent rules, and following through with fair and logical consequences we can help to limit behavioral difficulties. Of course, difficulties are sometimes experienced and we use these times as an opportunity for children to learn and practice positive behavioral skills. We facilitate this process through modeling, direct instruction, consistently and respectfully addressing behaviors, and acting as mediators between children with differing points of view. By utilizing these strategies, even very young children can learn to resolve differences successfully, first with assistance from

teachers and then independently.

In our program, no child is allowed to hurt or mistreat another child. No adults (including parents) are allowed to use inappropriate language or corporal punishment with children at any time.

Immunization Policy

Before attending the program a copy of your child's immunization records and proof of health child check up must be on file at the program site. It must conform to the schedule of immunizations determined by the Vermont Department of Health. Exceptions will be made only if families have legally accepted written exemptions and these must also be kept in children's files.

Illness

Please do not send an ill child to school!

When children become ill during school our first concern is for their well-being. If a child develops any serious symptoms that would lead to exclusion, she/he will be separated from the group and made as comfortable as possible, and you will be notified. School nurses or head teachers will make the final determination as to whether an ill child is able to attend the program. Please come as soon as possible to pick up your sick child from school!

On your child's admission form you are asked to designate at least two people that may be contacted to pick up your child when you are unable to be reached. Make sure you have notified these emergency transporters that they have been listed! It is also a

good idea to alert emergency contacts if you know that you will not be available to arrive promptly at the school in case you are called to do so.

Children should not return to school until they no longer display the symptoms that led to their exclusion. Children should be free of fever, persistent diarrhea or vomiting for at least 24 hours before returning. If the child was suffering from a communicable disease she/he should no longer be in the contagious stage of that disease. In the case of strep throat or other bacterial infections the child should be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning. For certain conditions a doctor's note may be required before a child can be readmitted to the classroom.

If your child is able to be at school but needs medication, we must have your written permission to administer the medication. Prescription medications (ex. inhaler for asthma) need parent/guardian permission and a doctor's order as well.

According to Vermont state childcare licensing regulations and/or Rivendell School District policies, we cannot allow a child to come to school (or remain in school) if she/he has any of the following conditions:

- * Child looks or acts very ill
- * Child is too ill to participate comfortably in regular school activities
- * Child is too ill to play outside
- * Taking care of the child compromises staff's ability to care for the rest of the group
- * Fever above 100 degrees (oral temperature) or 99 degrees (under arm temperature)

- * Child has difficulty breathing
 - * Severe cough
 - * Vomiting
 - * Diarrhea that is causing toileting accidents, is recurrent, with stomach, or is an atypical color
 - * Viral conjunctivitis (rapidly spreading type)
 - * Chickenpox, scabies, impetigo
 - * Ringworm
 - * Rash: oozing/open
- * A complete list of signs and symptoms of conditions (and rules pertaining to exclusion) is posted in each preschool classroom.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of serious illness or accident, parents/guardians will be notified as quickly as possible. If parents/guardians are unable to be reached, an emergency contact person will be called. School personnel will seek emergency medical care as needed, which may include transportation to the emergency room and the emergency medical personnel administering whatever emergency treatment is necessary.

Emergency Preparedness

We practice fire drills and shelter drills on a regular basis during the school year. In case of a fire or other emergency, we will follow the Rivendell emergency response plans and procedures.

Snow/School Closure Procedures

The Rivendell Early Childhood program will be closed when the Rivendell schools are closed. Parents will be notified through the emergency phone system. School closings are also posted on the internet and broad casted on local radio.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy

All preschool and elementary school staff members are required by law to report cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Vermont Agency of Human Services - Department for Children and Families (DCF) within 24 hours. The purpose of this legal requirement is to protect the health and welfare of children in our care.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be maintained at all times by staff in our program. We will not discuss your child, or share written information regarding your child, with anyone other than preschool staff members or administrators. We also request that you not inquire about, or discuss information pertaining to, any student other than your own child. Your child's preschool file, or special education file, is available for your review at anytime with

prior notification. Special education files are always kept with a child's current special educator.

Complaints Procedure

If you have any concerns regarding your child's experiences in the preschool, you should contact your child's classroom teacher. If, after doing so, you still feel that the issue has not been appropriately addressed, you should contact the school principal. If the issue is still not resolved, the next person to contact would be the superintendent of schools. If you continue to have concerns, you may call the Vermont Child Care Consumer Concern Line at 1-800-649-2642.

Childcare Licensing Information

The RECP is licensed by the Vermont Agency of Human Services - Department for Children and Families (DCF). A copy of the childcare licensing regulations is posted in the preschool classroom. The licensing regulations, along with additional information pertaining to early childhood development, is also available on-line at www.dcf.vermont.gov

Drug, Alcohol and Smoking Policy

There shall be no smoking on school property or in vehicles on school grounds. If the staff believes that anyone picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol they will not release the child to that individual. Staff will offer to call emergency contacts to transport the child and adult.

Phone Numbers

Westshire Director :

Heidi Nichols

(802) 333-4668 ext 4126

Samuel Morey Director:

Ashley Bean

(802) 333-9755

Early Childhood Special Education

Jill Buffum

(802)333-4668 or (802) 333-9755



Daily Schedule

8:00 – 8:45: Arrival, Morning Choice

8:45 – 9:00: Morning Meeting

9:00 – 10:30: Snack, Choice Time

10:30 – 10:45: Music and Movement, Story Time

10:45 – 11:45: Outside Play (Morning Pick-Up: Outside @ 11:30)

11:45 – 12:30: Lunch, use bathroom, read books on mat

12:30 – 1:45: Rest Time (Thursdays: wake up at 1:30)

1:45 – 2:15: Snack (optional), Pack Bags (Thursdays: Pack Bags, Afternoon Pick-Up: Inside @ 1:45)

2:15 – 2:25: Story Time

2:25 – 3:00: Outside Play (Afternoon Pick Up: Outside @ 3:00)