

ORWELL EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

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THE FAMILY HANDBOOK

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ENCLOSED: Family Handbook Agreement – Please Sign and Return to MJCC

A Negotiated Curriculum

Our approach to curriculum is a way of perceiving, observing, responding to, and working with each child, taking into consideration each child's unique self, beliefs, skills, and interests. This approach— child-initiated and teacher-framed—demands a high level of teacher understanding, involvement, and commitment. Teachers respond to children's interests and needs by providing an environment that is rich in materials and activities that specifically support those interests and needs.



Learning occurs when children are engaged in collaborative activity about something that deeply interests them...the teacher's role is to collaborate with the children in their exploration so [the teacher's] knowledge can scaffold (build upon) their understanding.

Lewin-Benham, NAEYC Beyond the Journal, March 2006

On a walk, a teacher may observe that a group of children is intrigued with watching water in the flow. This interest might provide for an in-depth exploration of water. What floats? What sinks? What happens when water freezes? Melts? Where does water come from? Where does it go? What animals live in the water? The possibilities for exploration are endless

and are constructed on the children's interests and then, through careful listening, extended by the teacher's use of questions and materials that are provocations to expand children's further exploration.

Our programs are built on the developmental principle that children are born learning and that the learning that takes place in the first five years of life is greater than at any other time of life, including four years of college. Children are learning all day, from the time they get up until they fall asleep. They are learning to share, to make friends, to negotiate, to soothe themselves, to dress, to feed themselves. They are continually acquiring language and the understanding of complex concepts like family, community, neighborhood, space, time, and color. Their learning is never-ending.

Early childhood educators see learning from this perspective and align the curriculum with the Vermont Early Learning Standards. We could teach very young children to memorize all the sounds and letters of the alphabet and to count from one to one thousand, but we don't believe that is the best use of their time. They will learn letters and numbers and how to read when they are developmentally ready when those skills are the next logical step in their learning. We work to make these concepts meaningful to the children as they work to solve real problems and learn about the concepts that interest them. Our goal is to support a love of learning, including embracing the use of symbols and sounds.

The Emotional Foundations of School Readiness that were developed by the national organization, **Zero to Three**, reflect the program's goals for each child leaving the program and entering kindergarten.

Confidence -- A sense of control and mastery of one's body, behavior, and world; the child's sense that he is more likely than not to succeed at what he undertakes and that adults will be helpful.

Curiosity -- The sense that finding out about things is positive and leads to pleasure.

Intentionality -- The wish and capacity to have an impact, and to act upon that with persistence. This is clearly related to a sense of competence, of being effective.

Self-Control -- The ability to modulate and control one's own actions in age-appropriate ways; a sense of inner control.

Relatedness -- The ability to engage with others based on the sense of being understood by and understanding others.

Capacity to Communicate --

The wish and ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings, and concepts with others. This is related to a sense of trust in others and of pleasure in engaging with others, including adults.

Cooperativeness -- The ability to balance one's own needs with those of others in a group activity.

These characteristics equip children with a "school literacy" more basic than knowledge of numbers and letters. It is these characteristics that are most closely associated with school success.

Five Guiding Principles for Children, Families, and Teachers

Be safe physically and emotionally. Be aware of boundaries, learn to regulate, control impulses, and practice self-awareness. Know when and how to help others and ask for help. Individualize supports, challenges, and expectations.

Be actively engaged with others, experiences, the environment, and the community. Be genuine, rise to challenges, and solve problems. Initiate and try new things. Make connections, contribute, and collaborate.

Be respectful of others, materials, and the environment. Use strong listening and communication skills, being aware of the messages sent verbally and non-verbally. Value differences.

Be responsible. Initiate, give your full attention, and follow through with expectations. Be proactive, responsive, and dependable. Take care of your needs and do your best. Communicate ideas and feelings. Contribute to a positive, healthy environment.

Extend kindness to others. Be friendly and care for others, going above and beyond. Empathize and show compassion. Offer support and show appreciation. Celebrate successes.

Admissions

In the Mary Johnson Children's Center programs we are committed to creating a diverse community of children and families. Families are encouraged to be proactive in their search for an early childhood program, and if they believe they are interested in enrolling their child in the Orwell program, they should ensure that their child is on the waiting list. The Orwell Early Education Program serves children who are 3 years old until their entrance into kindergarten.

When enrolling children, we strive towards creating a balanced group of children and families. The following criteria are all considered:

- Age range
- Sibling status
- Gender
- Children and families with special needs
- Enrollment contracts
- Date of placement on waitlist

Rates are spelled out in the program tuition contract that must be signed and returned at the time of enrollment. **If your child receives state tuition assistance, all paperwork MUST be processed before your child begins.**

The program's tuition is based on the receipt of funding from the local school district via the Universal Pre-K Program. Before enrolling, parents will receive and must submit a school district form allowing Mary Johnson to access this funding for their child. Tuition rates will be at a higher amount for those without UPK funding in place.



Waiting List

We recommend that you contact Mary Johnson Children's Center to put your child on the Orwell program waiting list as soon as possible. While most children begin their program experience in the early fall with the start of the traditional academic year, the program may have unanticipated openings at any point during the year. Families move, jobs change, families' needs change and consequently some openings occur at unanticipated times.

A family can place their child's name on the waiting list simply by calling Mary Johnson Children's Center. You will be asked for your name, your child's name, your child's date or expected date of birth, your address and your telephone number. You will also be asked what schedule you prefer once enrolled. There is no fee or deposit for putting your child's name on the waiting list and there is no commitment on your part to enroll your child if an opening becomes available.

OEEP does not operate during the summer school break. Families interested in care during the summer should contact MJCC's main office when notices go out in late winter/ early spring. At times, we have spaces available to families in our Middlebury sites during the summer.

Visiting

Prior to enrolling a child in the Orwell Early Education Program, all families are asked to visit the classroom and ask any questions they may have. While lunch, outdoor time and naptime are integral components of our day; morning visits are preferable as families can most easily see the program dynamic and meet teachers with the least disruption.

Once a family has determined that they would like to enroll their child, they will be scheduled for an intake visit. This is a valuable time to sit down with the teachers and share information about your child, and to ask any unanswered questions about the classroom and the program.

It is particularly important that children visit the program, spend some time in the classroom and meet their teachers prior to their first day.



First Day(s)

The first day can be stressful, not only for children but for parents as well. Our experience has also shown that occasionally a child will breeze through the first day's separation and then experience a difficult separation on the second or third day. It is important for parents to talk to their child about what to expect: that (s)he will be with other children, who the teachers will be, and explain that you will be coming back later in the day. You may want to spend a little extra time with your child to help them settle into an activity before leaving. If the separation is difficult when you do leave, it is best to simply say goodbye and leave. More often than not, the child will be upset for a short time, then settle into the classroom and be fine. We will help in any way we can. You may also call and check on how your child is doing later. Teachers will call a parent if there are any significant concerns.

Arrival and Departure

- **Arrival:** We ask that children arrive at the program by 8:30. Our experience has shown that children who consistently arrive after the rest of the class have a more challenging time entering and joining in classroom activities.



Transitions can be hard and some children experience difficulty saying goodbye in the morning. Teachers will be ready to help families whose children are having difficulty transitioning, and families should always feel free to call the program to see how their child is doing.

Half Day Departure: This means that families should plan to arrive by 12:20.

• **Full Day Departure:** The program closes at 4:00. We ask that all parents arrive by 3:50 to pick up their child.

Just as it is important to consider arrival time, it is important to consider the end of the day. Late pick-ups are upsetting for children who are waiting. Children—and adults—can be tired and extra time and patience is required. For children who find it challenging to leave, it can be helpful to establish a routine with the help of the classroom teacher and stick with it.

• **Sign in/out:** Please be certain that your child's teacher is aware of when you are arriving or departing. It is very important that your child be signed in and out each day by you or an authorized adult.

• **Release of Children:** Children will not be released to an unauthorized person. Families should list those people who are authorized to pick up their child on the child's enrollment form. In a rare emergency situation, arrangements can be made verbally. If the teacher does not know the person picking up the child, information about the person must be provided, including their name, phone number, and physical description. This person will be asked to show a picture ID. If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up a child, the child will remain under the supervision of the teacher. Families are requested not to ask the program to release their child to a sibling who is under eighteen.



• **Emergency Contacts:** Families **must** provide the program with the name, address and home and daytime telephone numbers of **TWO people** to contact in an emergency or in case your child becomes ill, if the family cannot be reached. The family provides this information on the child's enrollment form. Be sure to update as necessary.

Hours and Schedules

The **Orwell Early Education Program** is open from 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The daily schedule is available in the classroom, and during Welcome Conferences.

Families can choose a part day or full day schedule from the following options:

- 2 half days (10 hours) 7:30 -12:30
- 3 half days (15 hours) 7:30 -12:30
- 3 full days
- 4 full days
- 5 full days

If a child has a part week schedule and a family has the occasional need for an additional day, the family should check with their child's teacher to see if the schedule can accommodate the family's need for care. They must also notify the Mary Johnson Children's Center office of any schedule changes.



The Orwell Early Education Program will follow MOST of the Slate Valley Unified Union School District calendar for holidays, in-service days and snow days, yet there are some differences to note.

Late Policy

We all have times when everything seems to conspire against us. The flat tire, the car that won't start, the traffic accident that leaves us stuck in traffic; all are realities of life. For these reasons, families are expected to arrange for a back-up person to pick up their child in the event of an emergency. While it happens rarely, families should be assured that in a family emergency, the family's emergency contacts will be called and the program will make sure that a staff member stays with their child until arrangements can be made.



However, these highly unusual circumstances are the exception and families must leave sufficient time to get to the program to pick up their child in a timely way. **We ask that families plan for at least 15 minutes in the building at the end of the day for pick up.** This means that families should plan to arrive by 12:20 for half day, and 3:50 p.m. for full day enrollees.

Families who are in the building past the closing times will be assessed a fee of \$20.00 incrementally for each 15 minutes past closing time. Families will be billed for this charge.

Daily Schedule

Activities and schedules change according to the curriculum and the seasons, but this schedule reflects the components that are part of a typical day at the program.

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 7:30 | Program Opens Exploratory play and open-ended activities Breakfast |
| 9:30 | Full group Meeting |
| 10:00 | Project time – Small Groups |
| 10:30 | Outdoor Exploration |
| 11:45 | Lunch |
| 12:30 | Half-day students depart Rest time |
| 2:30 | Afternoon Snack |
| 3:00 | Indoor/Outdoor Exploration |
| 4:00 | Program closes |



Tuition - Vacation Policy - Withdrawal

Mary Johnson Children's Center is a nonprofit organization that is dependent upon tuition for its operation. Tuition rates are set by the Center's Board of Directors and take effect at the start of the fall academic year. Tuition is calculated on a yearly basis, but, for the convenience of families, is broken down into a weekly payment. Every family must complete a Tuition Contract before their child enrolls in a program. If your child receives state tuition assistance, all paperwork **MUST** be processed and approved before your child begins.

Tuition does not vary on partial weeks and the full weekly tuition is due on those weeks. When the program is closed for a full week, Monday to Friday, tuition will not be due.

Withdrawal: If a family decides to withdraw their child from the program they are responsible for giving two weeks' notice. Families wishing to withdraw their child, but who fail to provide a two-week notice, will still be liable for the last weeks' tuition.

OEEP participates in the Universal PreK Program with area supervisory districts. Families whose children qualify (children generally must be 3 years old by September 1 of the new school year and live in one of the districts that participate) will have their tuition reduced for 10 hours per week for 35 weeks of their early childhood education, the first week of school through mid-May.

Tax / Payment Receipts: Many families require a receipt for childcare for tax or employer reimbursement purposes. If you require one, please contact the business office at Mary Johnson Children's Center. **Please allow up to two weeks for processing, especially during tax season.**

Employer Federal ID#: 03-022-4359



Snow Days and Emergency Information

The Orwell Village School is part of the Slate Valley Unified Union School District's PowerSchool Broadcast Notification Service. This will allow the school to contact you immediately by phone with important information about school events, emergency closings, and weather-related closings. The Orwell Village School will use this system to notify you of school delays or cancellations due to inclement weather. OEEP staff will also post this on Procure.

What you need to know about receiving calls sent through PowerSchool Broadcast:

- Caller ID will display the school's main number (948-2871) when a general announcement is delivered.
- Caller ID will display 411 if the message is a dire emergency.
- PowerSchool Broadcast will leave a message on any answering machine or voicemail.
- If the PowerSchool Broadcast message stops playing, press any key 1-9 and the message will replay from the beginning.

If there is an emergency during the school day that requires that the program leave its school location, the program will evacuate and follow Orwell Village School protocol for evacuation sites. For travel to a distant evacuation site, children will be evacuated by vehicle, with or without car seats. Parents will be called once the evacuation and relocation is complete and will be directed to the appropriate evacuation site. While every effort will be made to put this information on the website, there is no guarantee that this will be possible.



Safe Transportation Policy

If an obviously intoxicated/impaired parent comes to retrieve a child, program staff will encourage the parent to find someone else to pick up the child. If the parent's behaviors do not seem to be impaired, the staff will ask the parent if they are okay to drive or if they would like help calling a ride. If the impaired parent insists on retrieving the child and drives away with the child in the car, the police will be called immediately.

If the program has any reason to believe a driver or parent is breaking the law, including public knowledge that an individual should not be driving, staff will call the police. Likewise, if any child (served by MJCC or not) does not have or is not exercising appropriate car safety seating, program staff will not allow the adult to leave with the child or call authorities.

Children's Belongings

Clothing and Extra Clothing:

We encourage lots of active play, so children should be dressed comfortably in clothing that can be washed and will not cause alarm if splattered with paint, mud or other potentially staining substances. We also play in water tables, with hoses and in other water related activities and although we encourage the use of smocks, children often need a change (or two) of clothing during the day. Families are asked to keep 2 complete changes of clothes in their child's cubby. Families are also asked to provide diapering supplies as appropriate.

Families should remember that children are taken outdoors daily, weather permitting, and should be dressed accordingly: a light jacket, hat, good walking shoes and rain boots for damp days in fall and spring; a heavy winter jacket, snow pants, mittens, scarf, hat and snow boots in winter. When there is snow, children must have snow pants and boots to go outside.

In order to help us keep track of your child's clothes, please label everything. Even with labeling, clothing can go astray, so families are asked to make sure that their child's clothing does not have particular sentimental or monetary value.



Toys from Home:

For many children, something from home helps during transitions. A special comfort item, like a stuffed animal or blanket is appropriate to bring. Please keep all other toys at home.

If there is an item, like a book or game that your child would like to share with the entire group, please connect with your child's teachers to arrange this.

Holidays, Birthdays and Special Occasions

Celebrating holidays offers many opportunities for fun, excitement and camaraderie, and for meaningful learning about similarities and differences. We want to deepen, broaden and enrich children's experiences of holidays, yet we know that young children are easily overwhelmed by the excitement and pressure of holidays. Therefore, we emphasize calm, understated expressions of celebration. We also look to economic and material simplicity to give children (and their parents) some respite from the commercialism that has grown up around the major holidays. We know that most cultures celebrate similar milestones at similar times of the year, and focusing on the celebrations of non-dominant traditions enriches and balances children's awareness of the world.

Birthday party celebrations are exciting for young children. The program celebrates a child's birthday through a variety of ways including: making banners, signs and crowns, giving of birthday books, and with sharing of snacks and food. Birthdays may include cakes or cupcakes that are served with a healthy snack. Families may provide a birthday treat or the children in the class may prepare a treat for the special child's day. Families should let their child's teacher know in advance that they will be bringing a treat.



The program is an inclusive environment and we request that unless a family is inviting the entire class to a party, that invitations be mailed and not distributed at the program. A program directory with families' addresses and phone numbers is distributed in the fall, listing all families who wish to be included.



Food

Food and meals are significant and integral components of the program's culture and curriculum. While they offer an opportunity for children to learn concepts in areas such as nutrition, math, science, and language, their greatest value comes from the social interactions and cultural competencies that result from the shared experience of sitting with others and sharing a meal.

The program offers children a light breakfast and an afternoon snack. Lunches can be ordered from the Orwell Village School for no charge or can be brought from home. Information about accessing OVS lunches will be provided to you at your Welcome Conference or through the staff at the school.

Sharing mealtime is an important component of the curriculum. This is a great time for conversation as well as an opportunity for children to learn to self-regulate by observing their own hunger and fullness cues. Staff members do not praise children for finishing food, nor will they regulate the order in which they eat items from their plates/ lunch boxes. Mealtime is never used to discipline or scold children. Experience has shown that children will often try a new food after they have been exposed to it on previous occasions.



Lead Testing in Drinking Water

Lead exposure poses a special risk to young children because they absorb lead into their systems more easily than adults do. Lead can slow down growth, impair development and learning, and can cause behavior problems. Act 66 (2019) requires all Vermont schools and licensed or registered child care providers to test their drinking and cooking water for lead.

Individual program results may be found here: <https://leadresults.vermont.gov/>

Special Diets/Food Allergies

Special Dietary Needs

If a family observes certain dietary practices, the program will work with them to try to make sure that these practices are observed.

Food Allergies

The program works to accommodate children with a food allergy or intolerance. Families are asked to provide a statement from their physician stating the nature of that food allergy and suggested alternatives to that food before we can make any dietary accommodations. If the allergy is severe, we will meet with the family to construct a plan for the child. Warnings of the food allergy will be shared with all program staff and all those who may work with the child. An emergency plan will be readily available in the classroom. In extreme circumstances the knowledge of this allergy, but not the name of the child, will be shared with the parents of other children in the child's classroom so they may be aware of foods that are restricted in the classroom. **Families MUST provide classroom staff with an unexpired EPI pen and an emergency plan if the allergy requires such intervention.**



Health Policy

Immunizations

The State of Vermont requires that each enrolled child have on file at the Center a completed immunization record listing types and dates of immunizations. The record should attest that the child has been immunized in accordance with the schedule of immunization determined by the Vermont Department of Health. We can obtain your child's immunization record on the VT Department of Health database if you give your permission on your enrollment form. Families, who relocate from out-of-state, should have their physician fax their child's immunization record to our main office at (802) 388-3063.

If a child is not, or only partially, immunized for medical or religious reasons, you must give us a Vermont Department of Health Exemption Form. These forms are available online at www.healthvermont.gov under the links: "Immunizations & Infectious Disease" then "Child Care Providers" then "Forms".

In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease present, all susceptible children—**including those with medical or religious exemptions**—are subject to the exclusion guidelines as described in Vermont's Early Childhood Program Licensing Regulations.

When is it best to keep your child at home?

There is no doubt that a child in an early childhood program is exposed to contagious illnesses. Colds, ear infections, and the latest sore throat can quickly work their way through an early childhood classroom. We understand how challenging it can be for a parent who needs to leave work or miss work because a child is ill. However, it is beyond our ability to care for a sick child within the Center.

Generally, if your child does not feel well, please do not send your child to the Center. Please call the school at 802-948-2871 and ask for the Early Childhood Program to let the teachers know your child will not attend that day.

In an effort to keep the spread of contagious illnesses to a minimum, it is Center policy that a child who has the following symptoms remain at home until symptoms subside:

- Temperature of 100 or higher under the armpit (must be **fever-free for 24 hours without medication** to return to school)
- Vomiting, or diarrhea (must **wait 24 hours after symptoms subside** to return to school)
- Persistent loose cough
- Unusual skin rashes
- Flu-type symptoms (muscle aches, headache, sore throat)
- Red eyes with drainage

**The guidelines on the following pages are also provided, but they cover only the most common of childhood illnesses and we ask that you call the program if you have any questions.

| Illness/Infection/Symptom | Should You Stay Home? | When Can You Come Back? |
|--|--|--|
| Cold | Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with behavior change • Difficulty breathing • Severe cough • Blood red or purple rash • Unable to participate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Coxsackie (hand mouth and foot disease) | Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with behavior change • Difficulty breathing • Blood red or purple rash • Unable to participate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Chicken pox | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On medication or treated as recommended by a health professional if indicated for the condition and for the time required to be readmitted. For conditions that require application of antibiotics to lesions or taking of antibiotics by mouth, the period of treatment to reduce the risk of spread to others is usually 24 hours. • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Earache / Infection | Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with behavior change • Unable to participate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Fever Temperatures considered meaningfully elevated above normal are: 100° axillary (armpit) 101° oral 102° rectal Aural (ear) equal to oral or rectal | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever free for 24 hours • Able to participate/ normal energy level • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Fifth Disease Roseola | Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rash with behavior change or fever • Has oozing/open wound • Has bruising not associated with injury • Has joint pain and rash • Tender, red area of skin especially if it is increasing in size or tenderness • Unable to participate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • On antibiotic medication at least 24 hours if indicated. • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Itching | <i>For Chickenpox, Scabies and Impetigo:</i> Yes <i>For ringworm and head lice: Yes, at the end of the day</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families should consult a health professional at the end of the day for treatment. <i>For pinworm allergic or irritant reactions, and eczema: NO, unless:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears infected as a weeping or crusty sore | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On medication or treated as recommended by a health professional if indicated for the condition and for the time required to be readmitted. For conditions that require application of antibiotics to lesions or taking of antibiotics by mouth, the period of treatment to reduce the risk of spread to others is usually 24 hours. For most individuals with insect infestations or parasites, the readmission as soon as the treatment has been given is acceptable. • Exclusion criteria are resolved |

| Illness/Infection/Symptom | Should You Stay Home? | When Can You Come Back? |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Lice | Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families should consult a health professional for treatment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On medication or treated as recommended by a health professional if indicated for the condition and for the time required to be readmitted. For most individuals with insect infestations, readmission can be as soon as a complete treatment has been given • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Strep Throat | Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to swallow. • Excessive drooling with breathing difficulty. • Fever with behavior change. • The child meets other exclusion criteria • Unable to participate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to swallow • Able to participate • On medication at least 24 hours • Exclusion criteria are resolved |
| Whooping Cough | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 days after antibiotics are started or 3 weeks after onset of cough |

Medications

Prescription and Non-Prescription

If a child requires a prescription or non-prescription medication while they are at the program, families must sign a permission form, which are in the classroom. The medication should be given to the classroom teacher who will place the medication in a childproof medicine box.



- The medication **must be in its original container** from the pharmacy and must have the child's name and date of birth, the prescription name and date, the physician's name, and the dosage amount and time.
- There also must include the reason for the medication, how and when it is administered, any medical allergies and any other special instructions.
- **EPI Pens: Families MUST provide classroom staff with an unexpired EPI pen for allergies that requires such intervention.**
- **Unexpired emergency meds must be on site for a child to attend the program.**

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency or of an accident, the program will contact the family and the physician. If it is impossible to reach either and emergency treatment is required, the child will be transported to the nearest hospital. The family's authorization for the program to contact your child's physician and take whatever emergency medical measures are deemed necessary is part of your application. **It is critically important that families keep the program updated on any changes in any of their telephone numbers, including cell phones and work place numbers.**



Assessments and Conferences

OEEP utilizes Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) twice a year in order to assess the children through observations in their preschool environment. As an assessment tool, TSG is developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, and tied directly to children's daily activities. Teachers are trained to utilize the assessment tool to its fullest and engage in professional development in all domains to be assessed. Following the completion of observations and use of the assessment tool, parents will receive written reports that celebrate each child which address their strengths, interests, needs, and helpful interventions.

Each family will have the opportunity to meet formally with their child's teachers to review their child's progress report twice annually. However, families should by no means feel that this is the only time when they can speak with the teacher about their child or any concern that they might have. Families should feel free to communicate with their child's teachers and set up a time to talk at any point. Although families should always feel free to check in about their child's day when either picking up or dropping off, conversations that are more in depth or require confidentiality should happen away from the classroom.



Field Trips

The classroom may take walks throughout the community and explore both man-made and natural environments. Teachers carry cell phones with them on any trip. A family's permission for their child to leave the school property is included in the enrollment packet.

Trips that require transportation are much less likely, both for financial and logistical reasons. If transportation is needed, families will be notified before such an outing to ensure that arrangements are made for the drop off of car seats and separate permission slips will be given. Parents are always welcome to participate in these adventures.

Behavior Guidance

The goal of Mary Johnson Children's Center is for each child to develop a sense of respect for themselves and others. Teachers strive to create an environment that encourages children to make positive choices, to enter and exit peer groups with increasing skill and satisfaction, and to learn to live in a respectful and cooperative manner.

Discipline is not considered punishment. Inner discipline is the goal and is the result of an evolving process occurring within the child. Through appropriate adult/child interaction, anticipatory guidance, well-established guidelines for appropriate behavior, and active listening to children's responses, teachers get to know each child and what additional limits and adjustments are necessary. Over a period of time children internalize the concept of self-control, and will acquire measures of inner discipline.

What This Looks Like

- Educators will try to foresee and prevent as much as possible. They will work to prevent the negative behavior and should it happen, they will connect their words with the child's actions.
- Educators will redirect behavior and provide an alternative that is acceptable and meets the child's needs.
- Educators will use carefully timed strategies and make suggestions when they will be the most effective. They will allow a child to rely on and build his or her own resources.
- They will prevent serious problems, when possible, through structuring a safe and cooperative environment and will provide ways to resolve conflict, and think about the impact of your own behavior.
- Educators will set clear expectations, keeping them brief and consistent. They will ensure they are understood and followed through with. Children will be involved as much as possible when creating and setting expectations for the classroom.
- Teaching staff may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child.
 - Examples of physical punishment: shaking, hitting, jerking, pinching, requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time, etc.
 - Examples of psychological abuse: shaming, name-calling, humiliation, withholding affection, seclusion, etc.
 - Examples of coercion: rough handling, physical restraint except when necessary to protect the child or others from harm
- Educators will be mindful regarding strategic body placement, will be alert to the total situation, and will move as needed, avoiding grouping with adults.
- Physical intervention may be used for the safety of the child and other students in the classroom setting by a staff member who is trained in Crisis Intervention.

Even with all the best intentions and interventions, there are times when a child might become frustrated or angry and strike out, perhaps hitting or biting a classmate or teacher. The Center does not use "time out" for many reasons based on child development and experience. If a child strikes out, is having difficulty with classmates, or is being disruptive in an unacceptable way, a teacher will work directly with that child until the situation is resolved and the child can be successful. This may mean that a child needs to be removed from a setting or classroom, but a teacher will remain with the child until the child is able to return to the classroom.

If a behavior is identified as an ongoing challenging behavior, as defined as any behavior that 1. Interferes with children's learning, development and success at play 2. Is harmful to the child, other children or adults, or 3. puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure, the following procedures will be followed.

- The challenging behavior will be documented and patterns of the behavior will be assessed. It is MJCC's belief that behavior is communication. Educators will work in their teaching teams and when appropriate with the director or community resources, to identify the function of the behavior. (What is the child trying to communicate? What needs are not being met?)
- The teaching team will conference with families explaining what has been observed in the classroom. They will also gain insight regarding behaviors in environments outside of school, including the home. Additionally, the teaching team and family will work together to develop positive behavioral interventions and environments.
- If determined appropriate and necessary, educators will reach out to community resources, including behavioral and mental health consultants, with family consent.
- Exclusionary measures will be used as a last resort when all possible supports have been exhausted and there is a determination that MJCC is not the appropriate setting for a specific child. In such a case, staff will work with families to develop a seamless transition plan.

We are committed to implementing best practice in early childhood education by providing nurturing and responsive relationships within a supportive environment for all children and families. We do this in partnership with families, cultivating trusting relationships through open and caring communications. There may be times when experiences and circumstances in a child's life are such that we need to call on the support and expertise of local resources to help in problem-solving and developing strategies to support to all in working through a developmental need.



Expulsion Prevention Policy

In accordance with State and Federal Child Care Regulations, Mary Johnson Children's Center has developed an Expulsion Policy which ideally prevents the need to ask any child or family to leave our care. MJCC believes in eliminating or severely limiting expulsion, suspension, or other exclusionary discipline; these exclusionary measures may be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a determination of a serious safety threat that cannot otherwise be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications.

As early childhood professionals, we strive to provide nurturing and responsive care that supports each child's unique strengths and interests. In partnership with families, we cultivate nurturing, trusting relationships through open communication. We strive to create a caring community by promoting the Strengthening Families 5 Protective Factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children.

In an effort to prevent expulsion and suspension of children, MJCC shall adopt the following, in policy and practice and in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner:

- As Educators we will use developmentally appropriate practices that provide for stimulating and interactive learning environments, diversity, age-appropriate expectations, small group activities, teachable moments, and knowledge of research-based evidence and best practices in child development, early learning, and education.
- We ensure that educators are adequately supported and prepared to help all enrolled children excel by investing in professional development, training, and education to ensure educators have the competencies to support children's social and emotional health.
- We will develop and implement classroom expectations that are developmentally appropriate, clear, and consistent.
- We will cultivate supportive relationships with families and ensure that all are aware of program policies and community resources.
- Parents/guardians and staff will communicate regularly, as well as participate in individual parent conferences two times per year or when requested by either party.
- Exclusionary measures will be used as a last resort when there is a determination that MJCC is not the appropriate setting for a specific child. Prior to the expulsion of any child from MJCC, the staff and director will:
 - Conference with parents to discuss positive behavior interventions and development of goals
 - Identify and engage mental and behavioral health consultants and community resources like Counseling Services of Addison County
 - Provide reasonable accommodations to class schedule, expectations and environment
 - Document efforts to prevent and reduce expulsion
 - In the case that it is determined that MJCC cannot meet the needs of a child, families and staff will work together to develop and implement a seamless transition plan. MJCC will assist the family in finding a suitable placement and will connect the family with further community resources as appropriate.

Parental Access

Families always have access to their child, their child's files and, within reason, to their child's teacher. The program recognizes that in many cases parents have a legal right to be a part of their child's life. The Center denies a parent access to their child **only** if there is a legal document on file that addresses that denial.



Parent Involvement

Families are always welcome at the program. The program encourages families who might have a particular talent, story or interest to share these with us.

The program also has various evening events, suppers, classroom meetings and other times that families have the opportunity to help the program by giving important feedback on the direction of the curriculum and to share their ideas on their child's learning and program experience.

Photographs

The program staff is continually photographing the children and the work that they are doing. These photographs are used to display children's work and activities at the program, via Procure, and on MJCC's website. They are also compiled for families as a record of their child's time at the program.

Occasionally, the local newspaper photographer stops by to photograph children for the newspaper. A family's permission to use photographs of their child without compensation is part of the program's Enrollment Form. Families who do not wish for their child's photograph to be used in any out-of-program publicity should make that clear on their Enrollment Form.

Confidentiality and Release of Information

All program teachers and staff must sign a Statement of Confidentiality, which states that they will not discuss a child or family with anyone outside the program or with anyone within the program whose responsibilities do not require such knowledge. All employees are cautioned about using a child's name or a family's name when parents, children or other persons might overhear them.

We ask families to respect these same guidelines and to refrain from discussing—either in the Center or in the community—what might be considered personal information about children and families that they acquire through their time in the program.

Children's files are confidential but are immediately available to administrators, teachers, parents or legal guardians, and VT regulatory authorities.

If children are receiving services from other community agencies, their families will be asked to sign a Release of Information form that will allow a child's teacher to work with the other agency or agencies involved to best coordinate services for that child.

Parents of children who will be receiving Universal Pre-K tuition funds or those entering kindergarten are also asked to sign Release of Information so that teachers may share progress reports and other information with the receiving school. This form is part of your Welcome Conference.



Smoking Policy

The Orwell Village School is a smoke free environment and no smoking is allowed within the building or on the property, including the parking lot.

Parking/Parking Lot

The program's entrance and parking lot is on the east side of the Orwell Village School. You can access it by turning in the dirt driveway at the east side of the playground.

Although we have no way of monitoring the parking lot, it is requested that for everyone's safety:

- Children may not be left unattended in cars in the parking lot.
- Cars are never left running.
- A child never leaves a car or the building unless they are holding the hand of an adult.
- Cars are driven slowly both in the parking lot and on the driveway.
- Children are not transported to or from the Center without appropriate car seats or restraints.
- Paper, food or artwork that is mistakenly dropped in the parking lot is retrieved.
- Families should not ask the program to release their child to a sibling under 18, even if the parent is waiting in the car in the parking lot.



Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse

All staff of an early childhood program are Mandated Reporters. This means that they are obligated by law to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment to the State of Vermont. Families should be aware that in reporting suspected child abuse, no definitive judgment is made by the staff. Personnel from the State of Vermont Department of Children and Families decide whether evidence exists to determine whether or not a report is upheld.

Feedback, Suggestions, Grievances



The program teachers are professionals and they value input that helps to evaluate and improve the program. Yearly, a parent questionnaire will be sent home. The program encourages families to answer the questions honestly and to share their perspectives regarding how the program is working for them.

When areas of concern arise, the problem should be addressed with the child's classroom teacher who will work with the family and attempt to reach a solution. If additional communication is necessary, the family should contact the Mary Johnson Children's Center main office to speak with the director.

Families have the further option of appealing at any point to the Child Care Consumer Concern Line at 1(800) 540-7942.

Child Care Licensing Regulations

Child Care Licensing Regulations govern child care programs in the State of Vermont. These rules are minimum requirements established to protect the health and safety of Vermont's children in out-of-home care and ensure that children in childcare programs in Vermont are provided with wholesome growth and educational experiences. Child Care Licensing Regulations for Center Based Child Care and Preschool Programs may be found here: http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Docs/Licensing/CBCCPP_Regulations_FINAL.pdf

Anti-Harassment Policy

Mary Johnson Children's Center Programs are committed to providing a safe environment for all, free from harassment of any kind. To that end, parents, caregivers or designees assigned to drop off and pick up children are expected to treat all employees, fellow parents, and children with dignity and respect through behavior and all written and verbal communications.

In the event that any adult behaves in a manner that disrupts the program (intimidates, harasses, disrespects others, or promotes fear), that individual will be asked to leave the facility and may be restricted in their access to the program and its premises in the future. All individuals must use respectful behavior, including written, verbal, and non-verbal communications, as well as social media posts.

We take all complaints seriously. Please contact Kristen Dunne, Executive Director, with any questions or concerns.

English version:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>

Spanish Version: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027s.pdf>

In the event that a complainant makes the allegations verbally or in person and refuses or is not inclined to place such allegations in writing, the person to whom the allegations are made must record the details of the complaint for the complainant. Every effort will be made to have the complainant provide the following information:

Name and contact information for the complainant.

The date(s) during which the alleged discriminatory actions occurred or, if continuing, the duration of such actions.

The specific location and name of the entity delivering the service or benefit.

The nature of the incident or action that led the complainant to feel that discrimination was a factor.

The basis on which the complainant feels discrimination exists within any of the protected classes.

The names, titles, and business addresses of persons who may have knowledge of the discriminatory action.

If the USDA determines that a civil rights complaint warrants an investigation, it will occur based on established FNS policy and procedures and then be finalized into a report. They will investigate the complaint and this is the sole responsibility of the USDA.

In addition to submitting the complaint to the USDA, the SFA will keep a Civil Rights Complaint Log on site.

Maintaining confidentiality is crucial. As much information as possible will be documented, including:

Name and contact information of the complainant

Description of the incident including date, time, location, and persons present Relevant Protected Base(s)

Name of organization and individuals alleged to have engaged in discrimination

Date of referral to USDA

The findings of any investigation conducted

Description of the final disposition of the complaint including any corrective action planned or taken

The SFA will also notify Child Nutrition Programs at Vermont Agency of Education of any complaints of discrimination. The State Agency maintains the information in a confidential database with limited access. Child Nutrition Programs does not investigate complaints of discrimination but ensures complaints are received by the USDA and will cooperate in the tracking, processing, and resolving of complaints of discrimination.

The Vermont Agency of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, marital status, sex, disability, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation in its programs and activities. Complaints alleging discrimination related to the Vermont Agency of Education protected bases of religion or martial/civil union status, will be sent to Emily Simmons, General Counsel, at emily.simmons@vermont.gov or (802)-828-1518.

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