



CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

Play School

HOPEWELL NJ



PARENT HANDBOOK

Updated for 2022-23

Key Points to Remember...

For Kids and Parents and Guardians, remember to bring:

- A bag or backpack to carry your belongings to and from school
- A snack (and a lunch if you are staying for lunch)
- An extra set of clothes to keep in your cubby (include underwear, socks, pants and a shirt)
- Appropriate outerwear that matches the weather. We go out in most any kind of weather. (Rain boots, raincoats, winter coats with mittens, hats or winter boots)
- A water bottle

For Parents and Guardians, remember:

- CCPS follows the HVRSD school calendar for holidays and weather closings. You will be emailed about closings but you can always check the HVRSD website as well.
- Drop off time is between 8-9am for full day students and 9am for half day students. Please call ahead if your child is going to be late for school.
- Pickup time for students attending half day is 1pm or by 4:30 pm for the full day session.
- Please call the school (609-466-0110) before 9am if your child is NOT going to be attending school that day.
- Please inform school personnel of any permanent additions or subtractions from the list of people that are authorized to pick your child up from school.
- If your child will be picked up by someone not on your authorized list, please send written notification authorizing the change in pickup on the day in question.

For more details on these and other points, keep reading.

We look forward to the chance to learn with all of you!

CCPS Mission Statement

“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.”

Matthew 18:5

Why is our church in the preschool business? Jesus tells us in Matthew’s gospel that when we serve the children in His name, we are serving Him. Our church, Board of Directors and teachers serve the greater community through the work of the preschool, by nurturing each child’s appreciation of self and the world as God’s good creation, by helping children to develop into kind, caring, loving, responsible individuals who will know that they are loved by God. We model the joy, compassion, forgiveness, and love of others in our attitudes, speech, and behavior toward children and their families. As God has loved us, so we shall love them.

Creative Connections Play School (CCPS) is both a ministry to members of the congregation and an outreach mission to the greater community. We believe that children are capable, curious and full of knowledge and that they bring their own ideas and enthusiasm to school. We honor each child and individual through allowing them the space and time to follow their own passions. These beliefs, rooted in our Reggio Emilia inspired program, demonstrate the Christian welcome that Jesus promises in this verse from Matthew’s gospel: that God reveals himself through the children that we serve. Who are the welcomers in our own story? Teachers, Board Members, church members, and the children themselves.

History of the Program and Goals

In 2014 Maria Santomauro approached Hopewell Presbyterian Church and inquired about renting space for a Reggio Emilia inspired preschool enrichment program. HPC wholeheartedly accepted and appreciated the opportunity to be a contribution to the greater community and to help to provide service to young families. Maria invited Kyle Wille to join her. When the program outgrew the one classroom, the church allowed CCPS to move to three rooms underneath the Sanctuary. Kyle and Maria invited Liz Blankstein, a church member and preschool teacher, to join them during their second year, in early 2016. By the end of that school year, both Kyle and Maria had made the decision to leave CCPS and asked Liz if she would like to proceed with the school. She said yes and was pleased that Maria agreed to stay on for one more year to help further establish the school. Liz sought to have the school become a ministry of the church, and we were eventually renamed a mission of HPC. In November of 2016, the

preschool formed a Board of Directors and the original school was dissolved by the end of December 2016. Through much hard work and dedication from the CCPS Director and Board, the school was licensed in November 2017.

From inception, CCPS has developed and promoted children's security, independence, confidence, self-discipline, self-expression and self-esteem in a loving and caring atmosphere. Our school's curriculum encourages students to observe, investigate, seek, acquire and process information; to improve language skills; to achieve physical competence; to cooperate with other children and adults; to control and communicate inner feelings; and to express themselves through the arts. In short, ours is a well-balanced program which responds to all the particular needs of preschool children and helps them to make the transitions from home to preschool to kindergarten with confidence.

Our school holds a Certificate of Approval from the New Jersey Department of Education and fully meets the Department's requirements for teachers, space, program and equipment.

Curriculum

- CCPS follows a curriculum that is supportive of the developing child as an individual and as part of a group. Through all our activities, we are interested in cultivating the self-esteem of each child so that he/she has the self-perception of being a valuable and important person. The child matures socially, intellectually and physically in this accepting environment. Our curriculum is enhanced through projects, discussions, stories, songs, fingerplays and first hand experiences. Any themes we study in depth are due to an interest of the children.
- The following is a *broad outline* of the curriculum:

Color and Shape	Line
Executive Functioning Skills	Rhythm
Self Regulation Habits	Nature
Movement	Social Emotional Learning
- The development of **fine motor skills** is encouraged through play with playdough/clay, scissors, small manipulatives (loose parts) and pencils/crayons/markers. The outdoor play area and the church's Fellowship Hall provide opportunities for **gross motor skills** to be exercised.

- **Music-** We have a music program with Mr. Charlie Ashton, the Minister of Music at Hopewell Presbyterian Church. We sing, dance, run, skip and use musical instruments during our weekly lessons with Mr. Charlie.
- **Field Trips:** CCPS classes may occasionally go on walking field trips that enhance the curriculum. A blanket permission slip must be signed by parent or guardian for each child who leaves school grounds. Field Trips outside Hopewell Borough will require separate Permission slips and parents will provide transportation to such destinations.
- **Religious Education:** While most consider us a secular school, we are a mission of Hopewell Presbyterian Church. We are housed in a church and without the support from the church, we could not exist. With that in mind, we do a daily prayer before snack, thanking God for our food. We discuss the Holy Family and Jesus' birth at Christmas time and we also touch upon Easter each Spring. Our goal is not to indoctrinate the students and force religious beliefs on anyone. Our goal is to share the love of Jesus Christ with the school community. If not for God, CCPS would not be here at Hopewell Presbyterian Church. We feel blessed.
- **End of the Year Binder-** We document the children's learning and compile a binder for each child. We take the artwork created by the student, quotes from the child, notes written by the teacher and pictures taken while the child is learning. Parents will receive this binder at the End of the Year Party in June. You will not have artwork coming home on a daily or weekly basis. You are encouraged to come into the classroom at pick-up and look through your child's clipboard which holds their work until it is categorized into the binder.

Parent Responsibilities

- **Parent Participation.** Parents of children enrolled in CCPS are invited to participate in the life of the school. Some of the ways in which we encourage parental involvement are; sharing a skill or talent with the students, sharing a holiday tradition, helping plan and execute holiday class parties and the end of the year celebration, or simply coming in to read a story.
- **Absences:** Parents are responsible for calling the school if their child is going to be absent that day. The school telephone number is 609-466-0110.
- **Transportation:** Parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from school and escorting their child to and from the classroom. Teachers will only release a child to his or her parents or guardian. Parents must notify the teacher in writing if they want their child released to anyone else.

- Snack Program. Parents are asked to provide their child with an appropriate daily snack with a drink. CCPS will provide a list of current classroom allergies.
- Birthday Celebrations. Birthdays can be celebrated with a special snack. Parents have the option to celebrate their child's 'unbirthday' should the child's birthday fall outside the school year.
- Supplies/Clothing. Children are asked to bring a tote bag/backpack each day to transport their snack. Parents are asked to dress their children in play clothes that are appropriate for outdoor play or messy projects inside. Outerwear, especially boots and gloves, should be selected so that children can put them on easily by themselves. Tote bags and all outerwear should be labeled with the child's name. An extra set of clothes must be provided to stay in the cubbies at all times. It is important to have these extra clothes as accidents do happen and we do not want a child to remain in wet clothing.
- Items from Home. Children are not allowed to bring in toys from home with the exception of a stuffed animal for rest time.
- Emergency Closings - CCPS will notify all parents of emergency closings via email or text message by 7am of the specific school day. We will give further advance notice whenever possible.

Health Policy

- Health forms will be mailed to families during the summer. To comply with State regulations, these forms must be completed and returned to the Director or the teacher no later than the first day of school. Allergies or any other special health problems or conditions should be specified on the health form.
- Parents must be informed of the school's health policies, as follows, prior to the beginning of school. ***Please read this section carefully.***
- **Maintaining a healthy environment is of utmost importance to the CCPS children and teachers.** Therefore, parents should make sure that their child is in good health before coming to school. **Children who are coughing, running a temperature or showing other signs of "flu" such as aches and pains, have a communicable disease or other illness must remain at home.**
- The children's health is assessed daily by the teachers, who are authorized to send a child home if he/she shows signs of illness and to request that he/she remain at home until good physical condition. returns * Any child who becomes ill with one or more of the following diseases will not be permitted to attend school for the indicated time period.
 - a. CHICKEN POX: May return six days from the first appearance of the rash, or after lesions become dry. When under treatment, one to three days after discharge has ceased.
 - b. CONJUNCTIVITIS: (pink eye) May return when under treatment, one to three days and after discharge has ceased.

- c. FIFTH DISEASE: May return with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - d. GERMAN MEASLES: May return four days from the first appearance of the rash, with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - e. HEPATITIS A: (Infectious) May return seven days from the first appearance of jaundice and after clinical recovery, with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - f. HEPATITIS B: (Serum) May return upon clinical discovery, with a signed permission from the attending physician.
 - g. IMPETIGO: May return 24 hours after beginning antimicrobial therapy and when lesions are dry, with signed permission from the physician.
 - h. LICE/PEDICULOSIS: May return upon elimination of all nits/lice; must be cleared by an examination nurse. An attending physician's permission is not sufficient if nits are present, even though treatment may have been administered.
 - i. MEASLES: May return four days from the first appearance of the rash, with signed permission from the attending physician. State law requires child's doctor to certify history of disease.
 - j. MONONUCLEOSIS: May return upon clinical recovery, with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - k. MUMPS: May return after at least nine days or until swelling has disappeared, whichever is longer. State Law requires child's doctor to certify history of disease.
 - l. PINWORM: May return when under treatment, with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - m. RINGWORM: May return when under treatment, with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - n. SALMONELLA: May return when free from infection, with signed permission from the attending physician. Family members attending school are also required to have signed permission from attending physician.
 - o. SCABIES: May return when free from infection, with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - p. STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTIONS: (Strep Throat, Scarlet Fever, Scarletina) May return after two days if under medical treatment, or upon clinical recovery, with signed permission from attending physician.
 - q. TRENCH MOUTH: May return after one day if under medical treatment with signed permission from the attending physician.
 - r. COVID 19: The quarantining procedures are constantly being updated. Please check in with the Director.
- The child **must be free of all symptoms before returning to school**; or if the symptoms persist, the child may return with a written consent statement from his/her doctor. Any other extended illness would require a doctor's note before the child returns to school.

- Parents **must report** any contagious diseases such as flu, Covid, chicken pox, strep throat or lice to the teachers so that parents of exposed children can be alerted. Teachers are authorized to request a doctor's written statement regarding the medical health of a child.
- An Injury/Illness Notice will be sent home with any child who, to the teacher's knowledge, has sustained a significant injury during class time or has shown recognizable symptoms of illness or infection. The parent is encouraged to speak with the teacher after receiving the notice.
- A **phone call** or some form of personal contact will be made to the parents if there is an injury to the child's head, a bite that breaks the skin, a fall from a height, or an injury requiring professional medical attention.

Arrival and Dismissal

A. Arrival

- The teachers will be ready to start class at 8:00 AM, for full day students. Please come to school at 9am if your child is enrolled in the half day program.
- Late arrival: Please arrive on time. Frequent late arrivals are disruptive to the class and your child's school day.

B. Dismissal

- Class ends at 1pm for half day students. The full day program ends promptly at 4:30pm.
- It is important that all children be picked up on time. In the event the adult will be late to pick up, please call the school to let them know. Late fees may apply.

C. Release of Children

- A child may be released only to the child's custodial parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the custodial parent(s) on the emergency contact form. If a parent wishes to have their child picked up by a classmate's parent, a signed, written note is required.
- A child shall not be visited by or released to a non-custodial parent unless the custodial parent specifically authorizes the school to allow such visits or release in writing. This written authorization, including name, address and phone number shall be maintained in the child's file.
- If a non-custodial parent has been denied access to a child by a court order, the custodial parent must provide the school with documentation to that effect and the school will maintain a copy in the child's file.

- The procedures to be followed by teachers if the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), appear to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the teacher, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual. The procedures shall require that:
 - a. The child may not be released to such an impaired individual.
 - b. Teachers will attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternate person(s) authorized by the parent(s).
 - c. If the school is unable to make alternative arrangements, as noted in above, a staff member shall call the Division's 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline 1-877-652-2873 (1-877-NJABUSE).
- In cases involving court ordered restrictions on visitation, the following rules apply:
 - a. Only the parents or court ordered guardians have the right to visit their children at school or have the children released to them (no other family members).
 - b. A release form will be available for anyone else allowed to visit their children and/or pick them up from the school. The name, addresses and phone numbers of these individuals must be on file at the school.
 - c. The teachers and/or the CCPS board should be notified immediately should the courts become involved in custody disputes.

Communication Between Home and School

We believe that parents, teachers and children are partners in learning. Communication between parents and teachers is essential. Teachers are always available to discuss concerns of parents regarding their child, the curriculum, or the class.

- A. **Conferences** for 3 and 4 year olds are held in the fall and if requested, the spring as well.
 - For the fall conference, the teacher will prepare an evaluation for the purpose of sharing observations on the development of the child.

- A written evaluation will also be done in the spring and placed in the end of the year binder.
 - If a parent has special concerns at another time they should not hesitate to contact their child's teacher by email or telephone.
- B. The monthly parent newsletter is distributed via email. Its purpose is to encourage communication between teachers and parents.
- C. Observation of classes by parents is welcome and encouraged, except during pandemics. Windows in classroom doors permit parents to observe their child and his/her class at their convenience.
- D. **Emergency Closing and Snow Days** will be the same as those for the Hopewell Valley Regional School District. CCPS will notify by email if there is a closing or a delayed opening. You may also check the website at HVRSD.org. The first three classes canceled due to weather will not be made up. Any canceled classes after the first three will be made up at the end of the school year, thereby extending the closing date.
- E. Information and solicitation from outside CCPS must be for the benefit of the children if it is to be considered for distribution by CCPS. Distribution will be at the discretion of the CCPS Board and the teachers.
- F. The Manual of Standards for Child Care Centers (the official licensing regulation manual) is available in the CCPS library for parents to review.
- G. **Grievance Procedure**- In the event that a parent is unable to resolve concerns regarding their child with the Head Teacher and/or the Director, the following Grievance Procedure is to be followed.
- The parent will submit a letter to the Director describing the nature of the grievance prior to any meeting.
 - The Director will inform the Board President who will call a meeting of the CCPS Board to find an appropriate solution to the problem.
 - All parties will be notified of the grievance within 24 hours or the next business day and the Board meeting will be held within one week of receipt of the grievance letter.
 - Written correspondence from the parent will be handled with confidentiality by all who know of it. Correspondence may be shared with the teachers and/or Board of Directors when deemed necessary and appropriate by the CCPS Board. The President will respond in writing. At the end of each school year, these grievances will be expunged.