



Parent Handbook

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Motto

Where caring and learning shine through

Mission Statement

To offer preschool children a structured learning program that consists of well-designed classrooms, careful choice of learning materials, consistent application of behavioral expectations, and an assessment of each child's development.

To create a classroom environment that encourages the development of independence, self-control and "quiet confidence".

To promote the above through an educational program directed toward parents and the community at large through conferences, committees, projects and programs sponsored by CEL.

Program Goals

It is the goal of this school to nurture the child's natural curiosity and propensity for learning by providing a stimulating environment rich with potential for learning. Thus he or she may come to discover many ideas and concepts on his/her own or with the guidance of a teacher, and may reflect these experiences and incorporate them into his/her understanding of the world. To that end, we foster independence, self-control, social competence, and self-confidence.

History

The Center for Early Learning (CEL) was founded in 1978 by a group of dedicated teachers and parents whose goal was to offer a quality preschool program to area children. The school strives toward this end by providing a developmentally appropriate educational experience for its children. Chartered by the New York State Board of Regents, the Center occupies the Education Wing of the Church of The Messiah Parish House.

Philosophy

CEL regards learning as a lifelong process, beginning before birth and continuing throughout life. CEL is concerned with the child's total growth and development encompassing the social, emotional, cognitive and physical aspects of learning. Each child is viewed as a unique individual with his or her own characteristics. CEL prides itself on providing an enriching environment and following an individualized educational approach, which is enhanced by maintaining a low student to teacher ratio.

Studies have shown that children develop the greatest amount of cognitive growth before the age of five. CEL uses Piaget's stages of cognitive development as guidelines for curriculum design. Many sensory activities are offered. All materials are nontoxic and appropriately sized for the age group. Materials are placed on low shelves, where students can access them easily.

The Open Classroom Philosophy

CEL is founded on an understanding of Montessori principles and individualized education concepts. Curriculum is individualized in relation to each child's stage of development, thereby allowing him/her to learn at his/her own rate. It is also shown that children learn through interaction with one another and adults in a skillfully designed learning environment.

Classrooms are arranged to suit the learning needs of young children. Objects are strategically set within reach on low, open shelves. Each learning material is carefully selected to teach the basics of mathematics, reading, language, science, art and music. Many materials are self-instructional; the teacher may show the child how to work with them, but it is in working with them that the child learns. In addition, a variety of art materials are offered daily, even to the youngest children. A separate room equipped with climbing apparatus and other pieces designed to require the use of large muscles is used daily by the children. Outdoor play and walks to downtown Glens Falls facilities are also scheduled.

Many important social and emotional gains are made in the open classroom. Cooperative interactions in the room and relationships between children are encouraged, while dependence on the teacher is de-emphasized.

In an open classroom, children may move freely from one activity to another, choosing from carefully selected and varied materials and developmentally appropriate activities all within a stimulating environment. A child in this setting has many choices and thus learns to make decisions, manage time and be responsible for his or her own behavior. As the child progresses through the program, they will become more independent, enthusiastic about learning, self-reliant and ready to take initiative. The outcome of this progression leads to "quiet confidence" in them and in what they can accomplish.

The goals of the open classroom education are to provide an environment that is free, open, supportive, meaningful and non-threatening. The open classroom provides for happy children who have wholesome attitudes toward life and learning and are independent thinkers who are motivated and continuing learners.

Policies

ALLERGIES

CEL takes severe (anaphylactic) food allergies seriously and we make every effort to provide students with food allergies a safe, unrestricted environment in which to learn. In order to make CEL as safe as possible for our students with severe food allergies we ask that parents identify their children's severe food allergies at the time of registration. Parents will then be asked to provide the school with an emergency care plan signed by

their child's doctor, a school set of emergency medications (Epi Pens, Benadryl etc.) and to complete an Individual Plan of Accommodation for Children with Allergies (IPACA) with the school director. The IPACA is a detailed agreement between parents and school staff re: how each will work together to help keep the child safe at school.

This year, **CEL is a peanut and tree nut free environment.** Please see our lunch bunch and snack policies for additional information on this topic.

We ask that you please have your children finish breakfast before entering school. For the safety of all students, we **cannot have food in our hallways.** If your child has eaten peanuts or tree nuts prior to coming to school, be sure your child's hands and face have been thoroughly washed prior to entering the school.

ARRIVAL

Our hours of operation are 8:00 am -3:00 pm. Classroom doors are open at 8:45am. Please bring your child to our main entrance (Red Door) at arrival. As soon as your children have adjusted to school, we will begin the optional drop-off system at the doorstep. You will be notified when the drop-off is available to your child's class. Typically it begins sooner for the older groups and later for the younger children who may not settle as quickly. See additional info in the Drop-Off policy section.

BACKPACKS

It is required that each child bring some type of backpack in which the communication folder and artwork can be sent home and in which diapers and treasures from home can be stored during class time. Please label the backpack and be sure it is big enough to handle all of the above needs. When looking for a backpack, please keep in mind the ease of opening and closing for your child, as he/she will be packing his/her own folder into the bag each day.

All children have access to their own and each other's backpacks during class time, specifically during the time they pack their own mail. **Please be sure that there is nothing in the backpacks that can harm children if ingested; for instance, coins, small toys, diaper creams, medications, and snack foods that may cause allergic reactions in other children.** If you need to send items to another caregiver that is picking up your child at school, notify the teachers or the office and we will accommodate your needs.

BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

On the children's birthdays, they will choose between bringing their favorite book to share, a show and tell, or their favorite song to have a dance party to. They may receive a birthday crown or card made for them by their classmates. "Happy Birthday" is sung at snack time. **Please do not send goody bags to be dispersed to the children in class.**

Holidays are celebrated at CEL through special projects and activities. Through storytelling and discussion, the children talk about the holidays their families celebrate and how various customs and family traditions have developed. Throughout the holiday season, CEL works hard to take a non-sectarian approach to discussions. By relating holidays to each child's family experiences, we are able to leave religious teachings in the hands of the parents.

CALENDAR AND MAKE-UP POLICY

Our school calendar, with respect to holidays and vacations, is consistent with that of local public schools. Snow days are announced on local radio/ TV stations, social media, and a Remind text. We do not have make-up days for days missed because of weather conditions, illnesses, or family vacations.

CLOTHING AND DIAPERS

Dress your child in clothing appropriate for painting, floor play and working with various art or sand materials and water. Smocks are available and encouraged, but they don't prevent all accidents. Clothing should be loose enough not to restrict movement. **Sneakers are a must** as children will be experiencing gym type activities each day. We ask that you send in a change of clothing (& extra masks) in a gallon Ziploc bag (labeled with their name) that we will keep in the classroom. Accidents can happen, even to the most adept at potty training. Because outerwear, hats, mittens etc. can be similar to others or are often left at school, we ask parents to label their child's clothing.

It is necessary for children in diapers to bring one or two each day in their backpack. Please send in wipes as well. Unfortunately our storage space is so limited it does not allow for storage of diapers and wipes, therefore it is necessary to have these brought in each day.

COMMUNICATION- *We will be using the Remind app for most communication this year*

On the wipe off board outside the classroom door, teachers will provide a brief overview of your child's day. Your child's backpack provides further opportunity for communication, specifically through your child's communication folder. Please check it, and make sure that it comes to school each day with your child. Communication is important to your child's success in school now, and through all levels of education and learning.

CONTACT INFORMATION

We can be reached at 518-793-4380 or celpreschool@gmail.com

Please visit our website at www.centerforearlylearning.com or our Facebook page

DISMISSAL

Dismissal times are staggered to allow for the many cars coming and going in the parking lot. For the first few weeks, teachers may need to ask who you are until we are all familiar with each other. If someone we aren't familiar with will be coming to pick up, we must have that information in writing and the person must show identification upon arrival. If you must call in the case of an emergency, you will need to identify yourself as the parent by disclosing your child's birth date in order for us to dismiss to an unfamiliar person. Your child will be dismissed to you from the main door. Please do not enter the school. In the confusion, a child may skip out. Teachers need to be in control and responsible for the timing and flow of dismissal.

Playground dismissal is the same. Teachers will bring your child to you at the gate. Please do not enter the playground.

We must have written permission from the parent or legal guardian of a child for anyone other than the parents or guardian to pick the child up from school. For your convenience, a “Permission to Discharge” form is provided. Only those on this form will be allowed to pick up your child. **If you do not give permission to anyone other than yourselves to pick up your child, please send it in with no names listed.**

Once your child has been dismissed to you, please proceed to your car as the hallway and parking lot become very congested. Walking through the parking lot is a teachable moment. Please keep each other safe by holding hands. Doors are open at all other times during class and parents are welcome to stop in anytime (not at this time).

DROP OFF PROCEDURE- All drop offs/pick ups will be outside this year. You may use the drive up drop off or park and walk your child to/from the red door for drop off and pick up this year..

CEL has an **optional** “Drop Off” Procedure in order to alleviate parking lot congestion and for the convenience of parents. **Independent and Pre K families** are invited to use the system as follows:

- Parents may line up in the driveway that leads from Glen Street to the back lot. It is “one way”, **so you may only enter the line from Glen Street!**
- Drop off **starts the second week of school**, or as otherwise communicated by classroom teachers.
- Teachers will be at the door from 8:45-8:55am for AM classes and 12:15-12:25 pm for PM Pre-K.
- Parents and children should remain inside of their cars for safety reasons, as the flow of traffic through the one-way drive must continue.
- Teachers will take children from the passenger side (preferably) of the first car in line and walk them in while the next car moves up in line. Cars may pass along your drivers’ side door into other lots.
- If you try drop-off and your child is having a difficult time, please proceed to the parking lot.
- Please be respectful of the church parking rules, which restrict parking along the playground fence (church reserved spaces). CEL families may park in the rest of the lot.
- The driveway for drop-off is a no parking zone.
- If you arrive at drop-off and it is storming with lightning, we will not be taking children from cars. You are welcome to park and wait for the weather to let up before coming inside.

EARLY BIRDS AND LUNCH BUNCH

Early Birds

Students of all ages may be dropped off anytime between 8:00 am and 8:45.

We will bring your child to their teachers at 8:45.

The cost of Early Birds is \$6.00 per morning regardless of how long they are here.

Lunch Bunch for 3 and 4 year olds

Lunch bunch runs from 11:15am-2:00pm. Your child may attend any portion of that time, on any day when lunch bunch is offered.

The cost of using lunch bunch is \$7.00 per hour and is prorated every 15 minutes but rounded up to the next quarter hour.

If you do not sign up 24 hours in advance, the cost is \$8.00 per hour.

If your child will be here for lunch, we eat at 12:00 pm.

Your child's lunch should consist of simple foods that you know they will eat. No candy or chocolate of any kind should be included.

Please purchase an insulated container to keep cold foods cold or hot foods hot. We cannot cook anything or heat up food for your child.

We will always make sure that your child has lunch. We will send home whatever they do not eat so that you know what they had.

LUNCH BUNCH Food Allergy Policy

- Please **read ALL food labels**. We ask that parents read food labels and not knowingly send in any peanut or tree nut containing product for lunch bunch.
- We reserve the right to not serve foods that may cause an allergic problem for another child or that are not in accordance with our food allergy policy. If your child brings an item containing peanuts or tree nuts to school, school staff will remove the item and put it in a safe place to return to the family. Your child will be offered a safe alternative and you will be notified.

Lunch Bunch for 2 year olds

It is at the discretion of staff to determine when two year olds are ready for and how long is appropriate for them to stay beyond school hours.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

If something happens to our building or any of the buildings in our immediate area, even if it is a weather related event, we have been advised by Glens Falls Fire Department to take the children across the street to The Church of The Messiah. If it is unsafe to go outside, we will be in the Movement Room. Parents and the Fire/Police Department will know where to find us. The children will be safe and entertained to the best of our ability. We will have emergency supplies with us.

If we do evacuate, you will be called and told where and when to pick up your child. Depending on circumstances, you may not be able to get close to our location. Remember that your children are safe with us and take your time making your way to us. We will be in lock down, therefore parents will not be allowed in, but children will be dismissed out to you one at a time.

FIELD TRIPS

Teachers may take the children on walking trips to downtown Glens Falls businesses and facilities. Field trips involving transportation may also be planned. Special permission slips are issued for each field trip. Parents may be asked to assist with driving and/or make car seat arrangements. All children attending a field trip that involves driving must follow Center for Early Learning guidelines, which are in accordance with New York State law. All children in the vehicle must be secured in a proper car seat. A child may never ride in the front seat.

FUNDRAISING

CEL is a private, non-profit organization. Though most of our operating budget is funded through tuition, fundraising is necessary in order to keep tuition costs stable and to support necessary purchases and school improvements. Our annual fundraising goal is \$10,000.00. We welcome parents, students and family members to participate in our annual fundraising efforts. We strive to only choose fundraisers that build community and will be useful and fun for our families. If you are interested in volunteering for one of our fundraising events, please contact the Vice President of the Board of Directors at celpreschoolvolunteers@gmail.com.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Families of CEL who have a question or problem within the classroom are encouraged to bring concerns to the teachers as soon as possible. Often the problem can be resolved immediately. If the family feels a resolution to the concern cannot be reached, they may bring the concern to the director. If a satisfactory resolution is still not reached, concerns may be brought to the CEL Board of Directors. Please contact the President of the Board or ask the Director to do so on your behalf.

ILLNESSES AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH-*Please also refer to our COVID-19 policy.*

It is important that children who are ill are kept home. **Children with fever, vomiting, or diarrhea must be free from these symptoms for 24 hours (without medication) before returning to school. In the case of illnesses like the flu, children need to be fever free for 48 hours before returning to school.** Please inform the office if your child has a contagious illness such as Chicken Pox, Coxsackie virus, mononucleosis, Pink Eye, Strep Throat, etc.

Staff members monitor student health while they are in our care. Children who show symptoms of illness during class will be taken to the office and the parent or emergency contact will be called to pick up the child.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Become familiar with your child's classroom dismissal time:

Guided: 10:45am (dismissal starts at 10:40)

Independent: 11:15am (dismissal starts at 11:10)

AM Pre K: 11:30am (dismissal starts at 11:25)

PM Pre K: 3:00 pm (dismissal starts at 2:55)

If you are late picking up your child, he or she will be brought to Lunch Bunch or the Director until you arrive. You will be charged a late pick up fee of \$10.00.

ORGANIZATION

CEL is operated by a Board of Directors, made up of parents and community members interested in early education.

The primary purpose of the Board of Directors shall be to oversee the fiscal stability of CEL. The Board of Directors is also responsible for the hiring and firing of the Director of CEL, as well as approving the hiring and firing of the staff by the Director of CEL. The Board of Directors is responsible for the raising of funds necessary for the continuance of CEL programs. In addition, the board also grants approval to an annual budget that is prepared by the Executive Committee.

The Board of Directors invites any interested person to sit in on a monthly meeting to become acquainted with its procedures and operations before deciding to make a commitment as a board member. A board term runs from August 1 – July 31, with the option of joining at the beginning of a given school year.

All members are voted on by the Board by a majority of a quorum vote. Please feel free to check out a meeting to gain firsthand knowledge of the process.

OUTDOOR PLAY

It is generally true that we will try to go outside each class time when the temperature and conditions are safe. This may not be the case for our youngest students because of the dressing process. The classroom teachers will make the decisions about going outdoors based on weather, clothing restrictions, and the children's readiness and ability.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to get involved in our CEL community. We invite parents to serve on the various Board of Directors committees, get involved in the fundraising efforts, share their special or unique talents in music, art or shared cultural experiences, chaperone field trips, or lend a hand in the classroom.

PARKING

The Church of the Messiah asks only that we **do not park long term in spaces along the playground fence**. The rest of the lot is open.

To alleviate parking lot congestion, we offer an optional drop off system in the morning, where parents can drive through the one-way driveway of the church from Glen Street and pull up to the doorway, at which time teachers will be there to take children up to the classroom. Please see our Drop Off Procedure.

The parking lot is a very busy and congested place at drop-off and pick-up times so please use caution and consideration. Be sure to hold your child's hand in the parking lot to ensure that everyone stays safe.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR PROGRAM

The CEL staff promotes positive behavior in several ways, recognizing that preschool children have a developing sense of self-esteem, self-discipline and inner control. The knowledge of childhood behaviors and the respect and acceptance of each child as a unique individual assists staff in providing developmentally appropriate guidance through simple communication. This allows for the child to generate solutions to problems and helps the child to value mistakes as learning experiences. The redirection of behaviors that may affect the health and safety of the child and/or classmates will be applied in order to assist the child in gaining inner self-control. Forestalling is also used as an effective method of preventing behavioral difficulties.

PROGRAMS

- **Guided Toddler Program** is a child's first introduction to our school. Small classes provide a warm, loving atmosphere for the very young child. Children range in age from 18 months to 2 ½ years and attend one morning (Friday) per week. Maximum group size is 8 children with two teachers.
- **Guided Learners** range in age from 2 to 3 years and can attend two mornings per week in groups of 8-10 children with 2 teachers.
- **Independent Learners** range in age from 2 years 9 months to 4 years and attend 2, 3, 4, or 5 mornings per week. Maximum group size is 18 children with 3 teachers.
- **Pre-K Program** has an age range of 3 years, 9 months to 5+ years and children attend class 5 mornings or afternoons per week. Maximum group size is 18 students and 2 teachers.

Each child at CEL is consistently observed and assessed on his/her learning progress. Parent/teacher conferences are offered once a year, in the spring, providing a time during which the child's school experiences can be discussed.

SAFETY

CEL always puts safety first. Close supervision is maintained by age appropriate activities, low student to teacher ratio, limited building access, standard dismissal procedures and fire safety programs.

The entry door will be locked with the exception of arrival/dismissal times. If you arrive and the door is locked, ring the bell and one of us will let you in.

Anyone picking up your child/ren on your behalf will be asked to show proof of identification if we do not already know them.

Thank you for your patience with this matter. Your child's safety is most important!

SEPARATION

Attending preschool is one of the many "first big steps" in your child's life. Unquestionably your child will need your support and understanding to help make this adjustment. Don't be embarrassed or feel guilty if he/she cries or clings to you when it is time to leave, since this is a typical expression of separation anxiety. What is important at that time is the parent recognizing that this is a reaction to a new experience, and part of the process of adjustment.

There are a few things you and your child can do to help make this adjustment together. Develop a “good-bye routine”, as routines are very important cues for children, indicating what to expect next. By developing a routine that you can follow each time you leave your child, he/she will soon learn that you will return just as you always do. The routine can be as simple as give mommy a hug and kiss, then wave good-bye. Whatever routine you choose, stick to it. When it is time to say good-bye, as difficult as it may be, it is important to follow through and then leave.

These early years are when children are developing and fine-tuning their ability to trust adults. By following through on the plans you make together, you teach your child that he/she can trust you. Eventually that translates into trusting that you will come back, because you always do. Until the child has that experience a few times, Mom or Dad leaving and then returning for him/her, of course there will be unsettled nerves. Many children cry for the first two or three days as they are learning what to expect.

Rest assured that while you are gone, the teachers understand the way you and your child are feeling. They are reminding your child of the routines that take place each day until you return to them. Most children will quickly develop a sense of wellbeing with this situation and the crying will end. This is dependent a great deal on how parents handle those first days.

Here are some tips for success.

1. Be prompt at arrival and dismissal times. Children whose parents are consistently late have more difficulty settling into class at the beginning of the day, and often experience a measure of stress when they are late being picked up.
2. Be sure to leave the first time you tell your child you are leaving. By prolonging the exit you lead your child to believe that by being more upset or if he/she says or does the right thing, you will stay. That isn't fair to your child or to yourself. Children can handle separation, usually better than parents.
3. Show your child you have confidence that he/she is in a safe place, with loving people and that it will be fun. Your child can sense your anxiety and wonders what could be wrong.
4. For the first few days, plan to be busy doing something while your child is at school. If you can keep your mind on something else, you'll find that these few days aren't so bad.

As always, the teacher and Director are here to help you through this. Though not every child is ready for an early preschool experience, most handle it quite successfully. The learning that takes place over that first year in preschool is exciting and every child should have a place that is designed for him/her even for just a few hours a week.

SERVICES (ADDITIONAL)

CEL is proud to offer our quality program to children without discrimination. We have a wonderfully diverse and gifted staff trained in early childhood education, however, we do not employ any special education personnel nor do we have a therapist or nurse on staff. Although we are not medical experts, we are trained in child development and may recognize when certain milestones are not met. All children develop at their own rate and the average range can be broad. Parents are always welcome to discuss their own concerns with the teachers. If teachers and parents have concerns for development, we can refer you to specific programs available to

you to help you make decisions for your child. It is a fact that the sooner these concerns are addressed, the more likely they will be resolved. We are here to support your child and family. If your child has already been evaluated and is receiving related services, you are welcome to let us know so that we may incorporate his/her goals into our day at school when possible. We also welcome their service providers to our classroom for therapy sessions at the parent's request. Please provide us with this information so that we can coordinate with them.

SNACK POLICY

It is CEL's policy that students have healthy and nutritious snacks while at school. In a typical school year, parents would provide snacks for the class on a rotating basis. This year, in an effort to provide students with the safest environment we can, we ask that parents **send in a bottle of water and a healthy snack for your child each day. *Due to this being the only unmasked time in the classroom, we are asking that each child be limited to one snack item, and snack time will be approximately five-ten minutes in duration.***

Snack ideas include:

- Cheesesticks
- Individual Yogurt/Yogurt smoothie
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa
- Cheese
- Bananas
- Hummus, guacamole or veggie dip
- Whole-grain crackers
- Graham crackers

Snacks MUST be PEANUT and TREE NUT free.

Food Allergy Policy:

- Please **read ALL food labels**. We ask that parents choose fruits/veggies or snack products that do not contain peanuts or tree nuts. (this information can be found on all food labels)
- This includes food that is labeled "made in a shared facility," "processed on shared equipment" or "may contain" peanuts or tree nuts
- If a snack is brought in that a child in the class is allergic to, we will make a substitution and return the snack to the family. We will keep a supply of non-perishable "safe" snacks in case a substitution needs to be made.

STAFF

The Director of CEL is responsible for carrying out all the policies for the Board of Directors. The Director coordinates the educational program and oversees the general operation of the school.

The role of the CEL staff extends to the school at large. Every member is responsible for providing and maintaining a safe environment for the students. They are responsive to all CEL children's needs as they arise. CEL staff members obtain and maintain current working knowledge of child development and its application to the classroom for the purpose of implementing a developmentally appropriate program. Teachers and staff members communicate to parents any specific concerns or needs that arise and inform parents of the progress and experiences of their children within the classroom.

TUITION

CEL is a not-for-profit organization that subsists mainly on tuition, all of which is expended on salaries, instructional supplies, and operating costs. Timely payments are expected on the first of every month. Delinquent accounts are made subject to a late fee unless prior arrangements are made with the accounts receivable treasurer.

Accounts must be current before registering for any Enrichment programs or Summer Camp. Also, balances from the previous school year are due, in full, prior to paying the tuition commitment for the upcoming school year.

“play and grow together”