



Rockville Community Nursery School

Parent Handbook 2011-2012

.....celebrating over 45 years of excellence in early childhood education.....

Rockville Community Nursery School

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School and Teachers Approved by
Maryland State Department of Education

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School Founded 1964

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School Incorporated 1966

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About Our School

Who We Are

Rockville Community Nursery School (RCNS) was founded in 1964 by Nancy Person and is incorporated in the State of Maryland as a non-profit educational institution. We are licensed in accordance with the state and local regulations for educational standards, teacher qualifications, fire and health regulations. The school and staff belong to various professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Parent Cooperative Preschools International (PCPI), and the Potomac Association of Cooperative Teachers (PACT).

RCNS is a cooperative, parent-owned, and non-sectarian nursery school. We meet in Building 3 of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockville, however, we are not otherwise connected with the church. RCNS does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

What We Believe

RCNS is a cooperative preschool in which parents, teachers, and children participate together in an exciting and nurturing first-school experience.

The educational goal of the school is to provide each child with developmentally appropriate learning experiences through which he can grow at his own rate to a new maturity and sense of self-worth and self-direction.

Our purpose is to develop in each child an interest and joy in learning about herself, others, and the world around her.

We believe in the value, dignity and self-worth of each child. Each child is treated as an individual and his potential is developed emotionally and intellectually to the fullest extent while at the same time he learns the social skills of working and playing cooperatively with his classmates and teacher.

Our program is designed to meet the basic needs of the young child. A balance is maintained between freedom and guidance, group and individual activities, and active and passive experiences. Flexibility on the part of the teacher is essential, yet the child finds security when there is a daily plan which she comes to know and expect. When children play, they learn. During free-play time, toys for the development of small and large muscle coordination are available, as well as numerous art supplies for the creative mind. The imagination is stimulated with dramatic play accessories, dress-ups, blocks, and sensory table explorations. Books, puzzles, and manipulative games are widely used. Group activities include singing and a variety of other musical experiences, creative movement and dramatics, scientific investigations and crafts. There is always time devoted to stories, books, and group discussions, where the skills of listening, speaking, and remembering are enhanced. Outdoor play and nature walks around the school's beautiful grounds, as well as engaging field trips, make our program well-rounded. As the child becomes a part of the group, she learns self-control, and begins to gain a sense of responsibility and a feeling of success. She learns to listen and follow directions, to share and to plan, to give and to take. Creativity, imagination and intellectual inquiry are fostered and new skills are developed in a supportive and loving environment.

The curriculum at RCNS varies at each age level and follows The Creative Curriculum (www.teachingstrategies.com) which develops skills in the following areas:

- **Social and Emotional Development:** Participates in the school setting with respect for self and others; learns to separate comfortably from parents and take responsibility for one's needs; demonstrates a positive self-image, self-control, and self-discipline; and forms positive relationships with adults and peers.

- **Physical Development:** Demonstrates spatial and body awareness; coordinates large and small muscles.
- **Language Development:** Listens to and understands increasingly complex language; uses language to express thoughts and needs clearly and grammatically; engages in conversations using the social rules of language.
- **Cognitive Development:** Demonstrates positive approaches to learning such as curiosity, engagement, persistence, and problem solving; remembers and connects experiences; uses classification skills; and uses symbols and images to represent something not present.
- **Literacy:** Identifies and names alphabet letters and their sounds; notices rhyme and alliteration; uses and appreciates books; interacts in other book-related activities; and writes to convey meaning.
- **Mathematics:** Uses number concepts; explores spatial relationships and shapes; compares and measures; and demonstrates knowledge of patterns.
- **Science and Technology:** Uses scientific inquiry skills; knows the characteristics of living things and the physical properties of objects and materials; knows about the Earth's environment; and uses tools and other technology to perform tasks.
- **Social Studies:** Demonstrates an awareness of one's role and the role of others in the global community and how roles change; and demonstrates simple geographic knowledge.
- **The Arts:** Explores the visual arts, musical expression, dance, and drama through actions and language.
- **English Language Acquisition:** Progresses in listening to, understanding, and speaking English for those who are (English) second language learners.

How We Are Run

RCNS is run by its parents, all of whom serve either on the Executive Board or in other administrative positions, and by the Director.

The Executive Board

The Executive Board is the governing body of RCNS. These positions are elected by the families and are as follows (with their major responsibilities):

- **Co-Presidents:** Prepare agenda and conduct board meetings; serve on key committees, including the Appeals Board; work closely with the Director to run the school; oversee other decision-making processes; update Parent Handbook and policy book. There is a policy book in the office.
- **Vice President:** Arrange parent education discussion groups; assist the Co-Presidents; arrange babysitting swap list.
- **Co-Treasurer (Budget):** Prepare the budget; report income and expenses; pay bills; oversee accounting, bookkeeping and tax filings; serve on Budget Committee and Contracts Committee.
- **Co-Treasurer (Tuition/Payroll):** Collect, track and deposit tuition and other payments; manage payroll; serve on Scholarship Committee and Appeals Board.
- **Membership Chair (Records):** Provide roster information to parents and update parents via email; register students; manage paperwork and forms.
- **Membership Chair (Tours)** Conduct tours and provide information for prospective parents; host open houses throughout the year.
- **Secretary:** Record and distribute the minutes from the monthly board meetings; document and maintain list of any policy/by-law changes.
- **Fundraising Chair:** Manage and direct all fundraising efforts; oversee Yellow Balloon Fair.
- **Administrative Jobs Coordinator:** Coordinate and manage all non-board administrative jobs.
- **Publicity Chair:** Arrange all RCNS advertising and marketing needs through various media venues, including advertising for the Yellow Balloon Fair and Silent Auction.
- **Class Representatives:** Prepare the class co-op schedule; coordinate class field trips; assist the teacher as needed; facilitate communication among the class parents and between the class parents, teacher, Director and Executive Board.

The duties of this Executive Board include:

Formulate school policies and coordinate all school activities

- Approve all contracts entered into by the school
- Approve an annual budget (established at a separate budget meeting)
- Appoint all committees; prescribe and supervise their activities
- Appoint officers, if vacancy occurs during term
- Attend monthly Board Meetings
- Call General Membership meetings when necessary
- Work with Director as liaison between parents and teachers
- Make adjustments in special situations with feedback from all sources

The Executive Board also consists of the Director (voting) and teachers (one voting representative for each age level).

Director

The Director is responsible for the educational program at RCNS, including overseeing the curriculum and supervising the teaching staff. The Director is on site during school hours each day. The Director negotiates all teacher contracts, holds monthly staff meetings, meets with parents upon request, attends professional meetings, ensures that RCNS adheres to all educational and legal standards, and operates the school on a daily basis. The Director acts as a liaison among the Executive Board, the parents and the teachers. The Director also oversees extended day activities and summer camp.

Parent Responsibilities

To provide a quality nursery school program for our children, the parents have the following responsibilities to the school:

- Co-oping in the classroom
- An administrative job
- Yellow Balloon Fair participation
- One Saturday housekeeping
- Attendance at Co-op Education Meeting and Back to School Night

Co-oping in the Classroom

On a rotating basis, a parent or a Board-approved substitute assists the teacher in daily classroom activities and playground supervision and completes general housekeeping duties. Child care arrangements must be made for siblings on the day you co-op. (Some parents trade childcare on co-op days.) It is mandatory that the co-oping parent arrive on time and stay through the entire class program so an optimal classroom experience can be planned for our children each day. Co-oping parents should arrive in the classroom at **9:00am by the RCNS digital hall clock** to prepare for the day. Co-ops arriving after 9:15 a.m. and before 9:30 a.m. will be fined \$15. Co-ops arriving between 9:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. will be fined \$30. Co-ops arriving after 10 a.m. will be fined \$50. Co-ops leaving before all co-oping responsibilities are completed will be fined \$30. Co-ops failing to show at all will be fined \$50 and will also be responsible for a \$40 payment to a substitute co-oper. (see Fines, page 19)

Upon arrival at school, please sign in under the digital wall clock in the front hall and note the arrival time.

A general description of co-oping duties follows:

Before school

- review plans for the day with the teacher
- ~~prepare snack for your class and note items from home on the classroom snack~~
calendar

- clean all tables using the 3 step process
- set up any equipment or activities that the teacher requests
- be prepared to greet and assist the children when they arrive at 9:30 a.m.

During the school day

- help with removal of coats and tote bags
- assist with all class activities, including art
- assist children with hand washing
- help monitor the children during outdoor play
- participate in circle time activities
- help children dress for outdoor play

Snack time

- clean the snack table(s)
- set out a cup and napkin for each child (use other dishes as needed)
- supervise hand washing
- assist with refills
- remind the children to dispose of their trash and place dishes in wash basin
- wipe tables and chairs

End of the school day

- help children gather belongings
- sweep the floor, stack the chairs, vacuum the rug areas and tidy the room
- clean easel(s), change newspaper, wash out brushes and clean the sink area
- take home leftover snack
- empty and replace trash bags (combine trash with another class when you can)
- empty the recycling bin
- empty and sanitize the sensory table
- check to ensure doors and windows are locked
- mark off the checklist of co-op duties posted in each classroom before you leave

If you are unable to co-op on your designated day, you must find a replacement by either switching with someone in your class, or by "hiring" a parent as a substitute (\$40 payable to sub). Failure to arrange for a replacement on one's assigned day or arriving after 10:00 a.m. will result in a no-show penalty of \$50.

If schedule switching occurs, it is the original co-oper's responsibility to change the teacher's master schedule and the replacement co-oper's responsibility to initial the change. The original co-oper must also confirm the switch with the replacement co-oper the day before the date in question. The name on the teacher's master schedule will be held responsible for the appropriate fine and payment to the substitute co-oper in the event of a no-show.

How to Work with Young Children

Remember our first priority is the children; classroom cleaning will be done at the end of the day. The teacher is the primary authority in the classroom, but general guidelines are as follows:

- Speak positively, i.e., "Please sit on the chairs." instead of "Don't stand on the chairs."
- Get on the child's eye level when speaking to children and go over to the child rather than talk across the room.
- Try to redirect inappropriate behaviors, i.e., child is throwing blocks; ask "Let's see how tall a tower you can build with the blocks."
- Let children's art or other projects be their own--there is not a right or wrong way to complete a project. It's the process, not the final product that's important.
- When children share their art with you, ask them about it and show your interest. If you cannot tell what it is, use questions such as, "What were you thinking about when you painted this?" or specific praise such as "I like how you put the red here and brown over there."

- Expand on their language. If they say, "red car" respond with "Yes, that is a red car in the garage."
- It is often difficult for your child to share you. Plan for this and try to help them feel special. But let them know you are the teacher's helper on your co-op day.
- Give children specific tasks when cleaning up. Instead of, "Clean the room" say, "Could you be in charge of putting all the fruit in the basket?"
- Keep praise specific. Comment on the exact deed, "I like how you came right to circle."
- Try to let the children work out their problems first. Be close by to offer suggestions, but give them a chance to solve differences themselves.

Above all, have fun! Co-oping is a wonderful experience. Join in the singing and listen to the story. This is a great opportunity to see your preschooler in action.

Administrative Jobs

Each family assists in the operation of RCNS by holding an administrative position. Job sign up begins in the spring. A folder with more detailed information regarding each position is provided at Back to School Night and via email. It is critical that you understand and complete the responsibilities listed in your job description. Please see the Administrative Jobs Coordinator, with any questions not answered by your handout. Failure to fulfill your responsibility will result in a \$150 fine. Provided on the next page is a listing of administrative jobs.

Executive Board Positions:

- Co-Presidents
- Vice President
- Co-Treasurers
- Membership Co-Chairs
- Secretary
- Fundraising Chair
- Administrative Jobs Coordinator
- Publicity Chair
- Class Representatives

Non-Executive Board Positions include:

- Newsletter Editor
- Director's Assistant/Librarian
- Snack Coordinator/Purchaser
- Housekeeping Coordinator
- Hospitality/Activities Coordinator
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Lunch Bunch Coordinator
- Head Aide
- School Aide
- Fundraising and Silent Auction Team
- Website Manager
- Online Coordinator

Fundraising

Ideally, the school's operating expenses (salaries, rent, etc.) are paid by the income from tuition payments. All additional expenses, such as new carpets, toys, furniture, playground equipment, mulch and our scholarship fund are supplied through your fundraising efforts, including corporate grants, RCNS merchandise sales, Monthly Dinners and other opportunities.

Our biggest fundraiser is the Yellow Balloon Fair and Silent Auction. The fair, which will be held April 28, 2012, requires 100% participation from all families. It is the only true "preschool fair" in the area. Each family is required to participate in this fundraiser. Failure to fulfill your Yellow Balloon Fair responsibility will result in a \$100 fine. If your family cannot attend on the date of the fair, there are some "pre-fair" jobs that can use your assistance. The success of the fair is due to the enthusiasm and hard work of all our families. It is a wonderful, community-based, cooperative effort that we are sure no one will want to miss.

Although these fundraising efforts are time consuming, we are convinced that RCNS is one of the best-equipped nursery schools in large measure due to the success of our fundraising efforts. These fundraiser profits help to keep our tuition fees reasonable.

Saturday Housekeeping

In an effort to maintain high standards of cleanliness, one parent (or pre-approved substitute) is required to work one Saturday morning (9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - or until job is finished) once during the school year. A thorough cleaning of each classroom takes place each month. A sign-up sheet for Saturdays is posted in the Fall. A detailed letter of parent's responsibilities will be

distributed by the Housekeeping Coordinator prior to your scheduled day. Failure to appear on one's scheduled day or to find a substitute will result in a \$150 fine.

Monthly Tuition Payment

Tuition is due on the first of the month. Checks should be made payable to RCNS.

PLEASE PUT YOUR CHECK IN THE "TUITION" BOX LOCATED ON THE TABLE IN THE FRONT HALL. Note your child's first and last name and class on your check.

If you must mail a payment please mail your check to: RCNS, Inc., 100 Welsh Park Drive, Rockville, MD 20850

A late fee of \$25 must be levied against families whose tuition checks are received after the 10th of the month. Tuition checks returned for insufficient funds will result in a \$25 fine (late fee) in addition to any charges incurred to cover bank fees. Please make arrangements with the Co-Treasurer (Tuition/Payroll) to work out a payment schedule instead of issuing a questionable check.

Tuition is due on the first of the month. If you are more than 30 days late with your tuition payment (or 15 days late with your April payment), your child **may not attend school or extracurricular activities until the outstanding balance is paid**. Fines and late fees are due upon notice. **If all fines are not paid within 15 days of notice, your child may not attend school or extracurricular activities until all fines are paid.**

Families overpaying their monthly tuition or fees will be required to pay the full monthly tuition amount in subsequent months. The school will notify families in March of any credit(s) due to overpayments, and the amount of the final tuition payment for the school year (due in April) will be adjusted accordingly. In order to streamline the school's accounting procedures, families will not be permitted to use the amount of an overpayment to reduce the amount of the tuition payment for any month other than April.

Back to School Night

This meeting is held in the Fall, prior to the opening of school (**Tuesday, September 6, 2011 @ 7:00 pm**). This event consists of a general presentation of operations followed by separate classroom presentations by individual teachers. At least one family member is **required** to attend, unless prior arrangements are made with one of the co-presidents.

[Note: This is a parent-only meeting, please make arrangements for child care.]

Mandatory Co-op Education Meetings

These meetings on **October 3 and 4, 2011 @ 7:00 pm** provide an opportunity for co-ops to learn how to co-op in their child's classroom, ask questions, tour the school, and review supplies for each classroom. **Anyone planning to co-op during the 2011-12 school year must attend one of these meetings and must have the notarized "release of information" and a "Medical Report for Childcare" on file with the school.**

Since participation in our school requires each family to co-op, after October 5 a child who does not have a currently trained co-op parent (or trained, Board-approved substitute) **may not attend classes** until this meeting requirement has been satisfied. Parents must find a substitute for any missed co-oping days. Make-up policy requires meeting with both the child's teacher and the Director, and doing an additional co-oping day alongside a trained co-oper. Please see the Director for clarification and to schedule this make-up process.

[Note: This is a parent-only meeting, please make arrangements for child care.]

School/Home Communication

Because parents are an integral part of our school, frequent, open communication is critical for smooth functioning. Parents can stay up-to-date by checking their mailboxes, bulletin boards, calendar and teachers' activity charts while picking up or dropping off children. Also, parents should read the monthly newsletter and special announcements sent home with the child or via email. Additionally, your class representative to the board, the Co-Presidents and Director are available at any time for questions, concerns or comments. Please try to direct specific concerns about your child to the teacher before and after the school day.

Newsletter

The newsletter is distributed via email at the beginning of every month. A printed copy is posted on the bulletin board in the hall, and a limited number of printed copies may be available in the office. This covers the upcoming monthly events and reviews the previous month's accomplishments. Please read the newsletter cover to cover. Deadline for submission of articles is the Monday after each board meeting. Anyone may contribute an article to the newsletter.

Email

Updates will be sent out weekly. Generally on Sunday evenings, and email from the (Co-) President(s) will be sent to parents to update them on any important issues for the upcoming week.

Parent Mailboxes

Notices, memos, and reminders are often placed in the parent mailboxes (located outside of the 4-Year classroom). It is your responsibility to check your mailbox each school day.

Child's Cubby

Your child's art work and some reminders are placed in your child's cubby. Be sure to thoroughly check your child's cubby and bag at the end of each day.

Hall Bulletin Boards

Pertinent information for parents is posted on the hall bulletin boards. The *RCNS information board* includes a school calendar with important dates, announcements, minutes of previous board meetings, current fundraising efforts and any other useful school information. The *community information board* includes information we feel may be useful about area activities and events.

Curriculum Updates

Each classroom teacher posts a curriculum web that corresponds with the daily schedule on the class bulletin board.

Student Evaluation

A student evaluation for each child is kept in a confidential file at the school. This evaluation is used as a basis for the parent-teacher conference and is kept on file for two years after the child leaves RCNS. Individual conferences are held with the teacher twice during the school year. Conferences are held in November and March.

Board Meetings

Board meetings are usually held the 4th Tuesday of every month in the 4Year classroom. We gather at 7:00pm and meetings commence promptly at 7:15 p.m. For the 2011-12 school year the dates are: ~~8/30, 9/27, 10/25, 11/29, 12/20, 1/24, 2/28, 3/27, 4/24, 5/22~~. All parents are encouraged to attend board meetings as non-voting participants. Board meetings are an

excellent way to fully understand how the school operates. Because RCNS is a school run by the parents, all attendees (voting and non-voting) can discuss issues and help set policies.

In advance of the meeting, agendas are posted on the Hall Bulletin Board and distributed via email to all Executive Board members, and by request to any other parents. Minutes are made available after each meeting to Executive Board members, any other parents upon request and are posted on the Hall Bulletin Board.

Parent Survey

In late winter, survey forms will be distributed to each family. This is your opportunity to comment on your experience at RCNS. The Co-Presidents and Director will compile the evaluations and distribute the results to the Executive Board and membership.

Appeals Board

The Appeals Board exists to consider appeals brought by members regarding policy issues in the context of school philosophy and current policies. A case is brought to the Appeals Board if the member, or members, feel that their situation has unique, extenuating circumstances which merit exception from the applicable policy. The Appeals Board reaches its decision by taking into account the family's circumstances, the school's philosophy, and current policy. All meetings of the Appeals Board and decisions rendered are confidential and will be shared only with those directly involved.

The Appeals Board is composed of one Co-President, one Treasurer, and one At-Large member chosen from the membership. The Appeals Board meets as needed to consider all policy issues. Appeals should be made to the Appeals Board in writing. Decisions are made, confidentially, at the time of the meeting. The Co-President will notify only the member(s) who brought the appeal of the decision.

An appeal must be submitted in writing to the Appeals Board. Your letter should state the matter you are appealing and your reason for the appeal. In some situations it may be possible to perform a service in place of a fine. Any suggestions will be considered. Be sure to place your letter in the Co-President's mailbox outside the office.

Special Events and Activities

RCNS offers many special events and activities throughout the year. These are designed to enhance the curriculum and offer opportunities to participate in expressive and enriching programs. **Parent input for new programs is always welcome.**

Field Trips

All classes participate in an October trip to a pumpkin patch. Other trips are arranged by the teachers. Considerations in planning a field trip include value of activity, age-appropriateness, safety concerns, and interest level. The responsibility for transportation is shared by the class parents. A permission slip will be sent home prior to each field trip and must be signed and returned prior to the field trip.

Field Trip Reminders

When off site activities require transportation to and from RCNS and multiple children are being transported, 2 adults must be in the vehicle; one of whom must be First Aid and CPR certified.

Parents scheduled to go on the field trip should arrive 15 minutes early to get carpools organized.

- Each child must have a safety seat WITHOUT EXCEPTION.
- Siblings may not accompany parents on field trips.**

Special Celebrations

Special festive days including Halloween, , Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and birthdays are held throughout the school year. For a child's birthday, a co-oping parent may supply a special treat on a day near the child's birthday. Your child's teacher may suggest some ideas about what is an appropriate treat to bring. The co-oping parent must write in the treat on the classroom snack calendar and attach the ingredients list.

In light of concerns expressed by some RCNS parents of children with food allergies, the school's policy regarding treats for special celebrations, is as follows: On a class by class basis in classes with severe food allergies, the school will provide a list of acceptable special treats pre-approved by the appropriate parent(s). No home-baked treats will be permitted in those classes.

Tree-nut or peanut products are not allowed on the RCNS premises during the school day. No goodie bags or balloons please!

Lunch Bunch

This program is held after the regular school day has ended, and runs from 12:30 until 2 p.m. This is an opportunity for children who are in the threes and fours classes to bring a lunch to school and share lunchtime with their friends and teachers. *(Please remember that RCNS is a tree-nut and peanut-free school.)* After lunch, there is additional free play or themed activities, both inside and outside. Registration is handled by our Lunch Bunch Coordinator. There are a limited number of spaces available for this program. Registration is by the month. There are no refunds for sessions not attended. Simply write your child's name on the sign-up sheet (posted in the hallway) and drop your check in the tuition box (opposite sign-up sheet) marked with your child's name and "lunch bunch." If Lunch Bunch is canceled for any reason, affected families will receive Lunch Bunch credit in the following month for the missed days.

Summer Camp

This program is usually offered for two weeks in June for two, three, or five days per week. It is centered on outdoor activities. Summer Camp is available to children completing a 2-Year, 3-Year, or 4-Year class.

Safety and Health Information

Hand Washing

At RCNS, we want to be sure that we are providing the safest most hygienic environment for our children. To ensure that we are doing all that we can to prevent the spread of illness, we ask that when you drop your child off in the morning you wash your child's hands before they engage in any activities in the classroom.

Illness

If your child is not well enough to participate in all school day activities including outdoor play, s/he should not attend school. Parents may not send their children to school with a fever, cough, sore throat, or other symptom of illness. In addition, children should be free from fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours before sending them back to school.

Should your child contract any communicable condition such as Pink Eye, Strep, German Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox, Impetigo, Lice, Pinworms, etc. parents are required to contact the Director immediately. Any necessary warnings will be posted on the front door of all classrooms, and it is the responsibility of the parent to check regularly for such notices.

If your child is on ANY MEDICATION, the classroom teacher and the Director should be informed. Sedatives, antihistamines and cough medicines can cause behavior changes; the teacher should therefore be made aware of the situation.

Allergies

If your child is ALLERGIC to any foods, plants, animals, or anything else, please be certain that the teacher and the class representative are fully aware of this sensitivity, and confirm your Doctor has indicated this on your child's health forms.

EpiPens and other prescription or non-prescription medication can only be administered on site if the parent and Child's Doctor have completed a Medication authorization form (available from the Director).

Cell Phone Policy

At RCNS we believe that involved, engaged parents can enrich a child's educational experience. Co-oping requires each person's full attention at all times. Adults should refrain from using a cell phone, Blackberry, or any other means of electronic communication while they are co-oping, except in emergency situations such as a sibling's school nurse calling. I agree with your note. In the event of such an emergency, please find the school aide or Director to cover for you in the classroom, and then exit the classroom to complete your call. You may also give out RCNS's phone number (301-340-7584) in case you need to be reached in an emergency. Please be sure to turn off your ringer during your co-oping duties.

Emergency Policy

As educators and caregivers of your children during their school day, RCNS considers emergency-preparedness to be an important component of school planning. Below is an outline of procedures and policies regarding safety at school. (The full plan is in a binder in the Office). All of the safety precautions outlined in our plan are as required by the Maryland State Department of Education. Periodic drills are conducted to practice the routines outlined in the plan.

All emergency information and telephone numbers are posted on the wall above the office phone. All of the children's emergency cards with pertinent information and telephone numbers are located in a notebook in the Director's office. **Please inform the Director and the Membership Chair of any change of address or phone number, and be sure to keep this information updated as necessary throughout the school year.**

To be compliant with suggestions put forth by Montgomery County Office of Child Care, the RCNS exterior door is kept locked from 9:45-12:15 every day. Those wishing to gain entry into the building should knock on the door.

Emergency backpacks are also utilized in conjunction with the emergency preparedness plan. The backpacks are a crucial component to our emergency plan and each classroom has their own bag to carry.

Fire Drills: Each month, we have a fire drill in our school. The evacuation plan (neon green paper) for each classroom is posted by each classroom's exit door

Notification by NOAA Alert System and Radio:

The county has provided RCNS with a NOAA Alert Radio, located in the school office. This radio is kept on at all times. It is both AC and battery operated. It emits an audible as well as visible signal in the event of a weather-related emergency or local environmental catastrophe (and sometimes as a test signal). Further information is obtained by listening to the Emergency Alerting System (EAS) stations on the radio: WMAL 630AM, WTOP 103.5FM, WWRC 1260AM, or WKYS 93.9FM. We follow their directions.

Our school's Asbestos Management plan is available in the Director's office. If you have any questions about the protocol for emergencies and regular security, please contact the Director.

Snacks and Good Nutrition

Eating healthy food plays a vital role in physical and emotional development. RCNS is committed to providing healthy snacks in order to promote good eating habits and teach children to make better food choices in the future. Offering a variety of foods at school encourages children to try new and different flavors and textures. We all feel better when our bodies are filled with good nutrition. Children can focus better in class and better control their behavior. Good nutrition builds stronger immune systems against illnesses and prevents tooth decay, diabetes and obesity.

The school provides a snack along with milk and water each day. It is the co-oping parent's responsibility to have the snack prepared before the start of the day. The co-oping parent is responsible for bringing a fresh fruit or vegetable to share with the class.

- Any type of fresh fruit is appropriate. *Grapes must be sliced in half.*
- Raw vegetables such as carrots (*cut into thin strips*), cucumbers, celery, broccoli, red peppers and avocado are appropriate.

Please make sure you are aware of any food allergies that a child in your classroom may have. Remember: **Tree-nut and peanut-free items only.** Popcorn is not served because of choking hazards and allergies.

All of our staff is trained in pediatric CPR and First Aid.

Insurance

RCNS carries liability insurance that covers children as well as staff and volunteers. When driving on a field trip, you are responsible for carrying the proper automobile insurance that would cover your passengers.

How We Discipline

A great deal of planning takes place to ensure that we have a stimulating, safe and age appropriate environment in each of our classrooms. This alone alleviates many discipline problems. We see parents as partners at RCNS. We value how dedicated parents are in taking an active role in their child's first educational experience. Parents can help reinforce positive behavior.

At RCNS we feel that our goal is to help guide a young child toward self-control, while maintaining a safe environment for all. This takes a great deal of time and patience. We feel that much of a child's uncooperative behavior is due to the fact that the child has not matured to the point where he can fully understand or meet the demands we are placing upon him. Discipline at our school will be tailored to the child and the situation. Many techniques such as redirecting, prompting, planned ignoring, modeling and reinforcing appropriate behaviors are incorporated to encourage appropriate behaviors. Our goal is to set limits and still allow the children to feel positive about themselves and learn to self-regulate.

In some situations a child may need to take a break from the classroom environment, in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for herself and others. The teacher is the only person who should initiate this calming activity. This may include, for example, a few quiet moments in a location within the classroom, or a short story or walk with a staff member. It is important that co-ops follow the teacher's lead in the classroom.

Co-ops are encouraged to talk with the teacher before and after school to learn about the teacher's approach to classroom situations. Please remember that as a co-oping parent you are an employee of the school, therefore you should not discuss what you observe during a co-oping day with anyone other than the teacher or Director. Confidentiality is imperative.

At times, teachers may have concerns about a child's behavior that need to be addressed in cooperation with the child's parents in order to set consistent behavioral goals for the child. The teacher and parent together may put in place strategies to help the child with classroom behavior. The Director may be brought into this conversation and may also assist by doing a formal observation in the classroom if the child's parents or teacher feel it would be helpful. In this case, the Director will coordinate a formal action plan for the student which will be discussed with the parents and teacher at a conference. With parental input, this action plan may be revised. If further strategies are needed, additional resources may include bringing in an outside consultant or referring the child to an outside agency for assessment.

If you have any questions about discipline please feel free to ask anyone on the staff. Specific discipline guidelines are printed in the RCNS Teacher Handbook. A copy of this handbook is available in the Director's office.

Other Important Information

School Hours

School hours are 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It is important for your child to arrive on time and to be picked up promptly. Children who frequently arrive late may have trouble joining the group; those left at the end of the day may become anxious. If you are not co-oping and arrive early, please feel free to use the playground or plan a quiet story or game while you wait in the car. Please be sure to arrive on time to pick-up your child. If you think you may be late, please call the school and leave a message. This will ensure that your child's teacher is aware of the situation, and they can put your child at ease. If you are 10 minutes late for pick-up a \$25 fine will be levied (see FINES pg. 19). **TEACHERS WILL NOT RELEASE A CHILD TO ANYONE OTHER THAN THE PARENT WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.**

Teacher - Student Ratio

The maximum teacher-student ratios are as follows:

2s classes – 1 teacher to 8 children (plus 1 co-op parent)

3s classes – 1 teacher to 10 children (plus 1 co-op parent)

4s class – 1 teacher to 16 children (plus 1 co-op parent)

In addition, there are both staff and parent school aides that assist classes as needed each day.

Withdrawal Policy

One month's written notice to the Director is required to withdraw a child from RCNS. (e.g. you must notify the Director in writing by Nov. 1 if your child is withdrawing Dec. 1) All registration, tuition and activities fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. May tuition and other fees are not transferable or refundable, and may not be applied to a different month's tuition.

Scholarship Guidelines

RCNS is committed to making a cooperative education available to all people. Partial scholarships are available as well as funds for emergency short-term needs. A three-person committee made up of a Co-President, Membership Chair, and a Co-Treasurer will consider applications. All information obtained during the application process is kept in strict confidence and is destroyed at the end of the school year. If you have any questions or would like to apply for tuition assistance, please contact the Co-Treasurer (Tuition/Payroll).

Calendar

We follow the Montgomery County Public School schedule with some minor exceptions. The opening and closing dates differ, as well as a few of the Teacher Professional Days. Please see www.rcnscoop.org for the current calendar.

Inclement Weather (Please also see Emergency Policy, page 12)

RCNS inclement weather policy is as follows:

- No school when Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) are closed.
- When MCPS has a delayed opening, RCNS will open at 10:30 a.m. Lunch Bunch will run as usual.
- If MCPS closes early, after school programs are canceled.

MCPS closings are announced on local radio and television stations. It is the parent's responsibility to be aware of closings/cancellations. *In the event of a delayed RCNS opening, it is the co-oping parent's responsibility to be at school at 10:00 a.m., or to find a substitute instead.*

Make-up of snow days will follow MCPS if it falls within RCNS' school year and hours.

Parking

Please park in the lot farthest away from the school. Another school uses the upper lot. Orange cones will block off the area children use during outdoor play. Do not leave purses or valuables in cars.

Clothing

- Child's name should be on each article of clothing, including jackets.
- Children should wear washable play clothes they can manage themselves.
- A seasonally appropriate change of clothes (shirt, pants, socks, shoes, undershirt/underwear) should be sent with the child on a daily basis. *Be sure to include diapers if your child is not potty trained.*
- We encourage the use of a tote bag rather than a backpack. An RCNS tote bag is available for purchase from the school.
- Smocks are provided for messy projects, though this does not prevent having clothes stained.
- Loops should be put on sweaters and coats so children can hang them in their cubbies unassisted.
- Children play outside daily (except in severe weather). Please have them dress appropriately. This includes snow pants, boots and mittens (not gloves) for snow; boots, and raincoat for rain.
- Co-oping parents should dress in comfortable clothing and also remember to dress appropriately for outdoor play. (This is the perfect opportunity to wear your RCNS T-shirt!)

School Library

Books and pamphlets on child development and child rearing may be checked out by signing the checkout book in the Director's Office. Loan time is two weeks.

School Pictures

Each spring a professional photographer takes individual and class pictures. Pictures are usually taken in April. Parents will be notified about the time and cost.

Rosters

The Membership Chair coordinates the school and class rosters. Rosters are sent to all families at the start of the year, and updates are sent periodically via email. Please notify the Membership Chair and the Director of any changes in address, email or phone.

Registration

Registration takes place in January. You may register for your family only. Registration occurs on a first-come, first-served basis.. We will collect the following from you to reserve a space at RCNS: Completed registration form, \$75 registration fee (per family) and May tuition. **NOTE:** We have rolling registration for current families for two weeks in January and priority registration for new and alumni families.

ALL FEES AND MAY TUITION ARE NON-REFUNDABLE!

The RCNS registration process will allow gender to be taken into consideration with the goal of achieving more balance in the gender mix of a class when such mix exceeds a certain threshold (ideally no greater than 2/3 to 1/3 gender mix).

With regard to 3's and 4's classes, acceptance of children with birthdates that fall on and after September 1st but not after September 15th will be at the discretion of the teacher and the Director.

February 1 is the cut-off date for enrolling new students in a current school year. Any student wishing to enroll after that date would be subject to the approval of the Co-Presidents, the Director, and the relevant teacher.

Purchases

Purchases must be approved by the Director or the Board. Because RCNS does not pay sales tax, any purchases for the school should be made with a copy of our tax-exempt card. Please turn in your reimbursement form within two weeks of your purchase.

Donations

RCNS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Any donations made to RCNS are tax-deductible. Please think of RCNS when making your end-of-year charitable donations. Please suggest RCNS to your employer if they are looking for a worthy recipient.

RCNS has a running "wish list" of items that are needed. Please think of RCNS when you have items that you no longer need at your home. Things like outdoor equipment (tricycles, cars, etc.), furniture and office supplies may be put to good use in the school. If you have items that you feel may be useful, please contact the Director. (Please don't bring things in without first speaking to the Director).

Fines

Fines have been mentioned several times throughout this handbook. A summary of these penalties follows. The goal of the fines contributions is to ensure that each family takes their responsibilities to the school seriously. This will help RCNS operate efficiently and provide the best learning environment for each child. All fines may be appealed to the Appeals Board. (see Appeals Board, page 10) Appeals should be made to the Board in writing. The Appeals Board will meet as necessary to consider all appeals and a Co-President will notify the members of the decision. All fines must be paid within 15 days of assessment.

Tuition Payments: \$25.00 if check is received/postmarked after the 10th of the month
\$25.00 plus any additional incurred bank fees for returned checks

*Tuition is due on the first of the month. **If you are more than 30 days late with your tuition payment (or 15 days late with your April payment), your child may not attend school or extracurricular activities until the balance is paid.***

*Fines and late fees are due upon notice. **If all fines are not paid within 15 days of notice, your child may not attend school or extracurricular activities until all fines are paid.***

Administrative Job: \$150.00 if responsibility is not completed.

\$ 25.00 if parent school aide misses a shift and shift must be made-up

Housekeeping Job: \$150.00 if responsibility is not completed.

Co-oping Job: Please note that the official school time is the Digital Hallway Clock.
\$15.00 if co-oper arrives after 9:15 a.m.
\$30.00 if co-oper arrives after 9:30 a.m.
\$50.00 if co-oper arrives after 10:00 a.m.
\$30.00 if co-oper leaves early
\$50.00 if co-oper is a "NO SHOW"* + \$40.00 Substitute co-oper pay (first time)
\$15.00 failure to bring fresh snack on your assigned day
*NOTE: fines for No Shows are as follows: \$50 for a family's first failure to show up for a co-oping obligation, \$75 for the family's second such failure, and \$100 for each subsequent failure during the school year. These fines are in addition to the required payment for a substitute co-oper.

Fundraising: \$100.00 if Yellow Balloon Fair obligation is not met.

Late Pick-up: \$25 if a parent is 10 minutes late for pick-up. Parents are reminded to please call the office when they are running late.

Parents may be able to perform a service for the school in place of a fine. Contact the Appeals Board in writing to see if an arrangement can be made. (see Appeals Board, page 10)