



Parent Handbook  
2016-2017

Berrybrook School | 267 Winter Street | Duxbury, MA 02332



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## Berrybrook History

There is a spacious piece of land  
Where firs and oaks and cedars stand  
Beyond the terraced slopes of green  
A tiny, wandering brook is seen  
Flowing past lilacs and trees of cherries  
Blue and black and other berries.  
With this beauty and quiet, you can tell  
The name, it fits this spot so well.

*Berrybrook*

*-Betty Carroll*

In 1954, Katharine Bailey Mann founded Berrybrook School on over 60 acres of land that was once called “Molkiah Farm” on Winter Street in Duxbury. Mrs. Mann’s dream was “to provide a place to develop self esteem and confidence, to help a child not to be afraid to fail – to learn by trying.” She wanted children to have the opportunity to explore and create, to learn from hands on experience, to learn to handle feelings and to accept them, to search out beauty in the world around them, to delight in exercising their bodies and to find out what they can do; a program that gives children time to develop their own ideas and to find their own answers.

The school began in a charming cape that is said to date back to 1730. With high hopes and eager anticipation Mrs. Mann and her colleague, Miss Helen Wheeler, greeted four pupils and soon thereafter three more. As news of this very special school spread, enrollment continued to grow.

In 1957, she created the Lucretia Prentiss Bailey Trust of Massachusetts to honor her mother, and ensure that Berrybrook would survive, and thrive, forever. In 1967 the school was incorporated and a Berrybrook Board of Directors was established, “To ensure continuance of present policy of the school, which is to put the interests of the children first, to maintain the atmosphere of freedom of expression within reasonable limits in a home like atmosphere, to offer the children a wide variety of experiences by means of a competent and understanding staff which will help prepare the child for the rest of his life; to always keep the emotional welfare of the child as the main objective.”

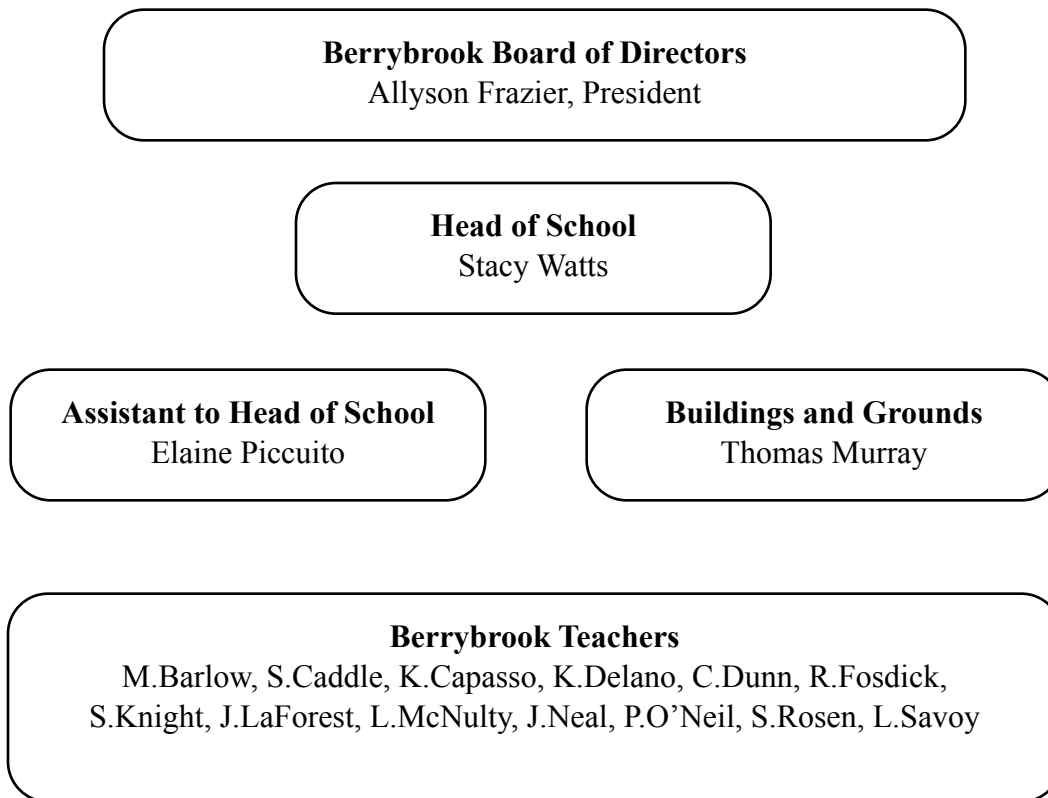
In July of 2008, the Lucretia Prentiss Bailey Trust sold 40.57 acres to the Town of Duxbury for conservation purposes. The sale of the land enabled Berrybrook School to build for the future and also ensured that the beautiful and historic landscape would be preserved forever. The town of Duxbury named the conservation land “Berrybrook Fields.” The school maintained 27.33 acres of land including the land surrounding the school buildings and beautiful woods and trails.

The new Berrybrook School House opened in June of 2008 with three classrooms, administration space, and a multi-purpose room. It is a warm, appropriate home for current and future young children and their families, and the vision of its founder, Katharine Mann.

## Berrybrook Governance

Berrybrook School is a non-profit organization, overseen by a Board of Directors. The Board consists of past and present Berrybrook parents and alumni, as well as interested individuals from the community. The Board meets on a regular schedule throughout the year. Members' names, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes are available at the school for parents. The first 15 minutes of each Board meeting is set aside for public commentary and parents are welcome. The Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school and reports to the Board. Parents with suggestions or concerns may contact the Head of School, Stacy Watts, or by writing to Allyson Frazier, Board President.

### Organization Chart



Berrybrook School is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, 1 Washington St Suite 20, Taunton, MA 02780 1-508-828-5025. Parents may contact the EEC regarding the program's regulatory compliance history.

## **Vision, Mission, and Values**

### **Our Vision**

Each and every child deserves the opportunity for an early childhood education that awakens the joy of discovery and learning.

### **Our Mission**

Berrybrook provides a special environment for young children, their families, and their communities.

At Berrybrook, young children learn, are supported, and are nurtured. They prepare themselves for future success, form cherished lifelong memories, and discover their own path to greater independence.

Families are given opportunities to promote healthy relationships with children, one another and the natural world around them. And,

Child educators pursue and advocate for a greater understanding of childhood. These professionals continuously improve our collective ability to guide children as they grow and flourish.

### **Our Values: The principles that guide us**

In the Berrybrook tradition, we are guided by and committed to these fundamental principles and practices:

#### Child-Centered

Celebrating childhood and nurturing the whole child.

Understanding and attending to the full range of each child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs.

#### Respect and Caring

Respecting and caring about individuals, families, relationships, and cultures.

Respecting one another's words, contributions, and opinions.

Respecting our planet, its seasons, and all its wonders.

#### Fun

Letting children be children;

Children deserve and need joy, laughter, and merriment.

#### Professionalism

Respecting and valuing those who work with and nurture young children.

Building, maintaining, and supporting a fully engaged, deeply satisfied, and passionately committed community of early childhood educators.

#### Interconnectedness

Appreciating the complex and wonderful web of life into which we are born, we live, and we die.

Honoring the crafts, trades, and professions that allow our society to function successfully.

Celebrating the varied traditions that together reflect the richness of individual cultures and the collective beauty of the human experience.

## **Admission Policy**

Families considering enrolling a child at Berrybrook are asked to make an appointment to visit the school to discuss the philosophy and tour the facility. Children are welcome on these visits. Applications from current and past families are accepted in January. Applications from families new to the school are accepted during the month of February. A \$40.00 application fee must accompany all applications. Notification of placement is made by the first week in March. Berrybrook makes every effort to accommodate parent preference, but reserves the right to make class placement based on the needs of the child and the composition of the group. Berrybrook School was created for all children and their families whatever their race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability.

## **Berrybrook Program Offerings**

**“Beginners”** (2.9) Program for children 3 years of age on or before December 1.

2 Day - in session Thursday and Friday from 9:00-11:45 am

**First Year Programs** for children 3 years of age on or before September 1.

2 Day - in session Thursday and Friday from 9:00 -11:45 am.

3 Day - in session Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00 -11:45 am.

**Second Year Programs** for children 4 years of age on or before September 1.

5 Day AM - in session Monday through Friday from 9:00-11:45 am.

4 Day PM - in session Monday through Thursday from 1:00-4:00 pm.

## **Tuition Information 2016-2017**

<b><u>Program</u></b>	<b><u>Annual Tuition</u></b>
Beginners (Thurs, Fri)	\$2,800.00
2 Day (Thurs, Fri)	\$2,800.00
3 Day (Mon, Tue, Wed)	\$4,130.00
4 Day (Mon-Thurs)	\$5,110.00
5 Day	\$6,040.00

## **Tuition Payment Policy**

A deposit of 10% of annual tuition is due directly to Berrybrook School along with a signed Enrollment Contract. The remainder of tuition is paid through FACTS Management Company who processes tuition payments online. Families receive an email with an invitation to enroll in a payment plan after the receipt of an Enrollment Contract. Tuition may be paid in full, semi annually, or in 9 monthly payments, and may be scheduled to be due on the 1st or the 15th of the month, starting in September.

Berrybrook School depends on tuition payments to meet the cost of operating the school. Any circumstances that prevent timely payment of school tuition should be brought to the attention of the Head of School. After 3 months of non-payment, student participation in our program will be suspended until payment is made in full. Legal remedies deemed appropriate will be used to secure payment of any debts.

## **Tuition Assistance**

Berrybrook School was created for all children and their families whatever their race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability. The Helen Wheeler Scholarship Fund is designated as the primary source of tuition assistance to Berrybrook families. All money raised through the Berrybrook Annual Appeal is earmarked for the Wheeler Fund. The primary purpose of this fund is to provide tuition assistance to parents and/or guardians of children who have been accepted to Berrybrook, and who would not be able to attend without financial assistance. The parent and/or guardian will be required to complete a confidential online Tuition Assistance application through **FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment**. All aid will be based on demonstrated financial need, the number of families applying for assistance that year, and the amount of funding available. The amount of relief to be provided will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will be subtracted from the tuition total. The school will provide families with payment plans for the balance of tuition. Berrybrook's Vision states, "Each and every child deserves the opportunity for an early childhood education that awakens the joy of discovery and learning." Families in need of tuition assistance are encouraged to contact the Head of School.

## **School Calendar**

The Berrybrook school year begins the week after Labor Day and concludes the Friday after Memorial Day. The school follows the public school calendar when observing holidays and school vacations with the exception of an additional week of vacation in December for the holidays. The school is closed for three professional days during the year so teachers may attend training and workshops that will comply with DEEC requirements and enhance and expand their knowledge of early childhood education. Parents receive a school calendar at the beginning of each year noting important dates and each month the Berrybrook newsletter updates parents about important events. Each class posts a monthly calendar of activities. Because teachers want to maintain spontaneity in our curriculum and allow children the "joy of discovery" we want parents to know that a specific classroom project may not occur on the specific day. Teachers require flexibility in planning each day according to the needs of the group and individual children and to accommodate changes in weather that may impact our lesson plans, so occasionally, activities may be rearranged.

## **Snow Days/School Cancellation**

It is our policy to cancel classes whenever Duxbury Public Schools are closed due to weather emergencies. Families should watch Channel 7, WHDH for a school cancellation at Berrybrook. The voice mail system at Berrybrook at 781-585-2307 will also have a snow cancellation message if we are closed due to a snow emergency. Beyond a formal cancellation, we urge parents to use their best judgment about driving young children to school in inclement weather. In the event of a severe snow storm, power failure, loss of heat, or other emergency, the school may be required to close early. Parents will be contacted to pick up children. Parents are responsible for all tuition payments for the full 2016-2017 academic year, regardless of any school cancellations, sickness, vacation, holidays, or any other absences of their child.

## **Parent Communication**

Berrybrook School values and works toward strong reciprocal communication between all constituencies. There are a number of varied ways for Parents, Teachers, Administration, BPA, and Board members to communicate with each other. The Head of School, Stacy Watts, makes every effort to be available in person everyday at arrival and dismissal and can be reached by phone 781-585-2307, or email [swatts@berrybrookschool.org](mailto:swatts@berrybrookschool.org). All Berrybrook staff are interested in hearing from parents and will arrange a meeting with parents at their request. The following is a brief description of some communication avenues used at Berrybrook. All communication will be delivered to families in a language they understand.

**Parent Orientation** - is held annually in September before children start school to welcome families and to introduce them to teachers and classroom environments. Also at this meeting parents are provided copies of important school policies and information and tips to prepare their children for school.

**Developmental History and Background Information Form** - Parents are encouraged to share, at their comfort level, information about their family structure, culture, traditions, values, language spoken in the home, and other information they feel will help teachers meet their child's needs.

**Home visits** – are offered for each student. More information is included in this Handbook.

**Parent Conferences** – are scheduled twice per year to discuss children's growth and progress.

**Arrivals** - Parents may share briefly any information that might affect their child's day.

**Dismissals** - Teachers may share information about a child's day.

**Injury reports** – are written reports given to parents if a child receives first aid.

**Classroom Bulletin Board** – has information about classroom activities.

**Notices in Cubbies** – may include health notices, permission slips, or other announcements.

**White Board** – is set up in the foyer and has reminders and information for parents.

**BPA Table/Bulletin Boards** – is located in the foyer and is where parents go for information about BPA events, and may sign up for activities.

**“Berrybrook News”** – is a monthly newsletter with information about up-coming events, as well as classroom activities, and articles from the Head of School, teachers, and Board of Directors.

**Berrybrook Web Site** – <http://berrybrookschool.org> has lots of Berrybrook information including admissions, calendar, and electronic copies of the “Berrybrook News.”

**Parent Surveys** – are conducted occasionally to gather parent input on school programs.

**Email** – is used by the office and the BPA to share information with parents.

**Home phones** – are used by teachers if they are unable to speak to parents in person. **Cell phones** are used by teachers in an emergency if they cannot reach parents at their home number. At Berrybrook, we ask that parents notify the office of any change in phone numbers.

We ask that parents refrain from talking on cell phones in the classrooms or on the playground unless it is an emergency.



**Shutterfly Sites** - Teachers take many photographs in the classroom. They attempt to capture images of the children's interactions and accomplishments as they engage in the curriculum presented. They also include celebrations and special activities such as Berrybrook Birthdays and enrichment programs. These photos are posted on a class Shutterfly site that parents may access from home. Also posted, is a school calendar and class list as well as occasional comments from teachers.

The site is only accessible to the parents/guardians of children in the classroom, who are invited to become a member when the sites are set up in September. Parents are encouraged to visit the site to observe their children, teachers, and classmates as they go about their day at Berrybrook.

**Connections** - "Connections" is made up of a group of teachers who serve as a resource for Berrybrook families.

### **Arrival and Dismissal/ Transportation Plan**

Teachers are available to greet children beginning at 9:00 am for the morning session and 1:00 pm for the afternoon session. It is important for children to arrive on time so they may start their day with the class and participate in all of the planned activities. Please bring all children, including siblings, into the school. Children must not be left unsupervised in cars or on the playground. During the first few days of school, separation from home may be difficult for some children. Teachers know from experience that a quick good bye works best, but they are happy to work out a plan with parents for individual children who may require assistance with separation.

Because all of the children need their attention at arrival time, it is difficult for teachers to talk at length with parents. However, teachers do like to hear important information about children that may impact their day, such as a medication they may have taken, or a parent being out of town. For a longer discussion of questions or concerns, teachers are happy to schedule a time to meet with parents when they can provide undivided attention.

All students will have a written Transportation Plan signed by parents on file. Parents should arrive for dismissal on time, at 11:45 am for the morning session, 1:00 for Lunch Bunch, and 4:00 pm for the afternoon session. If you are delayed, please call the school to let us know. Children may become upset when a parent is late picking up and it reassures them if you have called to say you are on your way. At dismissal, the children will be outdoors weather permitting. Sign your child out with your classroom teacher. Once you have signed out, you are responsible for your child on the playground.

**For the safety of children**, parents must notify the school in writing if someone else is picking up their child. Parents may fill out the "Pick up Authorization" log in their child's classroom or leave a note with their child's teacher. Children will also be released to individuals listed on their child's First Aid/Consent Form or their Transportation Plan provided parents notify the office by phone or email. Anyone picking up a child who is not familiar to teachers will be asked to show identification. Children may not re-enter the school unattended. In the event of a missing child, office will be notified, and all available staff will search. The Head of School will notify parents and will call 911 if necessary.

Remember, our parking lot can get very busy at arrival and dismissal. Be sure to follow the Berrybrook rules for safety:

- Hold your child's hand in the parking lot
- Lock the gate behind you
- Turn engines off
- Never leave children unattended in cars or in the parking lot
- Supervise your child once you have signed out

The Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Law was amended in April 2008 and as of July 10, 2008 requires children to ride as passengers in motor vehicles in a federally approved child passenger restraint that is properly fastened and secured until they are 8 years old OR over 57" tall. The expanded law requires a booster seat/safety belt combination for children who have outgrown a child safety seat - typically when they are above age five or 40 pounds - until they are 8 years old OR over 57" tall.

### **Transition Plan**

In order to make the home to school transition comfortable for children, Berrybrook starts the school year with the children in small groups. Half of the students in the class attend on the first day accompanied by a parent or guardian who stays for the entire session, and the other half of the class comes with a parent the second day. On the third day, everyone attends, and parents are not expected to stay. During the first two weeks of school our sessions are two hours in length, and introduce children to our daily routine. We have found that even children who have been to school previously need extra time for adjustment to new expectations. The shortened day also gives teachers time for a home visit with each child. The same transition procedure happens when children transition to their next class at Berrybrook. In addition, with parent permission we collaborate and share information when children transition to kindergarten or to another program, and assist each child with the transition in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand.

### **Home Visits**

Berrybrook has a tradition of home visits that have proven to be an excellent opportunity for children to develop a more personal relationship with their teachers. In addition to the child development forms, home visits are an informal way for teachers to become acquainted with families and their particular culture so they may adapt the program environment, curriculum, and teaching methods to better serve them. The shortened school days in September make it possible for Berrybrook teachers to plan a short visit to each child's home before or after school.

### **Clothing**

Parents can expect that often, children's clothes will become messy and/or wet during our day. Feeling free to be involved and creative is important to our program, so it is best to send children in sturdy play clothes. Closed-toe and closed-heel shoes are best on the playground. All children keep an extra set of clothing in their cubbies at school. At Orientation, parents receive a bag and a list of clothing items that should be packed to be kept at school. The sweatshirt, shirt, pants,

socks, and underwear should be familiar to children and easy to put on. In winter, boots must stay outside classrooms, so children should bring shoes or slippers to wear inside the classroom. Outerwear should be appropriate for the forecast. It is important to remember we go outside every day that is not raining or really cold. Please label all items!

### **Insect Repellent and Sunscreen**

Berrybrook Playgrounds are treated by Pure Organic Mosquito & Tick Solutions Solutions - <http://www.puresolutions.com>. If conditions warrant, Berrybrook teachers will apply insect repellent to children before going outside. **OFF Family Unscented Insect Repellent with 7% DEET** is the brand that will be used on all children at Berrybrook. After research, that particular repellent has been chosen for its 7% concentration of DEET which will be effective against both mosquitoes and ticks for up to 2 hours. Parents must submit a signed permission slip to allow teachers to apply the repellent to children.

Parents can provide another layer of protection by dressing children and themselves in appropriate clothing. It is also important for parents to get into a routine of checking children and pets from head to toe for ticks each night before going to bed. This is important everyday, because ticks can be found at home as well as school. Sunscreen should be applied by parents if they are staying to play after dismissal.

### **Daily Schedule**

Our schedule provides a daily routine for children to satisfy their natural need for order and consistency. However, the schedule is only a guide and it remains flexible enough to meet the needs of individual children and to accommodate the weather, special activities, and to capitalize on unscheduled learning opportunities and teachable moments. All children have access to a variety of activities and may choose to play alone or with one or several peers. Art, music, literature, dramatic play, and science activities encourage exploration, experimentation, and discovery and are available during indoor and outdoor time.

Teachers read books daily and children interact with peers and adults to develop competence in verbal and non-verbal communication by responding to questions, communicating needs, and describing things and events. As appropriate, children participate in the development of the daily and weekly plan.

### **Nutrition and Snacks**

At Berrybrook, because of severe allergic reactions of some children there is a ban on all nuts, peanuts, and peanut products. To ensure that the school environment remains safe we will enforce this rule every day. No candy or baked products should be brought into classrooms. Parents who bring a snack or lunch for their own children to the playground must ensure they are nut-free AND have not been manufactured on a nut line.

Berrybrook provides all snacks. Food is prepared, served, and stored in accordance with USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines. Daily snacks include items from the fruit, vegetable, grain, and milk groups from the [myplate.gov](http://myplate.gov) guide for young children (a copy is attached to this handbook). We also provide all ingredients for special cooking projects that may include jelly, applesauce, muffins, cookies, pizza, potato latkes, maple syrup, pancakes, and home made ice cream.

Children in the Beginners and First Year Program have snack as a group sitting together with teachers at classroom tables to enjoy food and conversation. In the Second Year program, children have group snack sitting together with teachers for birthdays, cooking projects, and other special occasions, but on most days, children in their second year enjoy “Open Snack.” Children wash hands, prepare, eat, and clean up snack when they are hungry. They sit at a table designated for snack and enjoy food and conversations with classmates. Teachers supervise to make sure all children have participated in Open Snack. Berrybrook children take pride in being independent.

### **Toileting Procedure**

- Children are always allowed to use the bathroom at their request.
- Children keep dry, clean clothes on hand in case of accidents. Soiled clothing is placed in a separate plastic bag and sent home at the end of the day.
- No child shall be punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
- Children and adults wash hands with liquid soap and running water after using the toilet and dry hands with paper towels.
- Children who use the toilet independently may be supervised for that short interval by sound, with teachers checking frequently and available to offer assistance.
- For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, teachers work with parents to create an individual plan for toileting.

In addition, staff and children wash their hands with liquid soap and running water at least at the following times:

- Upon arrival
- Before eating or handling food
- After coming in contact with bodily fluids or discharges
- After handling school animals and their equipment
- After cleaning classroom equipment

The school sanitizing schedule requires that toileting areas be cleaned and disinfected daily.

### **Health Policy**

The Health Policy of Berrybrook School is a separate document and is reviewed and approved by the school’s Health Care Consultant. Families receive a copy of the Berrybrook Health Policy at Parent Orientation. A copy of the Health Policy is also located in each classroom and the office.

### **Emergency Procedure in Case of Fire**

Upon discovery of fire or suspicion of fire, the Head of School will alert all teachers. The teacher will alert children to line up at the safest door to exit. The following items will be taken from the classroom:

- Attendance list
- First Aid box
- Student medications

The teachers will escort the children out of the building and proceed to the play area. Teachers will gather the children on the playground and take attendance. The children will remain until the emergency or drill is over. In the event that the children may not return to classrooms, Duxbury Public Safety personnel will coordinate transportation to a safe location if necessary, and parents will be contacted to pick up children.

### **Emergency Evacuation Drills**

Explanation and diagrams of 2 exit routes will be posted in the classroom.

Instruction will be given to children on the meaning of evacuation drills and the importance of classroom safety. Teachers will provide clear directions to children in a calm voice.

The first evacuation drill will take place in September and drills will be repeated every month. A designated teacher logs time, date, and effectiveness of drill in a log in the class attendance book.

### **Playground Safety Procedures**

A teacher monitors the boundary areas for each playground at all times. Playground rules are presented to the children at the beginning of the year and are reinforced daily. All play areas are checked for any hazardous materials or conditions before children enter the playground.

### **Playground Guidelines**

Teachers must be able to account for every student before they leave the playground and we want to be sure children have all of their belongings and creations to take home, so be sure to sign your child out with your teachers and empty your child's cubby as soon as you arrive to pick up your child. Berrybrook has a beautiful outdoor environment and a wonderful playground and families are welcome to remain with children after dismissal to enjoy our play space. Please observe your child carefully and enforce Berrybrook Playground rules.

#### General Rules

1. Parents must hold children's hands in the parking lot.
2. The gate must be secured at all times.
3. Children must be supervised at all times.
4. Children need to play where an adult can see them.
5. Children must be accompanied by an adult if they enter the school after dismissal.
6. Sticks and rocks should remain on the ground.
7. Living things on the school grounds should be respected and cared for.
8. All parents should encourage respectful, peaceful play.

#### Playground Equipment Guidelines

1. Children, including younger and older siblings, must be supervised at all times. The climbing structures may not be appropriate for younger siblings.
2. Objects should not be carried onto the climbing structures.
3. Children should sit on slides and slide feet first.
4. Children sit on the swings.
5. The sandbox is the only digging area.

6. Children travel in one direction, one at a time, on the horizontal ladder. Children may not climb on top of the horizontal ladder.

Living Thing Guidelines  
Hurt no living thing;  
Ladybird, nor butterfly,  
Nor moth with dusty wing,  
Nor cricket chirping cheerily,  
Nor grasshopper so light of leap,  
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,  
Nor harmless worms that creep

*Christina G. Rosetti*

### **Integrated Pest Management Plan**

Massachusetts regulations require that schools and child care programs must ensure that their facility ("school property") has an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan on file with the Department of Agricultural Resources. They are also required to ensure standard written notification of parents and staff whenever a pesticide application is being made outdoors on school property. Emergency situations may require an exemption from the conditions of the law. Exemptions are granted by their local Board of Health or Department of Agricultural Resources. The Berrybrook School IMP plan can be obtained in the school office or on the web at [www.massnrc.org/ipm/](http://www.massnrc.org/ipm/).

### **Duxbury Emergency Management Emergency Contingency Plan**

Duxbury Emergency Management officials in cooperation with Berrybrook School have developed detailed plans and procedures for use during a public emergency. The plans dictate that you will be contacted by the school to pick up your child well before any danger to the general public. The plans also state that if the emergency at Pilgrim Station were to escalate to a classification in which Massachusetts state officials directed the precautionary transfer of all school children and the school was unable to contact you or one of your emergency contacts, your child would be transported by bus to a host facility outside of the emergency area and cared for by staff. Berrybrook's emergency plan is to have all children released to parents or emergency contacts well before the state calls for a precautionary transfer. The host facility for Berrybrook is Braintree High School, 128 Town Street in Braintree, Massachusetts. Directions to this site will be in your parent orientation folder. More information about Duxbury Emergency Management is available at their website, [www.town.duxbury.ma.us](http://www.town.duxbury.ma.us), or by calling Chief Kevin Nord at 781-934-7159.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect Policy and Procedure**

Berrybrook School shall require as a condition of an offer of employment the satisfactory completion of a complete Background Record Check investigation, including CORI, DCF, SORI, and fingerprint-based checks. Berrybrook School shall confirm an offer of employment only after the hiring authority receives written confirmation of the following:

- (a) that the CORI investigation and the DCF Background Record Check investigation have resulted in a finding of “no record” or after the hiring authority has granted discretionary approval to hire the candidate in accordance with the provisions of 606 CMR 14.14;
- (b) that the individual has been approved for hire by EEC following a SORI check. The hiring authority shall not permit any candidate to commence employment in a position with the potential for unsupervised contact with children until after the candidate is cleared as a result of a SORI Check.
- (c) that the individual has been approved for hire by EEC following a fingerprint-based check of state and national criminal history databases, in accordance with 606 CMR 14.00.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Policy will be given to all staff and discussed at the first staff meeting of the year. The policy will state that sexual activity with children is illegal. This policy will also apply to volunteers in our classrooms. The policy will be posted on the main Policy Board in the School and will also be included in the Parent Handbook.

The Head of School will verbally report any suspected or alleged incident of abuse by a staff member to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families Plymouth Office by calling 508-732-6200, pursuant to M. G. L. c. 119, 51A. Within 48 hours, a written 51A report of the incident will be sent to DCF. The Head of School shall notify the DEEC immediately after filing a 51A report, or learning that a 51A report has been filed alleging abuse or neglect of a child while in the program or during a program related activity. The Berrybrook School will cooperate in all investigations of abuse and neglect, including identifying parents of children currently or previously enrolled in the program: providing consent for disclosure to the DEEC, and allowing the DEEC to disclose information to any person and/or agency the DEEC may specify as necessary to the prompt investigation of allegations and protection of children.

The staff member in question will be removed immediately from working with the children until the DCF investigation is completed and for such further time as the DEEC requires. Staff members who are subjects of substantiated 51A reports are terminated from employment.

All Berrybrook staff by state law are considered to be “mandated reporters”. Therefore, any staff person who suspects child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse must report the incident to the Head of School. If it is felt that child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse has taken place, the Head of School will inform the parent or guardian that a 51A has been filed with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, and will provide the parent or guardian with “a parents guide” published by the Massachusetts DCF Child Protective Services.

Children are only released to authorized parent/guardian or person authorized in writing. Parents must inform the Head of School of any changes in the following:

- Legal/physical custody
- Home address or phone numbers
- Emergency contact person or emergency phone numbers
- People authorized to take children from the school

## **Educational Goals and Objectives**

The philosophy of the Berrybrook School is to provide an atmosphere where children can feel free to explore their environment and express themselves through play, thus fostering individuality, creativity, and independence. Each child is entitled to a safe, secure, and cheerful environment. The program promotes the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of all children.

Our carefully planned developmental curriculum ensures a well-balanced day with alternate periods of activity and quiet and indoor and outdoor experiences. Teachers organize the day with a reasonable routine, with enough flexibility to respond to the needs of individual children. A wide variety of equipment and materials provides children with opportunities to explore different mediums, develop skills, widen interests and knowledge, and to have fun. As the year progresses the material presented to each group offers greater challenges.

The teachers create interesting, age appropriate environments and develop their own themes to enhance learning. The daily program includes a variety of activities, with opportunity for children to have free choice to work alone or with peers. Also included are teacher-led activities, story time, music, snack, creative materials, and dramatic play.

Academics are presented as they relate to the program. It is our objective to build interest in Language, Literacy, and Mathematics in reality based situations. Throughout the day children will be presented with opportunities to read and count and are encouraged to remain challenged and absorbed as long as interest continues. Children are not pressured to participate. We strive to present a program that is challenging in a manner that will build confidence.

Walks in fields and woods encourage the children's awareness of nature. Science and Social Studies topics are introduced through age appropriate activities. Art, Literature, and Music activities are in harmony with the cultural background of the children enrolled and cultural diversity is introduced through language, food, and celebrations where appropriate. Holidays and birthdays provide the opportunity for simple celebrations and are welcomed by the staff as a means of expanding the children's awareness of a wide variety of customs.

In an attempt to create an environment that fosters self discipline, we encourage children to be independent and responsible for their own behavior and to follow basic rules of safety and courtesy in the classroom. This allows the children to manage the behavior of the group with minimal teacher control. The staff of Berrybrook welcomes any suggestions from parents, and feels communication between parents and teachers is of primary importance.



## Berrybrook Curriculum

When planning curriculum, teachers adhere to standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children as well as the *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences* adopted by the Massachusetts Department of Education in April of 2003. The guidelines cover learning in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, History and Social Science, Health Education, and the Arts. They recommend learning through play and meaningful activities in a developmental sequence and many opportunities for children to:

**Plan:** children consider what they are going to do with materials and how they are going to do it.

**Play:** children use materials and equipment in ways that best suit their personal curiosity and understanding.

**Reflect:** children recall things that happened to them, reinforcing or questioning their understandings.

**Revisit:** children practice skills and replay experiences in many different ways, with each activity refining or modifying previous understandings.

**Connect:** children, with the help of teachers, connect new knowledge with past experiences, creating links among subject areas and areas of skill development.

Family values, beliefs, experiences, and language are all considered by teachers when planning curriculum. Classroom activities are geared toward the particular group of students in a class each year. Different combinations of children present a different group dynamic and different interests. Teachers design their curriculum by including topics of particular interest to their group.

The curriculum also reflects a school rich in tradition. For more than 60 years, the curriculum has reflected the wealth of natural and community resources available in our immediate environment to provide children with meaningful experiences. Many Berrybrook traditions are based on the natural world. Making jelly each September and tapping the maple trees each spring are examples of traditions enjoyed every year. While the traditions are important to our curriculum, they are subject to revisions that reflect the needs of the group as well as the talents and interests of the staff and parent population.

Our curriculum, through developmentally based activities, guides the planning and intentional implementation of our programs' goals and objectives and reflects the Vision, Mission, and Values of the Berrybrook School. In addition, our curriculum promotes a well-managed classroom that encourages children to learn skills such as how to ask for help or how to lend a helping hand. We practice solving problems with friends and encourage children to talk about feelings. Social and emotional growth is considered as important as intellectual and physical growth.

## **Field Trips**

At Berrybrook, field trips are planned to extend and enhance curriculum goals and objectives. Transportation to all excursions away from campus is provided by parents. The First Year Program traditionally invites all parents to bring their children to meet with their class for a trip to the Post Office and to join in a “Family Nature Walk”.

The Second Year program traditionally invites all parents to bring their children to meet with their class for trips to Plimoth Plantation and the O’Neil Farm. The only exception to our transportation policy is a “Kindergarten bus trip” at the end of the year for 4 & 5 Day students. Parents must sign a permission slip for children to attend this trip.

Families receive detailed information regarding field trips in the monthly newsletter, through notices in cubbies, emails from the office, and directly from teachers.

## **Assessment Plan**

Observing and documenting behavior regularly focuses attention on each individual child. Reviewing the information gathered and reflecting on it helps teachers to know each child better and to draw appropriate conclusions about the child and the program curriculum. It gives teachers information needed to tailor program activities to meet and extend the skills and the interests of each child.

We ask that parents share information about any therapeutic, educational, social, or support services that their child may be receiving offered by others. Teachers use varied methods for recording children’s progress including developmental checklists, classroom observations, and photographs or collections of children’s work. Each method depends on documentation *over time*. Because child development is not smooth or even and because a child’s performance may not reflect true abilities on a day when the child is tired or not feeling well, it is important not to rely on observations made on a single day or in a single week. In addition, child development varies across the developmental domains. Teachers observe children as they are involved in a variety of activities that draw upon different skills including cognitive, social/emotional, language, fine motor, gross motor, and life skills.

Assessments serve a number of important purposes. They are an important tool in developing a partnership between teachers and parents to promote the child’s growth and development; they can help the teacher learn about each child; they can be useful in planning activities to meet the needs of individual children; and they form a useful record that can help the child and family transition more smoothly to another program, to another classroom or to kindergarten.

Norm referenced and standardized tests may be used by an outside professional with parents’ written permission when seeking eligibility for special services.

## **Parent Conferences**

Parent conferences are held twice per year to discuss children's growth and progress. Teachers prepare a written report for each child based on their observations across seven domains:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics and Number Sense
- Scientific Thinking
- Social Studies
- The Arts
- Physical Development

The Assessment Reports serve as a basis for discussion, and parents are encouraged to share comments, questions, or concerns. Teachers work with families to agree on what assessment methods are appropriate and will best meet the child's needs. Parents receive a signed copy of the report in a language they understand and the original is placed in the child's school record.

In addition to twice yearly conferences, parents are encouraged to speak to teachers any time there is a concern. The Head of School and teachers would be happy to arrange a time to talk privately and without interruptions as soon as possible. Any concern is important and teachers need timely feedback from parents in order to address any issue. Please let us know what you are thinking. We want to work with parents to have the best possible experience for children and families.

## **Referral Services Policy**

The Berrybrook School tailors its educational program to meet the needs of individual children. Occasionally, teachers may feel that an assessment by an outside professional would be in the best interests of the child. These assessments may include, but are not limited to dental health, vision or hearing screening, social services, and educational or mental health services.

Teachers will bring any concerns about a child to the attention of the Head of School. All concerns will be documented with written observations, specifying the date, time, and nature of the observation. Copies will be kept in the child's file. The teacher and Head of School will develop a plan for discussing any concerns with parents.

At the meeting with parents, teachers will share observations and any efforts they have made to accommodate the child's needs in the classroom. A written statement clearly explaining the concerns and reasons for recommending a referral for additional services will be provided. Staff will provide parents with suggestions for appropriate outside assessments. When appropriate, children will be referred to the Special Education Department of their home public school system. Staff will assist parents with making these outside contacts if necessary.

Parents must provide the school with written parental consent before any referral is made, as well as written consent to speak with outside professionals about their child. With parental permission, the school will follow-up any referral with a consultation with the agency or service

provider who evaluated the child to ensure that the child's needs are met in the classroom. All staff working with the child will be informed of the results of any assessment or evaluation. Strategies for accommodating the child's needs will be discussed with those staff working with the child. Individual Family Service Plans, Individualized Education Plans, and other individualized plans shared with teachers will be supported by activities and accommodations to meet the needs of child and family.

If it is determined that the child is not in need of services, or is ineligible to receive services, the school will review the child's progress every three months to determine if another referral is necessary. The child's teacher will regularly inform parents of the child's progress. Berrybrook School will respect the rights and confidentiality of adults and children and maintain open, honest and supportive relationships with parents.

### **Child Guidance Plan**

In an attempt to create an environment that fosters self discipline, we believe that the basic rules of safety and courtesy allow the children to manage the behavior of the group with minimal teacher control. With a low teacher/child ratio, we are generally able to redirect a child before behavior becomes a problem. Teachers will intervene quickly in any physically aggressive situation. If it is necessary to separate a child from the group, we attempt to do this discreetly, to avoid embarrassment to the child, and help the child return to the group when the child is ready. This is done by the teacher taking the child to another area of the classroom where they can talk about what happened without interruption. The teacher is then able to listen to the child discuss ways to do things differently to solve a problem. The child is never left alone, nor is a time-out chair used.

The following restrictions always apply:

- No corporal punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse
- No cruel or severe punishment, including spanking
- No denial of outdoor time or food as punishment
- No punishment for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet

The Head of School is always available to assist the teacher in any situation. If necessary, a conference with the child's parents, teacher, and Head of School can be arranged to further discuss issues and concerns, offer information and resources, and formulate a plan in the best interest of the child, including pursuing options for supportive services to the program, as well as consultation and educator training. The plan will include behavioral interventions that may be implemented at home and at school. It is Berrybrook's goal to maintain a safe, orderly environment in which children are able to freely explore learning opportunities that foster their growth and development. Clear expectations and consistent limits foster this atmosphere. When appropriate and feasible, children shall participate in the establishment of such rules, policies, and procedures through individual or group discussion and the development of problem-solving skills.

## **Termination and Suspension Policy**

Every attempt will be made to keep a child enrolled in the Berrybrook School. A child may be asked to withdraw from Berrybrook School if:

- The health and safety of the child cannot be assured.
- The child's behavior puts other children's health in jeopardy.
- The child's developmental needs are not being met at the school.

When there are concerns about a child's ability to remain in the classroom, the staff will follow the "Referral for Services Policy" procedures to avoid suspension or termination. If after following the school's referral policy the Head of School determines that a child should not remain in the program, the following steps will be taken.

1. Written documentation of the concerns and the reasons the child should not remain in the program will be recorded.
2. A meeting with the parents where the written reasons for termination or suspension are provided, and a plan to return to the school if possible will be scheduled.
3. Parents will be informed of the availability of information and referral for other services.
4. The teachers will prepare the child for leaving the program in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand.

In addition to the above policy, a child may be suspended from the Berrybrook School if tuition is in arrears more than 3 months.

## **Student Records**

1. Information in a child's record is privileged and confidential. The Berrybrook School will not release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without the written consent of the child's parents. We will notify the parents if a child's record is subpoenaed. The child's parents will, upon request, have access to a child's record at reasonable times. In no event shall such access be delayed more than two business days after the initial request. Upon request the entire record, regardless of physical location, shall be made available. The Head of School will control access to duplication or dissemination of such information and will maintain a permanent, written log in each child's record indicating any persons to whom information has been released. The log will include the name, signature, position, date and portions of record that were released and the purpose of the release. This log will only be available to the child's parents and the Head of School.
2. There will be no charge for copies of this information. Parents will have the right to add information, comments, data, or any other relevant materials to the child's record.
3. A child's parent shall have the right to add, delete, or amend information, comments, data or any other relevant material to their child's record. If parents feel that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify, or correct objectionable material in the child's record, they have a right to a conference with the Head of School. Within one week of the conference, the Head of School will render a decision in writing to the parents. A decision in the parents' favor shall be put into effect immediately.

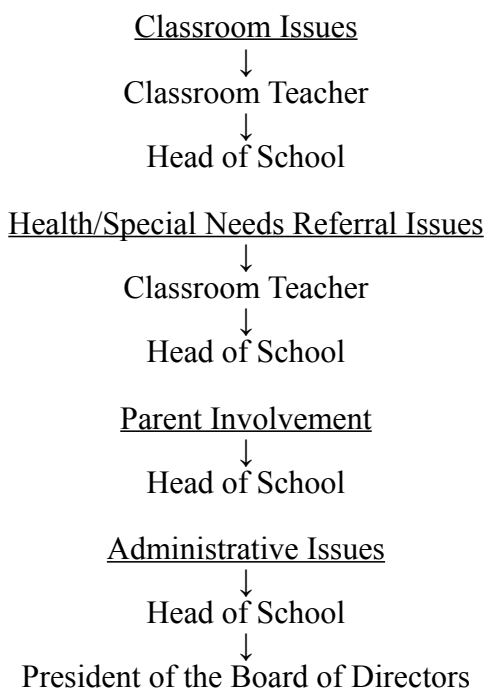
## Parental Rights

In accordance with Chapter 28A, Section 10 of the general Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, The Berrybrook School affirms the following parental rights:

1. We permit and encourage parents to visit the school and their child's room while their child is present, unannounced or by appointment.
2. We value parent input in the development of policies and programs. Suggestions may be made to the Head of School. If the parent requests a written response, we will respond in writing.
3. We will prepare a written progress report of the participation of each child in the program at least every six months. This report will be maintained in the child's records. We will provide a copy of this report to the parents and will be available to meet with them to discuss their child's activities and participation.
4. Our staff is available to meet for individual conferences with parents at their request.

## Grievance Procedure for Parents

Because teachers have primary contact with children, classroom issues and special needs concerns should first be brought to their attention. The following procedures will be followed to deal with any grievances that parents may have with the Berrybrook School:



## **Parent Involvement**

Berrybrook depends on the participation of families to maintain the wonderful community feeling that we enjoy. Parent involvement is encouraged and appreciated at Berrybrook, and there are many ways for parents to participate in the life of the school.

### **Berrybrook Parents Association**

Parents who have children enrolled in the Berrybrook School are automatically members of the Parents Association. The BPA is responsible for planning enrichment programs for children and adults, as well as planning and coordinating parent programs, family events, and school-wide community service projects. All programs are designed to be educationally stimulating, while relating to the Berrybrook curriculum. The BPA meets several times a year with the Head of School to discuss upcoming school events, children's enrichment programs, and adult programs. Parents are encouraged to join the meetings held at Berrybrook. Dates and times for meetings can be found in the monthly newsletter.

The Parents Association has four volunteer officers who serve for a term of one or two years. A President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary organize all of the many parents who volunteer for BPA activities. The BPA also has "classroom parent" volunteers who assist with communication within the school community. Classroom parents organize get-to-know-you playdates on the playground before school starts and many other activities during the year. News about BPA events can be found in the newsletter, the "BPA Corner" in the foyer, on the school web site at [berrybrookschool.org](http://berrybrookschool.org), and the BPA FaceBook group page.

Traditionally, the BPA asks each family to make a donation to the Berrybrook Parents Association at the beginning of the school year. All donations are used to help fund enrichment programs. The suggested donation is \$30; however, any amount is greatly appreciated.

### **Classroom Volunteers**

At Berrybrook, there are many ways for parents to participate in our program. Depending on the needs of each group, parents may share a special talent, create classroom materials at home, accompany children on field trips, or help out in the classroom. In October, Berrybrook teachers conduct a Volunteer Orientation for parents who are interested in volunteering in their child's classroom. The evening is designed to give parents an overview of our school day, school policies, ideas on how to assist in the classroom, and appropriate phrases to use with children. In the Beginner and First Year classes teachers post a sign up sheet for parents to volunteer in the classroom. Because the children in the Second Year classes are more independent and capable, volunteer opportunities are planned around specific classroom activities and projects and are scheduled by talking with teachers.

### **Board of Directors**

The Berrybrook Board of Directors is made up of current and past Berrybrook parents and members of the community who volunteer to serve. The first 15 minutes of each Board meeting is set aside for public commentary from any parent or members of the community.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

First and Second Year Berrybrook students celebrate a special “Berrybrook Birthday” during the school year. Teachers keep track of birthdays and speak to parents directly to arrange a convenient date. Depending on circumstances, parents may choose to come in for the “birthday” portion of the session or spend the entire day. As with all Berrybrook celebrations, simple is best. Children make a traditional “Berrybrook Birthday Crown” using construction paper and glitter. After hand washing and a heartfelt “*Happy Birthday to You!*” the candle is blown out and the class enjoys a special snack the birthday child has chosen from the food-safe choices in our Birthday Snack Book. In second year classes, children add a “Birthday Walk” to group time as part of their celebration.

For three and four year olds, birthdays are important events. Family birthday celebrations that take place at home are often the topic of conversation in the classroom and they can sometimes lead to hurt feelings. When these discussions do come up in class, teachers remind children that everyone has a special “Berrybrook Birthday” and encourage children to discuss their family birthday parties at home. We appreciate parents being sensitive to this issue. To avoid any disappointment, we ask that birthday party invitations be extended outside of school. All classes have a list of addresses and phone numbers for families available to parents. Children appreciate getting an invitation in the mail or a special phone call.

## **Holidays and Traditions**

In keeping with our goal to value individual differences, we celebrate diversity in many ways. Art, Literature, and Music activities are in harmony with the cultural background of the children enrolled and cultural diversity is introduced through language, food, and celebrations when appropriate. Parents who would like to share holidays, customs, and traditions important to their family are encouraged to speak to their child’s teacher. Sharing what makes us unique is a wonderful way to introduce tolerance and open mindedness in our children.

## **School Facilities**

Berrybrook parents are welcome on the playground, “The Nook” outdoor classroom, and fields and trails even when school is not in session. Families may arrange play dates or family outings before or after school sessions, or on weekends. All children must be carefully supervised when visiting the playground and surrounding areas. The BPA is encouraged to use the playground, multipurpose room, or other spaces for their activities by reserving time through the school office.



## **Family Resources**

### **Berrybrook Parent Library**

A parents' bookshelf with books on various early childhood and parenting related topics is maintained in the BPA area. Parents may borrow books and pamphlets by signing items out on clip board provided. If parents would like more information on a specific issue, teachers are available to research additional resources.

### **Connections**

Connections provides learning opportunities to families such as:

- Classroom Connections - Evening discussions to learn about volunteering in the classroom, program curriculum, and transitioning among programs.
- Conversation Connections - A meeting of teachers and fellow parents to discuss common challenges of raising young children.
- Common Connections - Resources such as articles and handouts are available to parents in the foyer. Topics include child development, parenting, recent early childhood research, and more.

### **South Shore Community Action Council**

#### **Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE)**

Berrybrook is a member of SSASC Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Program which facilitates the development of collaborative relationships to improve early childhood education in the community:

- Promote parent education, family engagement, and early literacy.
- Facilitate collaboration and community planning between local early education and care partners and other community stakeholders, including parents.
- Provide support and information to families with children transitioning between and among early education and care settings, home and school, and
- Support early education and care programs across the public and private sectors in delivering high-quality services.

### **Berrybrook School web site**

<http://berrybrookschool.org/>

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

<http://naeyc.org/>

### **Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care**

[www.mass.gov/EEC](http://www.mass.gov/EEC)

1-508-828-5025

### **U S Consumer Product Safety Commission**

[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

1-800-638-2772

Additional information about Community Resources and events are shared through postings on our community bulletin board, in newsletter articles, and in notices distributed in cubbies.

## Pointers to Help Your Preschooler Develop Healthy Habits

For more great pointers on these and other subjects go to: [myplate.gov](http://myplate.gov)

Get your child on the path to healthy eating.

### Focus on the meal and each other.

Your child learns by watching you. Children are likely to copy your table manners, your likes and dislikes, and your willingness to try new foods.

### Offer a variety of healthy foods.

Let your child choose how much to eat. Children are more likely to enjoy a food when eating it is their own choice.

### Be patient with your child.

Sometimes new foods take time. Give children a taste at first and be patient with them. Offer new foods many times.

### Let your children serve themselves.

Teach your children to take small amounts at first. Let them know they can get more if they are still hungry.

## Cook together.

## Eat together.

## Talk together.

## Make meal time family time.

## They Take Their Lead From You. Make Healthy Choices and Your Kids Will Too!

