



**Pebbles Patch
Learning Center**

**Parent
Handbook**

**Please keep this handbook
For future reference!**



Program Operations

Pebbles Patch Learning Center

Hours of Operation

We are open 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM Monday- Friday. Each child will have his or her own scheduled drop off and pick up times within these times.

Our Philosophy

We believe that all children grow and develop at their own pace and while it is important to ensure children are ready for kindergarten and for life experiences, we also feel they should not be hurried through childhood. Our goal is to provide a safe learning environment where kids can simply be kids.

We feel play is an essential aspect of young children's lives... it is essential to their well-being and development. Our preschool program provides time for free play as children need these experiences. New concepts, new skills and new understanding come to children through play. In play, children learn to formulate and organize ideas and to become more flexible in problem solving. Children's attention begins to lengthen when they play. Their imagination can take them anywhere they want to go. During play children learn to communicate their thoughts, feelings and needs to others. We feel by arranging our child care areas to offer challenging, interesting play and learning choices at a range of developmental levels, children will learn through their play.

We balance play with many structured activities such as table time, circle time, open ended art activities, music, meals, clean up etc. We choose curriculum activities based on the needs of the children enrolled and where we feel they need to be for kindergarten. We feel it is important to help each child succeed at his or her own level and adjust projects to meet and

challenge their current level of development. Teachable moments provide learning opportunities on any given day. Activities such as setting the table can be used as teaching opportunities. Children can learn counting, patterning, and one to one correspondence setting the table. Looking up a bug they may have seen on the playground teaches them not only the information about the bug (science), but that book, magazines, and computers are resources. We strongly feel that developing their love for learning and exploration is every bit as important as their care and safety!

We believe social skill and self-help skills are essential for each child to develop and we reinforce this through modeling responsibility, acceptance, caring, sharing and respect for all children and adults. We believe by truly listening and engaging in conversations with children provides numerous opportunities for the development of emotional, language and social skills as well as enhancement of self-esteem. We are sensitive to each child's social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs. We strive to meet their individual needs as well as the group's needs as a whole. We believe given these experiences and opportunities, children will develop a positive self-esteem and love of learning that will follow them throughout their lives.

Parent Communication

Using social Media , email and texting developing effective communication with parents and with extended family has become easier than ever. This, of course, is not intended to replace verbal communication but to enhance it and make it easier when you need to send me a quick note. Please do not hesitate to contact us at 443-488-2770 as your primary contact line.

We have social media posts with pictures of what the children are doing in our program often. (Permission for your child's photo to be posted is your choice and you will need to fill out a photo permission slip.) We understand each family has personal preferences regarding Facebook and respect your decision about having your child's pictures posted. Many parents love being able to see their children throughout the day, but other people are more private. It is totally your choice. Regardless please check out our page often to keep up with what your child is doing at school/child care.

Arrival and Departure Routine

Toddler/Preschool age children must be accompanied by a parent or other authorized adult. (Authorized adults must be listed on your child's Enrollment Form.) All children are encouraged to take care of their own belongings and to get their own shoes on/off as they are able.

ARRIVAL

- Have your child put their things in their cubby, take care of jacket, etc.
- Remind your child to remove their outside shoes
- Have your child put on their inside shoes
- Share any valuable information with staff (schedule changes, how the child is feeling, etc.)

If your child is going to be arriving late or will be absent for the day please call or text us by 8AM so we can plan our day and won't be waiting for your child to arrive. If you are going to be detained at pick up by more than half an hour OR after 6:00PM, please notify us so we can reassure your child and plan for staff to stay with your child.

DEPARTURE

- Encourage your child to get ready to go home themselves as much as possible. This teaches them responsibility and prepares them for school (and life.)
- If your child is outside, they will not be allowed to leave the play yard until you come to the gate or we give them the ok.
- If someone other than parent (guardian) will be picking them up, please notify us in advance.

Orientation to our Program/Separation Anxiety

Starting in a new setting is an exciting experience for a young child, however it can also be a difficult one initially. Even children who are very excited about "starting school" may suddenly realize that you are not going to be there. The apprehension that accompanies that realization is a normal reaction. We would like to offer several suggestions to help your child with the adjustment process.

- Relax! Children will sense your apprehension; therefore, it is important that you feel comfortable with the routine. If you have questions or concerns, please ask us.
- Come and visit with your child before the first day of attendance.
- Learn the names of your child's future play mates and the teachers who will be caring for them.
- Go to our social media , look at the pictures with your child. It will help your child become more familiar with the classroom before attending.

- In their first days, use social media pictures as a conversation starter with your child. What do you think you would like to do there? What did you play with today? Did you like the ____? etc.
- Actively listen to your child as (s)he talks about their day. This will give insight to help the next day. If you know they like the blocks, that might be a great direction to get them thinking about the next morning.
- Establish a “goodbye routine” and even practice it at home when leaving your child with a grandparent or spouse who typically doesn’t drop off. Try for example a special phrase like see you later alligator, one hug and two kisses. Try not to get trapped in the “one more hug, kiss etc.” Kids are amazing at this game! Unfortunately, it usually just makes a tough goodbye, tough for an even longer period of time.
- Figure out what works best for your child. For most children a quick departure is best. It doesn’t prolong what they are dreading (you are leaving). Usually by the time parents have pulled out of the driveway, a crying child has stopped and is involved in playing.
- If you are wondering how they are doing, please call or text to see how they are doing. We don’t want you spending the day worrying about them and totally understand how difficult this transition is on parents as well as children.

Health & Medication

Your child’s health is important to all of us. Please inform us of any special health precautions, medications or other concerns you may have about your child. In accordance with state law Immunization records must be on file at the center within one month of enrollment for all children who are not yet in public school. If choose not to immunize your child, we must have a written record of this for our file. Please update records after each immunization.

Authorization for medical treatment must be completed and signed by a parent and be kept on file for each child enrolled in our program. Our emergency medical facility is typically Bridgton Hospital unless another facility is dictated by your insurance carrier, you, or the severity of the emergency. In case of emergency, we will make every effort to contact the parent first. Children requiring emergency treatment may be transported by a teacher or EMS for minor injuries requiring immediate treatment.

Staff are trained in CPR, First Aid, and Basic Water Safety.

Illness: Parental cooperation is necessary to promote a healthy environment for all the children attending our program. Please do not send your child to the center if they show signs of illness in the morning. Your child may attend if they have regular cold symptoms, mild coughing or runny nose if they are able to participate in ALL child care activities including outside play.

Parents need to have an alternative plan for illness of their child(ren) arranged in advance. When we call to inform you that your child is sick and needs to be picked up, we expect you or someone to pick up your child within 90 minutes.

Children should not return to the program until a full 12 hours after a fever has ceased (without the use of a fever reducer) and diarrhea or vomiting has stopped. In addition, children must be on medication for any communicable disease for 24 hours before returning to the center. I understand this is a hardship for working parents, but I must think of all the other working parents and the other children's health.

Medication: Staff will dispense either prescription or non-prescription medication under the following conditions:

- Medication is in the original container which is labeled with the child's name.
- An authorization to administer medication has been signed.

Please give all medications including cough drops to a staff member for storage and administration. You may choose to complete a form to authorize administration of non-prescription medication for minor occurrences (headaches, fevers, coughs, sore throats, etc.) For children in child care, I would recommend sending a fever reducer and cold medicine for minor symptoms that do not require removal from child care or so that your child may begin receiving relief before you are able to pick him or her up. Please label with your child's name. Medications are kept out of reach in a locked box.

Safety for your Child:

- No child will be released to any person not listed on the child's enrollment form without prior approval for the child's parents.

- When someone other than normal pick up people comes to pick up a child, prior permission from parent is required. The child may identify familiar adults or ID will be required for unfamiliar adults.
- Playground and classroom equipment is cleaned and inspected regularly.
- Children and staff use proper hand washing procedures before and after each meal, toileting, diapering, etc.
- Child records are kept up to date and are located where all staff member can quickly access in case of emergency.
- Children are only allowed in the pool area with staff supervision and preschoolers must wear life jackets unless a single child is being worked on one on one with staff, while other children are being supervised by additional staff. Children must swim 50+ feet without being labored and have parental permission to not wear a life jacket.
- We are a family of nonsmokers and no smoking is permitted in any children's areas including the classroom, pool or playground.
- A first aid kit, children's emergency information and cell phone are located at pool and brought on any field trips.
- Monthly fire drills are held at various times of the day using different exits. Fire extinguishers and wired/battery fire alarms are installed and inspected regularly.
- Carbon Monoxide detector is located in sleeping area.
- State Fire Marshal inspects premises before each license renewal.
- State licensing inspector visits the premises each year. This is an unannounced visit. Additional unannounced visit by food program inspector takes place 4 times a year.
- Staff are mandated reporters of suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

USDA Food Program

This program is affiliated with the USDA Child Care Food Program and serves well balanced meals and snacks. All food preparation is handled in accordance with accepted safety practices. Meals are served family style. Children learn to set the table, serve themselves appropriate proportions, and use good table manners. We used mealtimes as a perfect opportunity to practice manners, such as please and thank you, not interrupting others when they are talking, chewing with mouths closed, not talking with food in their mouth and sitting at the table without getting up and down during the meal. We encourage each child to take a "no thank you bite" of each item served, although not required. Children learn about responsibility as they clean up their dishes and spills.

Each day children are served breakfast, AM snack, lunch and PM snack at no additional charge. Although the children may have special snacks, they are served in addition to the required foods. Due to recent USDA recommendations, we very rarely will serve fruit juices of any kind. The vast majority of all fruits is fresh, not canned or frozen.

Breakfast: Breakfast is served to all children arriving before 8AM. It consists of the following food group:

1. Milk
2. Fruit, vegetable, or juice
3. Enriched bread or equivalent – typically cereal, bagel, English muffins, French toast, pancakes, banana or other homemade breads/muffins.

Snacks: Snacks are served typically at 9:30 AM and 3 PM for preschoolers and 3:45 for School age children. Snacks are simple and nourishing and include food such as fruit, milk, crackers, homemade cookies, breads or muffins, etc.

Lunch: is served at approximately 11:30 and has components of all food groups:

1. Milk
2. Two Fruits and/or vegetables
3. Enriched bread or equivalent – pasta, rice, bread, etc.
4. Meat, poultry, fish, cheese or egg.

Please do not send other foods with your child unless he/she is bringing enough for the class to share.

Special Dietary Needs: A doctor's note is required for any special diet to be administered. If your child has any other dietary issues/sensitivities, please let me know and we will attempt to make reasonable accommodations.

Social & Self-Help Goals

We feel social and self-help skills are as important as academics. Each program has different expectations for children, so we wanted to outline some of the goals and skills children in our program will be working on. We DO NOT expect your child to come in our program knowing how to meet these expectations. It is a growing and learning process. The goals we have for the children in our care are all in place for a reason. They may be for health and safety reasons or developing self-help skills they will need for kindergarten and beyond, or social skills they need to navigate through life.

General Manners and Expectations:

- Children will learn to say please and thank you regularly.
- Children will learn to say excuse me when appropriate.
- Children will learn to share and take turns as developmentally appropriate.
(Preschoolers will not be able to do this at all times – this is a goal to work towards.)
- We do not allow children to exclude anyone who wants to play with them. (they can have alone time, but we try to eliminate the “I only want to play with _____”)
- Children are expected to help clean up the classroom at clean up times. We also encourage children to get in the habit of putting things away when they are done playing with it.
- Children are expected to use a gentle touch, we discourage rough play and pretend guns.
- Children are expected to be respectful of their teachers and other children.
- Children are expected to take care of their own things. They put their things away in their cubbies. They put papers in their folders. Clean up their own messes.

Table Manners:

- Children wash their hands before and after each meal.
- Meals are served family style and children learn how to serve themselves foods without taking more than they think they will eat. (Children can always have multiple helpings.)
- Children will also learn to pour their own drinks from small pitchers. We do not use sippy cups for children 3 years old or older.
- Children learn to use phrases such as “please pass the _____”. or ask for things they need like “Can you refill the milk pitcher, please?” “Thank you for _____”.
- Children are expected to remain seated during meal times. They are expected to say, “May I please be excused?” when they are done eating. (This helps children remember they are not to get up and down during a meal.)
- With children serving themselves, spills are to be expected, they are told “It’s ok, try to be more care next time.” They are responsible for cleaning up their own spills – help is given as needed, but this is one way to teach them to become responsible.
- Children clean up their own plates, cups and utensils after eating.

Potty Learning

We believe that potty learning is different for each child and each child will exhibit signs of readiness at different ages. Because of this, we do not require your child to be trained before starting preschool. We have experience and training in potty learning. We will be glad to assist in potty training with the understanding that it will only work if we work together. When your child is showing signs of readiness, you must work with your child at home and we'll work with

them here. Children should have some consistent success at home before we start with them at school/child care. This typically means several days with only one accident and interest in staying dry.

Preschool Program

Our preschool schedule is flexible to meet you and your child's needs. We have a variety of programs from 2, 3 or 5 mornings a week and can be combined with part or full-time child care. We teach weekly and monthly themes. These are designed to meet curriculum needs or/and building on the children's interests. Activities are designed to have children learn and discover new things each day and more importantly develop a love of learning. We have a range of ages each day and adjust activities to make them developmentally appropriately for each child.

Curriculum Goals are based on the new Early Learning Guidelines which aligns with the Maryland State Learning Results.

Social Skills- (manners, kindness, playing cooperatively, taking turns, compassion, respect, handling emotions).

Self-help skills- (washing hands, brushing teeth, dressing self, handling bathroom needs, cleaning up toys, taking care of their possessions)

Gross Motors Skills- (climbing, running, hopping, jumping, balancing, catching and throwing balls)

Fine Motor skills- (puzzles, lego's, blocks, manipulative toys, lacing beads, drawing, coloring, writing, cutting, play dough.)

Math Skills (counting, patterns, simple addition and subtraction, one to one correspondence. We use a wide variety of manipulative activities and incorporate math during our daily activities and circle time.)

Literature-based Activities (circle time, stories, charts, finger plays, songs, beginning reading and writing skills and dictating their own stories).

Letter and Number Explorations (activities including letter books, fun tactile activities, games, and a rich print environment.)

Handwriting Without Tears (handwriting program teaches proper letter formation from the start, yet in fun, easy ways designed for preschoolers to develop good fine motor skills)

Computers/Tablets (age appropriate computer programs teach academic skills as well as basic technology skills)

Science (hands on explorations about our environment, animals, and nature)

Social studies (learning about our community)

Art Media Discovery (a variety of painting techniques, markers, glue, scissors, collage materials, beads, stencils, rubbing plates, play dough.)

What to bring

Casual clothing is strongly recommended. Your child should be dressed for play; children do get dirty when they are actively involved in play. We feel letting them learn through explorations is much more important than keeping their clothes spotless. Please send your child in clothing that is easy to manage. Your child wants to learn to care for him/herself, and to be independent. Please do not send your child with a belts, suspenders or overalls unless they can fasten and unfasten them by themselves.

Please provide a back pack for your child to bring back and forth to school each day. This should include 1-2 complete changes of clothes (more if potty training). Dirty clothes will be sent home each day, please be sure to replace any missing items. It may be a good idea to label socks, because kids don't always get put in the right place and they are hard to tell apart, especially during summer months.

We are a shoe free facility, so please remove all shoes (INCLUDING YOURS) in the entryway and provide shoes for indoor use only to be left at preschool/childcare. Secure slippers, water shoes or canvas sneakers all work well for inside shoes.

All children (including school age children should have the following items:

A complete change of clothing, including shorts, long pants, t-shirt, long sleeved shirts, socks, underwear and sweatshirt or light jacket and indoor shoes.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR SUMMER

- Swimsuit and beach towel with a easily recognizable character or design.
- Older children (school aged) can bring goggles for underwater games and these will not be shared.
- We ask that each family bring 1 bottle of sunscreen that is SPF 50 for all the children in our program to share on or before June 15th or the first day of summer vacation.

- In summer, old sneakers should be left here, if child is wearing sandals daily. Many games or field trips require sneakers for child's comfort and ability to play.
- Security item, stuffed animal or doll if your child needs it.
- Diapers and wipes pull ups, training pants (when child is ready for potty training) along with several changes of clothes for toddlers and preschoolers. We recommend that you bring a full package of diapers, so you won't have to bring diapers back and forth each day along with 1 package of baby wipes. We will send you a notice in your child's cubby when we need more of either.

Remember your child's comfort for outdoor play:

Winter Season: Please dress your child properly for the weather at all times. We typically go outside when the weather is above 25 degrees unless it is bad weather due to freezing rain, snow or windy. **Please label ALL** winter clothing, particularly mittens, snow pants and boots as so many items look similar. When purchasing outdoor wear for your child please take into consideration that mittens, snow pants and boots must be waterproof otherwise they are wet right through to their inside clothes in minutes and children become cold quickly. Children staying for the full day should have two sets of waterproof mittens to be left at school.

Spring/Fall Season: Please bring shorts, pants, t-shirts, sweatshirts and jacket. Often a chilly day turns very warm or a warm day turns cold.

School Year Schedule

Each child will have his or her own scheduled arrival and pickup times. This is an approximate schedule of our day during the school year. Our schedule of activities is subject to change, due to the weather, kids, needs for the day etc.

9:30 Morning snack (wash hands, eat, clean up and wash hands)

10:30 Art time, science or special activity (table activities)

11:00 Outside play

11:30 Lunch

12:00 Children who only attend the morning program are picked up.

12:15 Story time and rest time. (children are not made to sleep or lay down; however, we typically have a minimum 30-minute rest period. Children that have not fallen asleep may get up and participate in quiet activities such as table toys, art, drawing, dramatic play, outside play, extremely limited TV, or individualized academic activities.

2:30 Wake up and cleanup for snack (if children did not wake on their own)

2:45 Afternoon snack for preschoolers

3:20 School age children arrive and have afternoon snack followed by self-directed play inside or outside depending on weather.

4:00 Homework time for older children. Variety of self-directed play activities.

5:00-5:30 Clean up, outside or inside free play for remaining children until close.

6:00 Closed

Toys and Personal Items

PRESCHOOLERS: No Toys Please!!!! Please do not allow your child to bring any toys to school. Toys brought to school caused added tension as toys could be easily lost or broken and special toys are difficult to share. All young children practice taking turns and sharing, however it is much harder for your child to share his or her favorite toy. Therefore, I request that no toys be brought, unless you have been notified that it is a special day such as teddy bear day.

School-Age Children ONLY: School age children may bring personal items such as electronic devices, books, or games. I will be limiting the time that they may use these items as the children have many other options to occupy their time. If your child does bring items to school, the child will be responsible for keeping track of these items. Rainbow Valley Kids will not be responsible if they get lost or broken.

Child Guidance Policy

Our child guidance policy is designed to help children become independent and caring by learning self-control, decision-making skills and responsibility for their own actions. We believe that children should be treated with the same respect that we, as adults, wish to be treated. Our goals are to help children develop positive self-esteem, respect for themselves and the rights of others and socially acceptable ways of expressing their needs and feelings. This is accomplished through positive guidance and loving discipline when necessary. We use the general discipline principles as described in the book 1, 2, 3 Magic. This book provides great guidance principles for parents if you are interested in reinforcing the same program at home.

In general, the child is reminded initially of what they should not or should be doing, then if not complying, the child is simply counted “that’s 1”, if it continues, or child back talks “that’s 2”, if it continues “that’s 3 - take 5” (meaning timeout). The book stressed two things: The first is not talking too much. The child usually knows what they are doing wrong, and it just allows them the opportunity to escalate and argue the situation. The second is showing no emotion when the child is acting up or when you are counting. Just calmly yet firmly say “That’s 1”. We have found this to work very well in our classroom as they always know what is next. A copy of this book is in our loan library and you are welcome to borrow it at any time.

Our staff uses other guidelines and techniques to help children develop self-discipline and reduce problems before they start:

- A learning environment that promotes consistent routines and well-defined expectations.
- Use of praise through kind words and actions (hugs, smiles) to reinforce desirable behaviors.
- Redirection to another activity when a child displays undesirable behaviors.
- If a child caused physical or emotional harm to others, the child will be removed from the situation for a brief time to calm down and will “take 5” in a calm down area.
- Time is provided to talk with the teacher about how the child is feeling and alternative, appropriate behaviors at a time when the child has calmed down.

We believe the primary responsibility for raising young children rests with the parents; however, the staff strives to assist parents in the training and guidance of their children. We will provide parents with feedback about their children (both positive and negative, if necessary). If you desire help in dealing with a specific behavior or issue, please discuss it with us. Parent support is expected for any guidance techniques used by staff to resolve unwanted behaviors. Staff are not allowed to discipline a child using prohibited methods (according to licensing regulations) even at the request of a parent.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition: Tuition is based on enrollment (a reserved slot), not attendance and payment will be expected whether or not the child is in attendance.

Registration Fee: A one-time \$35.00 registration fee per family is required upon enrollment of child. This fee covers preparations for your child’s arrival, such as setting up a cubby, reviewing and entering records into computer files, and filing forms, as well as holding their spot until the time care is scheduled to begin. There are no annual fees.

Payment is expected on the first day your child is in care each week. You may deposit your check in the basket hanging by the door in the entry area. If you are paying by cash, please place it in an envelope with your child's name on it.

Current rates are listed in the contract which you will receive a copy of for your records after it has been signed by parents and child care provider.

Sibling Discounts: In order to financially help families who may not be eligible for subsidy programs, I offer a sibling discount of **10%** of from your oldest child's tuition rate. No discount is applicable if you are receiving some other form of subsidy through the state or work to help pay for your child care.

Rate Increase: There will be a rate increase of 3% on the anniversary of your contract each year. No other rate increases will be charged.

Tuition: Tuition payment is due on the **first** day your child is in care for the week. There will be a \$2 per day late fee for each day your tuition payment is late. If tuition payment becomes 2 weeks late, your child may not be allowed to return to child care or preschool until tuition is current. I know there are sometimes exceptional circumstances and if you anticipate having a problem making a payment, please let me know as soon as possible. I will try to work with you. However, please keep in mind that this is a business and I do have payroll, food, and other expenses. You expect your paycheck when it is due, and I expect mine. Thank you for your understanding.

My Vacation: I typically take two weeks of vacations each year, you will be notified a minimum of one month in advance when child care/preschool will be closed due to my vacation, however typically you will be provided with 6 months of advance notice. I may or may not be closed during my vacation time based on availability of additional staff. Except in case of emergency, child care will not be closed without considerable advance notice.