

Elements Learning Collaborative, Inc.

Elements Learning Collaborative Staff Handbook

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## 1.0 General Policies

### About this Document

In this document we present our policies, guidelines, procedures, along with expectations and duties of staff. The policies stated in this Staff Handbook are intended as guidelines only (except where defined as mandatory) and are subject to change at the sole discretion of the Board of Directors of Elements Learning Collaborative (ELC). Staff includes paid employees, unpaid employees, and volunteers. All staff members are responsible for upholding the policies and procedures stated herein, and in the Parent's Handbook and/or other procedural documents. All guidelines should be read carefully and questions should be asked to the Directors for clarification. The Parent's Handbook describes the general information about our program, as it pertains to parents. Portions of this document pertain only to ELC's primary program, Elements Nature Program (ENP).

### Elements Nature Program Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide children of diverse backgrounds with a holistic, joyful and child-centered learning experience in nature, which fosters social and emotional development as well as responsibility and independence.

### Our Philosophy

Elements Nature Program offers a healthy alternative learning option for Southcoast families with the ideal that “play is the work of children...” (J. Piaget). We believe that in order for learning to be impactful, it should be applicable, intrinsically motivating, and therefore fun. Our method is a hands-on learning approach providing the right conditions for each child to grow academically, socially, physically and emotionally. This natural, yet innovative and progressive pedagogy allows children to explore and connect with their world in a positive way. Making positive and nurturing connections at the beginning and throughout one's education is important to how one interprets, relates, and reacts to new information. Elements Nature Program offers children the opportunity to make healthy connections to the natural world and our community.

ENP encourages children to explore and discover work, helps develop their independence for learning and fosters an environment of respect and socialization. We understand that all children grow individually and at their own pace, and we respect each child as an individual. We help children to reach their individual goals to contribute to their ongoing development and learning.

ENP will utilize nature and our community as the wellspring of resources to create an open-ended, emergent curriculum that allows children to grow into lifelong learners. Based on the seasons, the curriculum will allow for children's interests and multiple intelligences to lead the flow through a holistic learning experience. We believe that a healthy connection to one's community is crucial to guiding children to become positive contributors to society. We model respect for all living things and hope to inspire the children to be stewards of the Earth alongside us.

## Homeschool Registration

All children ages 6 and older will be registered as homeschoolers by their parents with their respective school districts. Information on when and how to register your child with the school district can be obtained by calling the school dept or visiting their website.

## Curriculum

ENP is Learning at Elements Nature Program will include, but is not limited to:

- Exploration and stewardship of nature
- Literacy
- Gardening
- Mathematics
- Physical & Human Geography
- Languages
- Science
- Engineering
- Social/Emotional Skills
- Art
- Music
- Movement
- Yoga/Qigong/Meditation
- Farming
- Nutritional cooking & eating

Observation and documentation are key concepts of our method and can be handwritten, recorded, or photographed. Documentation provides a way to look at the development of each child in all domains, as well as creates a window for parents to peer inside the daily life of the program. We also refer to our documentation to plan lessons for each child as well as projects for small groups. We keep a workbook for each child to collect work samples, art, dictated responses, photos, and other pertinent information.

Elements Learning Collaborative values family and community participation. At ENP, parents and staff working together in collaboration as a team for each child—to help ensure each child’s progress. Goal-setting and regular communication is paramount. Through newsletters, child workbooks, and various opportunities to volunteer, parents and staff can work together creating an environment of growth and compassion.

## Students with Learning Differences/Exceptionalities

Staff members should communicate any suspected learning differences or exceptionalities about students in writing to a Director. Information and possible referrals should be communicated to the Director before conferencing with the families so that a learning or behavioral evaluation may be discussed/conducted.

For children with existing Learning Differences or who have had an IFSP or IEP in the past, a meeting between the child’s parents and the Directors of ENP to determine how the child can succeed in our environment and what accommodations and modifications are necessary.

## Statement to Staff

Our staff members (employees & volunteers) are carefully chosen by ELC Board of Directors. We select staff who are competent, responsible, talented, and aligned with our mission to provide a holistic learning experience. We acknowledge that our staff members have chosen ELC because they share our values of education, child development, the importance of social-emotional nurturing, cross-cultural understanding and community involvement.

We believe that learning is an active process of self-construction, which occurs as we (children & adults) go about our everyday routines. There are two critical notions embedded in this view of learning.

First, all learning constructs (emotional, social, ethical, aesthetic, creative, wellness, intellectual and academics) are intertwined; they simply cannot be separated.

Second, we each (children & adults) bring to this community our own unique personal history. We, as guides, need to listen to — in the deepest sense — children’s and parents’ personal stories and perspectives, and to each other’s stories, for our curriculum and everyday experiences to be meaningful. Ongoing communication between parents and guides is important to ensure that children’s social-emotional and educational needs get met.

We come together as staff members not only with our vision and personal stories, but also with expectations of and responsibilities to each other. We will promote the highest quality, professional, consistent and respectful learning environment. We will support each person’s personal and professional endeavors to the best of our ability. We expect all staff to be 100% accountable for their performance and to work collaboratively with all other members of the ELC community (staff, board members, parents, educators, volunteers) and governing bodies such as the Board of Health. We expect staff to stay informed of school matters by attending staff meetings, parent workshops and other school functions, and by reading the staff updates/emails and the school newsletter.

## Confidentiality

We emphasize the extraordinary degree of care that employees (including volunteers) must take in maintaining the confidentiality of all ELC matters, including information about children, families and employees. Our obligation to maintain confidentiality requires that information not be released to anyone other than the individual, or their parents. Exceptional care must be taken to protect confidential information; failure to abide by this procedure may lead to termination. This requires that private information not be discussed with parents, and that confidential information, including staff memos, correspondence, and student records, be safeguarded.

## Code of Ethics

The successful operation and reputation of ELC is built upon the principles of appropriate and ethical conduct of our employees. Our reputation for integrity and excellence requires careful observance of all applicable laws and regulations, as well as a regard for the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity. Professional boundaries must be maintained at all times.

ELC employees are hired to work with our participants under the terms of their job descriptions and under the terms of our agreements.

The success of ELC is dependent upon our participants trust and we are dedicated to preserving that trust. Employees owe a duty to ELC, its participants and their families, to act in a way that will merit the continued trust and confidence of the public.

Compliance with this policy of boundaries, ethics and conduct is the responsibility of every ELC employee. Disregarding or failing to comply with this standard could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of employment.

## Statement of Ethics

In pledging to accept the Code of Ethics, staff members agree to conduct themselves professionally and personally in ways that reflect their respect for one other and for the children they serve; and that they will do whatever is within their talents and capacity to protect the right of each child to have the freedom and opportunity to develop his or her full potential.

### Principle I — Commitment to the Child

In fulfillment of the obligation to the children, the educator shall—

- speak to and treat each child with respect, regardless of circumstances;
- encourage independent action in the pursuit of learning;
- protect the opportunity to provide for participation in educational programs without regard to race, sex, color, creed, or national origin;
- protect the health and safety of students;
- honor professional commitments and maintain obligations and contracts while never soliciting nor involving children or their parents in schemes for commercial gain;
- keep in confidence information that has been secured in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.

### Principle II — Commitment to the Public

ELC shares in the responsibility for developing policy relating to the extension of educational opportunity for all and for interpreting educational programs and policies to the public. The educator shall maintain utmost respect, compassion, and appreciation for the community members it serves.

### Principle III — Commitment to the Profession

ELC makes efforts to raise professional standards and conditions to attract persons worthy of trust to careers in education.

In fulfilling these goals, the educator shall -

- extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the education profession;
- represent his or her own professional qualification with clarity and true intent;
- apply for, accept, offer, recommend, and assign professional positions and responsibilities on the

basis of professional preparation and legal qualifications;

use honest and effective methods of administering duties, use of time, and conducting business.

## Non-Discrimination Policy

We value, welcome, and celebrate a diverse population. ELC treats all employees and applicants for employment without unlawful discrimination as to race, creed, color, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation in all employment decisions.

## Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment in employment violates the provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any employee who is aware of any instance of sexual harassment should report the alleged act immediately to the Director. All complaints will be investigated promptly, impartially and discreetly and, upon completion of the investigation, the appropriate parties will be notified immediately of the findings. ELC will not tolerate any forms of discrimination and harassment by anyone. Any employee who harasses another will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## Harassment Policy

No words, acts or symbols of racial, gender, or other forms of discrimination will be allowed. Proven harassment because of an individual's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age disability or sexual orientation will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## Substance Abuse Policy

All use or possession of any alcohol, marijuana or illegal substance on or at a Elements Learning Collaborative event or reporting to work while under the influence of intoxicants or drugs will not be tolerated. Use or possession is grounds for immediate dismissal. Any observed use or possession is to be reported directly and immediately to the Director. Failure to do so can be cause for immediate termination. In the event of adult-only school events where alcohol is served, all staff members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. If using intoxicating substances outside of the workday or work events, we discourage (but cannot condemn) any public behaviors that go against ELC values, i.e. disrespecting community members or establishments, or modeling poor behavior in front of children.

## Non-Smoking/Tobacco Free Policy

We believe in the right of all people to breathe clean air. To help protect the health of our learners, families, staff and our global community, we are a Tobacco Free Environment. Smoking is not permitted on ENP premises or at ENP events. Staff should take great care in assuring that if they go off property to smoke, they do not smell like smoke upon their return. Marijuana is considered a substance, and is not allowed on grounds of ELC programs and events. Staff members cannot be

under the influence of marijuana at any ELC programs or events. See above “Substance Use Policy”.

## Criminal Background Check Policy

All staff members and contracted individuals that work with children will have a national background check (CORI/SORI) conducted upon their initial employment. Subject to applicable laws, ELC reserves the sole right to determine whether an offense precludes a staff member from hire or continued employment/volunteer service. An employee/volunteer has the responsibility to notify ELC in the event of a criminal charge or conviction that may impact their ability to remain reasonably employed/volunteering with children.

## Photography/Videography

Employees may use personal smartphones for documenting learning with the camera application only. Staff must refrain from taking photos of children whose parents have denied permission to be photographed by ELC. It is the responsibility of the staff member to be aware of who cannot be photographed. We respect the right of children to know when they are being photographed/recorded, and we respect their wishes to not be photographed/recorded. ELC staff must obtain permission from the children prior to taking a photo or recording, and refrain if denied permission. Photos may only be taken on occasion, and videos may only be taken with permission from Directors. All footage and data recording of ELC children on or off premises taken during school hours is the property of ELC. Photographs, video or any recording taken with personal devices cannot be posted to personal social media accounts without permission of ELC Directors. Posting photographs of children without permission is a violation of privacy. At any time a staff member is caught posting images without the permission from the director, disciplinary action up to and including termination will be taken. Staff must not allow children to view their phone screens or use their phones in any way, including to view a photo that was just taken.

## Cell Phone Etiquette

Mobile phones should always be silenced when near or around children. Checking voicemail, texting or answering the phone when with children should only happen in rare situations when the exception has been discussed with the director (ex. your child’s doctor is returning your call). Staff may keep a mobile phone on them for an emergency, but they may not take personal calls, text, use social media, check emails while supervising children. Nor may staff allow children to view their phone screens or use their phones in any way, including to view a photo that was just taken. Employees may use personal smartphones for documenting learning with the camera application only. See above “Photography/Videography” for more details.



## Appropriate Language/Demeanor

During program hours, voices are to be kept low and adult conversation needs to be kept to a minimum. When speaking to distressed children, staff should be warm and understanding of a child's concern, injury, fear, or inability to self-regulate. Most 1:1 or small group interactions should be at eye-level: kneeling, crouched or seated. Staff members are to speak respectfully to children, parents, and other staff. In the event that staff uses inappropriate/unprofessional language or demeanor a verbal warning will be issued by the administration. If a second warning is needed, it will be in the form of a written warning, which the staff member must sign. This warning will be placed in the staff member's permanent file.

Employees of Elements Learning Collaborative are to engage in professional conduct at all times. Each employee is a reflection of the program even when they are not at the facility. At any time an employee engages in an activity outside of work that is detrimental to the reputation of the facility (drug abuse, committing violence, breaking the law) disciplinary action up to and including termination will be taken.

## Public Relations

Employees of ELC are to respect the differing views of the community, and must speak carefully when addressing issues contrary to our goals, philosophy and mission, i.e. public schooling, conventional farming, and unhealthy lifestyles. Our goal is to offer alternatives and provide our participants with examples of our philosophies, in a way that does not undermine what they may already know or experience at home. We must not pass judgement on these things, but only model and support positive experiences and behaviors.

## Facebook & Social Media Policy

Employees of Elements Learning Collaborative may not be connected with parents as "friends" or "followers" on social media websites, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter unless that connection existed prior to enrollment. They may not upload or post pictures of any ELC children on their personal websites, Facebook pages and any other public social media sites. Parents will be encouraged to follow ELC and its programs via its professional social media accounts.

## Care of the Building

*When using the RTB facilities, ELC staff must:*

- Remove shoes and help children remove theirs.*
- Speak softly inside the buildings, and remind children do speak softly before entering.*
- Turn off lights when exiting a room.*
- Close exterior doors tightly when exiting the building.*

*In the Bathrooms, ELC staff must:*

- *Remind children to start with 2-3 squares of toilet paper, use another 2-3 if needed.*
- *Remind children to only use one scoop of wood shavings after each toilet use.*
- *Turn off all water faucets, and close toilet lids.*

*Before leaving at the end of the day, ELC staff must:*

- *Check the area for food scraps and bring all compost to the kitchen.*
- *Sweep/Clean bathrooms if needed.*
- *Return all borrowed RTB materials to where they belong.*
- *Turn off basement lights, and close doors tightly.*
- *Secure tent poles, walls and stakes.*
- *Close the gate if leaving past 5:30pm and any time that it is already closed upon exit.*

## 2.0 General Duties and Guidelines

### Staff Expectations

All staff members are expected to:

- Demonstrate an appreciation and respect for children and their individual learning differences;
- Demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to Elements Nature Program’s mission statement, beliefs, goals, and delivery of instruction;
- Demonstrate the characteristics of honesty, integrity and sense of humor;
- Maintain a kind and respectful tone and demeanor at all times when working with children;
- Demonstrate the ability to help children assess and potentially resolve conflicts, both internal and external, in a comforting, emotionally sensitive way.
- Respect the confidentiality of children and families and refrain from discussing personal or financial matters;
- Communicate directly and effectively with all staff members without adhering to gossip or speaking ill of others at any time;
- Show compassion and empathy with parents/families at all times without adhering to gossip or speaking ill of others at any time;
- Be constantly aware of the appropriateness of the conversations that we have with co-workers, learners and other adults;
- Show evidence of ongoing professional growth;
- Model positive attitudes and courtesy for all children and adults;
- Demonstrate an ability to communicate and collaborate with colleagues, parents, and community;
- Be flexible and open minded to new ideas and processes;
- Possess the willingness to grow in regard to technology, when applicable;
- Meet or exceed all other expectations in this Staff Handbook.

ELC reserves the right to terminate employees, and excuse volunteers of their duties, if the inability to comply with expectations persists.

### Job Descriptions/Policies

#### **Job Title: Director**

Role: Administrator

Reports To: Board of Directors

Currently Held By: Cristy O’Brien & Rachel Medeiros

**Job Function and Responsibilities:** The program directors serve as the educational leaders, responsible for managing the policies, regulations, and procedures to ensure that all students are educated in a safe learning environment.

- Confer with parents and staff to discuss educational activities and policies, and children’s behavioral or learning problems.
- Set educational standards and goals, and help establish policies, procedures, and programs to carry them out.
- Monitor students’ progress, and provide children and guides with assistance in resolving any problems.
- Review and evaluate new and current programs to determine their efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance with state, local, and federal regulations, and recommend any necessary modifications.
- Recruit, hire, train, and evaluate primary and supplemental staff, and recommend personnel actions for programs and services.
- Prepare and maintain registration information, activity planning, volunteer outreach, accounting, or personnel reports and records for officials and agencies, or direct preparation and maintenance activities.
- Plan, direct, and monitor instructional methods and content of activities and lessons.
- Determine the scope of educational program offerings, and prepare drafts of program schedules and descriptions, to estimate staffing and facility requirements.
- Determine allocations of funds for staff, supplies, materials, and equipment, and authorize purchases.
- Lead or guide children through lessons or activities, and supervise free play.
- Review and interpret government codes, and develop procedures to meet codes and to ensure facility safety, security, and maintenance.
- When applicable, collect and analyze survey data, regulatory information, and demographic and employment trends, to forecast enrollment patterns and the need for curriculum changes.
- Write newsletters, handbooks, and other publications, and assist in the distribution of promotional literature about programs and facilities.
- Maintain community and social media presence with photos, events, print media, and advertisements.
- Prepare and submit grant proposals to solicit program funding.
- When applicable, inform businesses, community groups, and governmental agencies about educational needs, available programs, and program policies.
- When applicable, organize and direct committees of specialists, volunteers, and staff to provide technical and advisory assistance for programs.
- Continue to develop a Program Portfolio and align the learning goals in the areas of: Assessment, Family Engagement, Curriculum and Differentiated Learning.

*Qualifications: The director in a center where there is a full-time head teacher shall have experience in administration or professional preparation in a field appropriate for those who work with young children. The director in a center where there is a part-time head teacher shall meet one of the following:*

*Hold a Bachelor’s Degree and have completed at least four courses at the post-secondary level in Early Childhood Education and/or Child Development; minimum three years teaching experience pre-K/Kindergarten or grades 1-6*

*required; administrative experience a plus; proven leadership and interpersonal skills; must continue ongoing professional development.*

## **Job Title: Lead Guide**

Role: Education Coordinator

Reports To: Administrator/Director

Currently Held By: Cristy O'Brien & Rachel Medeiros

Job Function and Responsibilities: This position requires love, patience and respect for children, encourage the children to be independent and model for them appropriate manners and behaviors. Instruct children in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth:

The Education Coordinator reports directly to the Administrator/Director of the program. Essential Duties and Responsibilities include the following

- Adhere to company and safety policies and procedures.
- Provide the children with a “prepared environment”
- Plan individual and/or group activities to stimulate growth of the children in social, emotional and academic areas.
- Encourage individual work time to promote independence as well as group work to promote socialization.
- Identify, select and modify work in the room to meet the needs of children with varying backgrounds, learning styles and special needs.
- Implement the progress of each child through individual lessons and recordkeeping.
- Conduct one parent/teacher conference per year unless additional reviews are deemed necessary.
- Establish and maintain cooperative working relationships with students, parents and co-workers.
- Participate in all open houses and programs.
- Continue to develop a Practitioners Portfolio and align the learning goals in the areas of Assessment, Family Engagement, Curriculum and Differentiated Learning.
- Other duties may be assigned.

*Qualifications: The Educational Coordinator/Head Teacher shall have a minimum of three years experience as a head teacher. The Educational Coordinator shall meet one of the following:*

*Hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development from an accredited or approved institution of higher education; and have a minimum of three months supervised teaching experience in a licensed/ approved early childhood program for the appropriate age level (student teaching may fulfill this requirement).*

## **Job Title: Guide**

Role: Educator

Reports To: Education Coordinator

Currently Held By: N/A

**Job Function and Responsibilities:** The Guide reports directly to the Education Coordinator. This position requires love, patience and respect for children. The guide will encourage the children to be independent and model for them appropriate manners and behaviors. The guide will also instruct children in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth by performing the following duties:

- The guide is responsible to the education coordinator/lead guide and will assist in establishing and maintaining a harmonious group.
- Will help in establishing and maintaining program culture, paying particular attention to the needs of students.
- Carefully observe and keep records on each student's individual progression through the program always being available to offer gentle guidance.
- Participate in staff meetings.
- Participate in all program events and conferences.
- Supervise the children outdoors and on playground.

**Responsibilities to the Education Coordinator:**

- To assist the lead guide with the children in their learning and understanding of the materials.
- To be informed and carry out duties as assigned by the lead guide
- To be familiar with the program policies and staff handbook.
- To inform the lead guide of any difficulties within the program, including behavior management, health, equipment needs, repair and maintenance.
- To meet with the lead guide to discuss goals for the program and individual students.
- Teach small group lessons based on art and science.
- Update child portfolios.

**Responsibilities to the Children and Parents:**

- Keep information confidential.
- Be professional and positive in all dealings with children and parents.
- Share all information from parents with lead guide.
- Allow the children to be as independent as possible.
- Assist with individual and/or group activities to stimulate growth of the children in social, emotional and academic areas.
- Be present at parent/teacher conference.
- Establish and maintain cooperative working relationships with children, parents and co-workers.

**Responsibilities to the Classroom: (Please refer to Daily Classroom Preparation)**

- Clean-up of the learning area. Ensuring that it is always tidy.
- Providing the children with a "prepared environment".
- Keep the learning area clean and inviting.

- Lead children to handwashing, snack and lunch while helping children to learn how to help themselves.
  - Allow children to be as independent as possible.
  - Actively include children in learning area maintenance and jobs: return all materials after use, tidy up after lunch (dirty laundry into laundry basket, lunch boxes placed in designated area, wash hands and mouths before rest or departure).
- Absence: Notify the administrator and education coordinator as soon as possible so that a substitute can be organized.

*Qualifications: A Guide at Elements Learning Collaborative shall meet one of the following: Hold a Bachelor's or Associate's degree in a related field such as child study, child psychology, early childhood special education, elementary education, or nursing; or Hold a Child Development Associate credential (CDA); CPR/First Aid certification; A clear record through fingerprinting; Have the physical capacity to work with preschool aged children; Keep up with professional development – 20 hours per school year.*

## **Job Title: Assisting Guide / Volunteer**

Role: Guide Assistant / Volunteer

Reports To: Education Coordinator

Currently Held By: N/A

Job Function and Responsibilities: A caring, patient person who is serving as a support for other guides and children. Some duties may include:

- Being familiar with ELC's mission, policies and procedures, as outlined in this document.
- Greeting children and parents. Reminding parents to sign in.
- Assisting the children with arrival routine. Remind them to put their belongings in cubbies, get their puddle pants on, put their name stone in the basket. Allowing children to complete tasks that they are capable of and guiding children through task rather than doing for them.
- Participating enthusiastically in group activities such as morning songs and circle sharing.
- Setting up the tablecloth and stumps for snack/lunch, or helping children wash hands before meals.
- Gently and quietly reminding children to stay seated while they eat.
- Guiding children into and during bathroom time. Supporting children as they remove boots, neatly sort gear and wait for bathroom. Reminding them of the guidelines for bathroom use: quiet voices, respecting privacy, washing and drying hands and waiting quietly for others.
- Reading stories to children.
- Supervising children during lessons and free play.
- Allowing children to be as independent as possible, warmly encourage children to try first and then ask for help.
- Setting up materials as directed by administrators
- Cleaning up materials at the end of the day, as directed by administrators.
- Greeting parents, guardians, and siblings during pick up, reminding parents to sign out.

Absence: Notify the administrator and education coordinator as soon as possible so that a substitute can be organized.

*Qualifications A teacher assistant shall be at least 18 years old; and have or be working toward a high school diploma or equivalent; and participate in an ongoing early childhood staff development program; Must have First Aid and CPR training yearly*

## Being Outstanding

### Criteria of Exceptional Teacher/Guide at Elements Learning Collaborative:

Being an exceptional director/guide is an ongoing journey. The following components provide an overview of the road to becoming exceptional!

- ★ They truly enjoy being in the company of children, even when things become difficult.
- ★ They are humble enough to admit their mistakes and apologize when necessary.
- ★ They are consistent with the Staff Handbook guidelines.
- ★ They maintain a beautiful, clean, and functional workspace for learners.
- ★ They collaborate with family volunteers to support them in working with other learners, ensuring that they understand our policies and procedures.
- ★ They have an insatiable work ethic that blends knowledge, teamwork, creativity and intuition for constant improvement in supporting learning.
- ★ They know themselves well and are able to reconcile stress and frustration in a healthy manner.
- ★ They are honest with themselves and others and are open to new ideas and suggestions.
- ★ They recognize their limitations, set professional development goals, and work candidly with other staff members to improve in these areas.
- ★ They have outstanding group awareness and consistently know where learners are and what they are working on, both inside and outside the workspace.
- ★ They take great care in organizing/orchestrating a lesson.
- ★ They understand the use, function, and objectives of all of the materials in the workspace and seek out new ways to use those materials to connect learning to children.
- ★ They are independently reading and internalizing the beliefs and philosophies relevant to our mission and vision.
- ★ They enthusiastically get to know each learner and take pride in knowing how to support him/her in connecting to new information by blending strengths and interests in this process. (This includes knowing the child outside of the school day.)
- ★ They are constantly learning by reading and conceptualizing educational best practices, and they share this information with other co-workers (ex. reading current articles/books, visiting other nature programs, talking with other teachers, etc.).
- ★ They are active participants in all staff meetings and share their ideas and input to help ELC achieve its mission.
- ★ They follow through with all staff responsibilities in a timely fashion.
- ★ They meet with their Director weekly to discuss planning, areas of improvement and overall learning.
- ★ They recognize the importance of being consistent in their actions and being intentional in



their wording with children to support self-discipline and self-regulation.

★ They love what they do and bring joy to the children.

## Professional Development

All salaried employees shall complete a minimum of two hours per month or twenty hours per year of training. The Director shall be responsible for developing and overseeing an individualized training plan for each staff person. Training shall be in areas relevant to the care of young children and shall be directed towards transferable skills rather than center specific knowledge. This may consist of workshops/seminars conducted by recognized professionals in the field; professional conferences; courses at an approved or accredited institution of higher education; or other similar professional activities such as classroom observation, reading relevant books and articles, etc.

## Dress/Attire

Simple professional attire; no sweatpants, low waisted pants, low cut shirts, concert or political shirts, clothing with holes, or anything considered inappropriate by the administrator. Be prepared to kneel and sit on the ground and avoid jewelry and bright nail polish that can be a distraction to the children.

Appropriate outdoor gear is needed; pants with pockets, boots and gloves. Staff must model proper self-care by wearing seasonally appropriate clothes. Clothes must not hinder the staff members ability to be involved in children's play. Be prepared to walk through briars, mud, puddles, rocky areas, etc.

## Staff:Child Ratios

Staff must maintain the appropriate staff:child ratio at all times. The staff:child ratio is no less than 1 staff member for every 5 children at all times. This rule is all-encompassing and covers the tent area, fields and all Round The Bend grounds. When in a field, the staff member must remain no more than 20 yards distance from children. When using the Dirt Hill, an adult must be at the foot of the hill if 2 or more children aged 5 or under, or 4 or more children of any age are on the hill. All staff members are responsible for the day-to-day safety of every child. All unsafe conditions must be brought immediately to the attention of the Administration. All major injuries(head injuries, excess bleeding, breaks/sprains/fractures, 911 calls) must be documented using the Injury Report Form. All minor injuries (cuts, scrapes, scratches, head bumps) must be documented in the child's folder.

## Staff Attendance

Attendance and timeliness are crucial parts of the consistency and well being of the program and more specifically the children.

All staff should be on time and work according to their contract. Each staff member should prepare a written plan with the Director after three (3) episodes of tardiness.

Staff should contact the Director for the list of substitutes, so they may arrange cover for their

absence.

**Beginning of the year set-up:** All salaried staff members are expected to report to work at the Round The Bend Farm on the Friday and Monday before the first Tuesday of the session to setup materials, cubbies, and curriculum planning. Elements Nature Program has seasonal sessions with varying start dates, staff must be familiar with the upcoming schedules. We will have one staff meeting the day before program opens from 3-5 pm.

**End of the session clean-up:** The last Friday of each session from 2-5 is for clean-up, inventory of materials, and put materials in storage. All staff is expected to arrive at 2pm and stay until 5pm or until everything is put away, stored and cleaned up. The director will meet with potential parents, staff, and conduct student interviews on an appointment basis during throughout the year.

**Staff meetings:** Staff planning meetings will be held on the first Monday of each month from 4-6pm. All staff is required to attend. Minutes will be kept at each meeting. If you must be absent due to an emergency or illness you are responsible for the content of the meeting and any policy changes or procedures discussed. Special meetings may be scheduled occasionally. No staff meetings on holidays, breaks, and snow days. The director will reschedule staff meetings when necessary due to holidays, illnesses, emergencies, or snow days.

Staff are required to be on-site on the Friday and Monday before each session for set up and planning. Staff meetings will happen the Monday before each session from 3-5pm. Attendance is mandatory.

**Participation/Attendance at Program Functions:** The program may sponsor evening workshops, meetings, open houses, and family field trips during the year. The faculty is expected to participate in related meetings and events. Faculty will participate in the creation of a program year timeline in order to avoid conflicts of activities requiring our presence.

Attendance is required at all program wide functions including but not limited to: Open House (when applicable), New Family Meeting (when applicable), Child's Work Night/Family Exploration Nights.

**Snow Day Attendance:** We close the school for snow days when the Public Schools of Dartmouth and/or Westport close for snow days. Staff is not expected to report to work on snow days. If the program is delayed, report to director for delayed staff arrival time. We understand that you will base your attendance on your individual family, safety and location.

## Break Policy

Employees are able to request a 20 minute break, if they are feeling physically or emotionally worn-out. Breaks can be a walk around the premises, or some time spent in the library. Lunch and snacks are to be had with the children at the set time.

## Eating/Drinking Policies

Staff members are expected to be role models at all times including meal time in which they should use this as an opportunity to sit with the children, place a napkin in their lap and model good manners. Since the staff eats at the same table as the children, the staff is expected to promote healthy nutritional choices and bring lunches that follow the same nutritional guidelines as the parents follow in the parent handbook. Candy, gum, soda, and fast foods are not permitted on the premises. Staff must also model an eco-friendly lifestyle by using reusable food and drink containers. Staff must take extra care with hot beverages such as tea and coffee. No smoking is allowed on the premises, or during breaks. Children are very sensitive to the smell of smoke and secondhand smoke even on clothing is not safe around children.

## Staff Absence

Advance notice must be given to the Administration if you are to be absent. Consecutive days for non-illness reasons, even if unpaid, are unacceptable unless used for an emergency such as family illness. Personal days just before or after a closed school holiday are unfair to other staff members and the children and cannot be permitted unless the administrator gives prior approval.

## Substitute Policy

Volunteer substitute names, addresses, and telephone numbers will be maintained on a sub list in the office. Staff who will be absent for approved personal days are responsible to notify the administrator as early as possible so that a sub may be called in by the administrator if needed.

## Sick Days

An employee calling in sick just before or after a closed school holiday or their personal day will be required to submit a physician's note in order both to return to work and to be paid for the day(s). Absence for illness of more than three days' duration needs a physician's note in order to return to work.

## Vacation

Employees are asked to plan vacation time when the school is closed. In the event of an illness, the substitute guidelines must be followed. All absences must be properly reported on Absence Report forms.

## Time Off/Personal Days

When an employee uses personal days for non-emergency situations, it is the responsibility of the employee to pre-arrange for a substitute and to complete an "Absence Report" at least three business days prior to the date of absence, to receive authorization. The employee receives a payroll deduction based on his/her daily rate of pay for unauthorized days taken.

## Employee Evaluation

The Director shall devise appropriate instruments of employee evaluation and will annually

undertake the evaluation of all education and staff employees. These reviews will take place before new contracts of employment are issued and shall take place no later than April 15 of each year. The owner shall keep records of all employee evaluations for each teacher, assistant/teacher aid, specialty teacher and other employee.

## Grievance Procedures

A grievance is a work-related problem or condition that an employee believes to be unfair or inequitable. It is hoped that any such grievance will be settled informally in conversation between the employee and the Administrator. This should occur within three working days of the alleged act.

- If such a discussion does not resolve the matter or a discussion appears to be impractical, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Administrator.
- The written complaint should be filed in five working days of the alleged incident or knowledge of the incident. The written complaint should contain the specific details describing the alleged violation of the program, law or personnel policy, and the desired remedy.
- Within five working days of the receipt of the written complaint, the immediate supervisor will respond in writing with a copy to the administrator.
- Decisions about complaints against faculty members will be made by the administrator.

## Grounds for Termination

Termination of contracted employees requires the following steps:

- The employee must be warned in writing. The employee must sign the warning. A plan for remediation or evaluation will be discussed.
- Termination of employment may and will be immediate.
- Confidentiality must be maintained by administration

## Resignation

An employee desiring to resign shall submit a written resignation to the Administrator. Contracted employees must give a minimum of three calendar months notice.

## Exit Interview

A terminated employee will have an exit interview with the Administrator whenever possible. Except in the cases of layoffs and/or extraordinary circumstances the exit interview will be held on the employees last day of employment. The employee must complete a separation process form before the final paycheck is issued.

### 3.0 Discipline Policies

## Discipline Prohibitions:

Staff shall not hit, grab, push, or pull the children or engage in any form of corporal punishment.

Children shall not be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, physical punishment, threats or verbal abuse, including yelling, screaming or derogatory remarks.

Children shall not be ignored or neglected.

Children shall not be deprived of meal, snacks, physical activity or outdoor play as a reward or behavior consequence. Exceptions may only be made if specifically states in a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

Children shall not be punished or verbally shamed for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.

Staff shall not physically restrain children, without prior consent given by a parents signature in the Parent Handbook. Children being restrained for their or others safety, will be treated with patience, respect and physical care to prevent any undue physical harm.

## Approach to Behavior Management

At all times each child should be treated with respect and understanding. Below are some guides to positive communication and discipline.

We believe that the people who work with young children on a regular basis must be sensitive, warm, caring, and knowledgeable about child development. Staff must be authentic role models for interactions with others and display a sincere enthusiasm for active learning.

The educational philosophy of our program is that a child's social & cognitive ability will develop in a healthy and positive way through active involvement in self-chosen tasks and the development of self-control, self-monitoring and self-reflection. Things that can help prevent or limit behavior difficulties include:

- Clear organization of the physical environment;
- Consistency and predictability of the daily schedule;
- The indirect manner of teaching or guiding interpersonal skills through expected and unexpected behaviors;
- Giving children sincere and specific praises, or reminding them that you enjoy their company, when their "cups" seem empty.

Following appropriate redirection or talk mediation, suggest alternative activities.

Persistent misbehavior in a group setting may be dealt with by temporary pause or step away from the group or trigger. Behavioral expectations are made very clear and the child is asked if he/she is ready to return to the group. A child who struggles consistently with the same behavior may need help understanding and exploring their feelings. Help the child identify their emotions, by asking how they felt; "Were you mad when he took the stick you were using?". Avoid telling children how they feel, by using suggestive phrasing such as "It *looked to me* like you were frustrated because she wasn't listening". Allow them to correct you if your assumption is wrong, and listen intently to a

child who is explaining themselves.

Let the child know that their emotions are real and valid, and gently show them how to deal with them in constructive ways with kind words rather than physical responses. Redirection is best, after meeting the child with sympathetic acknowledgement of their feelings.

If the behavior persists, parents will be notified and action will be taken. The administrator will be notified of persistent, inappropriate behavior and will work with the parents in regards to outside referrals and additional behavior management programs.

**Under no circumstances shall any child be subjected to corporal punishment in any manner upon the body or to verbal abuse .**

Children are encouraged to express their feelings and opinions in a non-judgmental atmosphere, and adults use active listening and empathic understanding to help interpret a situation with those involved. The teacher sets the tone for bringing the child into harmony by avoiding harsh words, bribes, and generalizations. As children feel accepted for who they are and what they feel, they develop positive self-esteem. The happier children are with themselves, the more likely they are to reach out and interact cooperatively with others.

For minor, nonchalant misbehaviors, gentle redirection toward work, which will re-engage the interest of the student, is often all that is necessary.

For recurring, minor misbehavior, a teacher may temporarily limit the child's choice of workspace and/ or quietly discuss the impact of such behavior on class materials or on other children's feelings.

For more serious misbehaviors, staff members will immediately intervene to protect the child from the hurtful consequences of his/her own actions, to ensure the safety of others, and to prevent serious damage to the environment. The child may be temporarily removed from the group activity to reflect with a teacher on what happened and on what s/he can do to remedy the situation. A phone call or conference must be convened with the parents to inform and decide together an appropriate course of action, if follow-up is needed.

## Positive Behavior Management Language

**State suggestions or directions in a positive form .**

A positive suggestion tells a child what to do instead of pointing out what not to do. If a child has already done what they should not do or is about to demonstrate inappropriate behavior, she/he needs help in getting another idea of action. We give the child help when we direct attention to what we want them to do.

For example, "Keep your hands out at your sides" will help the child who is in danger of losing balance better than "Be careful!" or "Stop jiggling!" Here we tell the child what to do, not point out what they are doing wrong. Staff should also avoid phrases that point out what we do not want, such as "Instead of making a mess, let's keep things on the table" or "When you throw the dirt it can get it peoples eyes". If the goal is to explain the consequence of their actions, we can explain in a positive way, such as "Keeping the sand close to the ground keeps it out of our eyes".

A positive direction is less likely to create resistance than a negative one. The statement is constructive rather than limiting and interfering. If the child is doing the action to annoy us, we emphasize the positive and thereby reduce the attention and importance of the negative aspect of the child's behavior. Children are very sensitive to the tone of voice that we use, and showing frustration or impatience in our voice is more likely to bring resistance, and feed the fire of the child whose goal is to annoy.

Sometimes misbehavior is only negative because it is inappropriate to the time and place. For example, running is not wrong, but outside is where running should happen, not inside. By simply phrasing the redirection positively, we withhold judgment of right and wrong when it is not necessary to draw attention to it.

Examples:

- *“Throw your ball over here” instead of “Don’t hit the window.”*
- *“Place blocks carefully on the floor” instead of “Don’t drop them on Billy.”*
- *“Take little bites to swallow them better” instead of, “Don’t put so much in your mouth.”*
- *“The table is a workspace, you can sit on the ground or on a stump” instead of “Get off the table.”*

**Give the child a choice when you intend to leave the situation up to him/her .**

Choices are legitimate. With increasing maturity one makes an increasing number of decisions. We accept that being able to make an appropriate choice develops maturity. There are decisions that a child is not ready to make because of his/her limited capacities and experience. We must be careful to avoid offering a choice when we don't actually want the child to decide (i.e. Asking “do you want to put your coat on?” when it is necessary that the child do so). We offer choices when, no matter which choice the child chooses, we are content with that choice. Questions are often hidden demands for compliance. Be careful that you offer legitimate choices. A child is not free to decide to hurt someone or something. S/he can decide, however, to choose between options for alternative settings when needed.

Avoid questions that suggest a consequence of their action. Do not ask if they want to receive a consequence or punishment, or try to highlight the negativity of the consequence for them. Questions that are used to make a point or to threaten a consequence, are not in best practice. Tone of voice and word choice becomes especially important here because there is an important difference between “This seems (stressful, overwhelming, too exciting, scary, very upsetting) for you. Do you want to take a break from this, so we can sit and relax for a minute?” vs “Do you want to have to sit over there, away from your friends?” It is always important for the adult to show genuine sympathy for a child's big emotions, as well as understanding that children may break a rule, or misbehave in the same way many, many times before they develop another way to express a particular emotion or feeling.

**Use your voice as a teaching tool .**



We have known individuals who think that the louder they speak, the greater their chances are of controlling behavior. It may be necessary to speak firmly or seriously, but it is never necessary to raise one's voice unless there is imminent danger. The most effective speech is simple, direct, and slow. In fact, firm and/or serious messages ought to be delivered to children in a volume slightly lower than conversational volume to make it easy for the child to focus on the message. Speech can easily convey emotion and they can easily go into fight or flight mode when they're being spoken to harshly or loudly. Flight may not always be physical fleeing, but auditorily fleeing by tuning out or agreeing or nodding before the message is complete.

Though we are in an open space, and children are often playing independently without staff beside them, we must take care to deliver messages to children by walking over to them, and speaking calmly and quietly. It is best practice to move nearer to the children and teachers to whom you are speaking. Unless children are in danger or a whole group is being addressed, and/or the staff member is unable to move closer because of an existing interaction with another child.

Speech conveys emotion as well as ideas. Children are sensitive to tonal quality, the tightness in a voice, the facial appeal. They understand fear and anger, annoyance or friendliness more from how you say something than from what you actually say. They are also more apt to respond in desirable ways when our tone and emotion convey understanding, helpfulness, and patience.

The teacher sets a pattern for others in his/her speech. If the teacher uses a harsh voice, children will later imitate the teacher's voice tones. Think carefully and use words that will best achieve the desired response from the children. If you are angry, calm yourself first and then use clear, quiet words.

**Avoid trying to change behavior by methods that can cause children to lose self-respect, such as shaming or labeling behavior with a negative judgment .**

It takes time to learn constructive ways of guiding behavior. The first step is to eliminate the destructive patterns in use. We must discard gestures, expressions, tones of voice, as well as words that convey the impression that the child should feel ashamed of him/herself, or that they are doing the wrong thing. It is hard to change one's behavior unless one feels respect for oneself. The young child is especially dependent on feeling that others respect him/her.

All children, at times, behave in ways that are undesirable, unacceptable or inappropriate. Do not add to the child's burden by passing judgment or labeling their behavior for them. Labeling behavior with a judgmental term such as "naughty", "bad", "selfish", "whiny", "babyish", "rude", or "disrespectful" fails to take the situation and the reasons for such behavior into account, and also is irrelevant in helping to change the behavior into more positive action. Labels will only encourage continued and possibly worse behavior. They do not build self-respect. Children easily interpret a description of their behavior as a description of themselves, and defining their undesirable behavior for them can make them feel badly about themselves, hurt their feelings, or even become angry with you. All of which make it harder for them to manage their emotions and/or learn the desired behavior. Even labeling children with these terms, or others, in our heads or with other staff, can end up creeping into our own interactions with children. If children hear in our tone or our words, that



we expect them to misbehave, they will be more likely to follow that existing pattern of behavior. Such as; “Last time you knocked everything over and made a big mess, you need to be careful this time”, or “I need to make sure you heard me because this has been a problem for you”. Again, tone conveys a lot, be careful not to show irritation with a child’s misbehavior before it has even happened. Forgive the child for past misbehaviors, be ready for a gentle and effective response for the next time they display the same behavior. It often takes many consistently gentle, simple and sympathetic responses to change behavior. For children who do need a specific reminder of expectations, do so gently and with a tone that conveys confidence that the child can succeed in following the rule or responding appropriately. This works best if the child is talked to individually, while staff is kneeling or crouching at their eye level, and given a quiet reminder such as; “If you feel like you want to throw the dirt, you can throw it down on the ground, or walk over to an empty space to throw it in the air”.

A child will be best helped if we accept him/her as they are, and know that they are indeed doing the best of which they are capable. Good hearted, respectable and well meaning adults cannot be expected to never exhibit undesirable behaviors, nor can we expect it of our youngest. In fact, the goal is not prevent future misbehaviors but to lessen their frequency and to guide children through their emotions and behaviors while creating a safe place where they can practice calming themselves, speaking in effective, respectful ways, and carrying out the expected behaviors.

### **Responding to big emotions**

Try to make it possible for the child to find some success, rather than reproofing him/her for not living up to our standards every moment.

Sometimes voicing the emotion a child appears to be experiencing is enough for the child to relax and try again with renewed effort: “I see that you are angry because the puzzle piece doesn’t seem to fit. How about if you take a deep breath and try again slowly like this...” Now is not the time for a lecture about safety—now is the time to reduce frustration and acknowledge feelings.

### **Avoid motivating a child by making comparisons between one child and another or by encouraging competition.**

Competitive schemes for getting children to dress more quickly or to clean up better may have some undesirable effects. Children who are encouraged to be competitive are very likely to quarrel more with one another. In any competition someone always loses, and she/he likely to feel hurt and resentful. Even the winner may be afraid of failing next time, or she/he may feel an unjustified superiority if the contest was an unusual one. Competition does not build positive social feelings.

Competition not only contributes to negative social relationships but also creates problems within the child himself. We live in a highly competitive society, it is true, but the young child is not ready to enter into much competition until his concept of himself as an adequate person has developed enough so that he can stand the strains and the inevitable failures that are part of competition.

Children should not feel that their only chances for getting attention and approval depend on being “first” or “beating” someone or being the “best.” They should feel sure of acceptance whether they succeed or fail. Even disapproval of children who are not on par, or equals with their peers, can

make them feel inadequate or incapable. Avoid comparisons such as “Everyone else is sitting quietly and listening” or listing out who has already completed the requested task, or is capable of behaving a certain way.

**Redirection is most effective when consistent with the child’s motives or interests .**

If the child is throwing a ball dangerously near a window, for example, we can suggest a safer place to throw it. If she/he throwing something out of anger, we can suggest an acceptable way of draining off angry feelings— like throwing into an empty field, kicking a ball into a net, or jumping on a wood plank. In the first case, his interest is in throwing and in the second case it is in expressing his anger. Our suggestions for acting differently will take into account the different meaning in his behavior. We will always try to suggest something that meets the needs he is expressing in his behavior. Often times, misbehavior directed towards other children is a child’s misguided attempt to interact. They may be embarrassed to ask to join, worried about rejection, or unsure of what to say. Quietly ask them if they’re interested in joining the play, and suggest phrasing for them to use. The other children may also need guidance on how to welcome someone else into play.

Effective redirection faces the situation and does not avoid or divert. The redirection should be relevant to what the child is interested in at the moment. At times when a child wants something that is not available, the staff member should first acknowledge the child’s desire (to play in a closed area, use an item that’s being used by someone else) and ask about their feelings about not being able to have it; “Does it feel unfair?”, “Is it hard to wait, or are you ready to...( desirable behavior)?”, “I can tell that you really want to ... Are you angry that I have to (help you find something else to use, make sure you stay safe, stop you)”. Truly listen to the child when they explain their feelings. One goal is to create a space where children feel comfortable to share their feelings, no matter how “wrong” they may be.

If a child thinks that something is unfair, but with our mature, adult understanding we can see clearly that it is in fact fair, we must still show sympathy, and understanding for that child and their experience. Before redirecting, the staff member should show sympathy for the child’s disappointment, anger, or difficulty in restraining themselves, and remind the child when they will be able to do what they wish(within safety limits). Once the child has been heard, understood, and reassured, they can be open to the redirection, and more capable of controlling themselves. Redirection should help the child face his problem by showing him how he can appropriately get his needs met, not by diverting him before his feelings have been explored with the guidance of a gentle adult.

**Effectiveness of a suggestion may depend largely on its timing .**

The timing of a suggestion may be as important as the suggestion itself. Through experience and insight we improve our ability to give a suggestion at the moment when it will do the most good. When a suggestion fails to bring the desired response, it may be due to the timing.

Advice given too soon deprives the child of a chance to try to work things out for himself. It deprives him of the satisfaction of solving his own problem. It may very well be resented. A suggestion made too late may have lost any chance of being successful. The child may be too

discouraged or too irritated to be able to act on it.

Help at the right moment may mean a supporting hand before the child loses his balance. This could mean mediating before two children hit each other over a toy, or the suggestion of a new activity before the group grows tired and disorganized.

Give the child the minimum of help in order that she/he may have the maximum chance to grow in independence .

Giving the minimum of help may mean reminding a child to loosen their laces and put their finger at the heel, instead of putting their shoes on for them. It may mean giving him time enough to work out a problem rather than stepping in and solving it for him. Children like to solve problems, and it is hard to estimate how much their self-confidence is increased by independent solving of problems. Opening a child's lunch container for him may be an effective way of getting him to eat, but it deprives him of the chance to practice doing it himself. It is important to give a child the minimum of help in order to allow him to grow by himself as much as possible. At times, the child may not have the energy to do what we know they are capable of; we all need help sometimes, even with things we are capable of doing ourselves. We must be in tune with the child's momentary capabilities to be able to determine what the minimum is.

In leaving the child free to satisfy his strong growth impulse to be independent, we support his feeling of confidence in himself. "I can do this all by myself," or, "Look what I can do," are ways children express their pride, which only comes from sufficient independent practice. When a child asks for help, we listen to his request and answer it in a way that will make him less afraid of being helpless and dependent on us. We remind them that "This seems hard for you, but the more you practice, the better you will get". Sometimes we need to remind them of a time when they couldn't do something, that they now can, so they can gain confidence in their abilities.

**Make your suggestions effective by reinforcing them when necessary.**

Sometimes it is necessary to add several techniques together in order to be effective. A verbal suggestion, even though given positively, may not be enough in itself. "It's time to come to the table for lunch," may need to be reinforced by another suggestion such as, "I'll help you put the blocks away," if the child is reluctant to leave his play, and then reinforced by actual help in cleaning up. A glance at the right moment, moving nearer a child, a verbal suggestion, actual physical help are all techniques, and one must judge when they are to be used. Give only the minimum help necessary, but give as much help as may be necessary. If children who need someone to physically walk them to get their lunch, are only given verbal directions, they may continue to listen and appear as though they are disobeying, but in fact, they aren't getting their needs met by the adult. They are not yet able to make the internal decision to stop their activity and follow the verbal direction, or they are momentary unable to, due to external distraction, or internal emotions (sadness, excess energy, etc).

When several children are playing together, some will accept suggestion more readily than others for different reasons. Success with one child will reinforce one's chances of success with others. It is wise to consider which child to approach first when one wishes to influence a group.

One of the most common faults of parents and teachers is that of using too many words, of giving

two or three directions when one would have been sufficient. Anxiety and insecurity often take the form of a child's "deafness" to too many words. It is important to have confidence in the child's ability to hear and respond to one suggestion, given only once. It is better to add different techniques together until one is successful rather than to depend solely on words.

Forestalling is the most effective way of handling problems; learn to foresee and prevent. Success in forestalling problems comes with experience. It takes time to learn what to expect in certain types of situations with particular children or combinations of children.

Learning to prevent problems is important because the child who approaches others by doing something annoying may actually not have the verbal skills yet to successfully join a group of children. A child has an opportunity to learn acceptable ways of approaching others if/when the teacher, observing a child having difficulty joining a group, says to the child, "If you'd like to play with these children, you might ask Michael if he needs another block," or some other suitable suggestion.

A teacher may also sometimes need to move into a situation to give more support or to interpret for the group what the children's intentions might be, or even to help the child accept her/his failure and find another place where he/she might have a better chance of success. If a teacher allows a child to consistently fail, the child will lose the opportunity to learn a way to interact constructively in social situations.

**When limits are necessary, they should be clearly defined and consistent.**

There are limits beyond which a child cannot be allowed to go. The important thing is to be sure that the limits set are necessary and that they are clearly defined ahead of time. If a child is to understand what the limits are, these limits must be clearly and simply defined for her/him. When we, as educators, are sure that a limit is necessary and that the child understands it, we can maintain it with confidence. When responding to a behavior in the moment, we need not explain in detail why the rule is so, unless the child is genuinely curious. "We need to keep you safe", "We need to keep the other children safe" is sufficient when responding to an unsafe behavior, especially if it is a typical behavior for that child. If they do not ask for explanation, we can assess their understanding and briefly explain what the danger is if necessary. Then we redirect to the positive statement of what we want the child to do. We repeat these statements calmly, and as often as needed, adding other strategies if needed. Lecturing a child on the dangers or negative implications of their actions, is not effective, and can potentially create shame.

The adult must be the one who is responsible for limiting children so that they do not come to harm, or destroy property. Children will feel more secure with adults who take on this responsibility.

**Use the most strategic positions for supervising.**

When working with children, there must be always be the proper adult:child ratio in order to maintain safety. If working with one child, a staff member must position themselves so they can easily see the others in their area. When children are in a spacious area, staff must be alert, and move around to place themselves where they can supervise all the children. Staff must refrain from group conversation that will put them too far from the children. Walkie-Talkie use is especially important

in spacious areas so that all children are accounted for and staff do not have to leave a group of children to talk to one another.

Where one stands or sits is important in forestalling or preventing difficulties. A staff member standing between two groups engaged in different activities can make sure that one group does not interfere with the other and can forestall trouble.

Stepping between two children who are growing irritated with each other may prevent an attack, but it cannot be done if the staff member is on the other side of the room. A suggestion/direction is more likely to be acceptable if the presence of a staff member can reinforce it. Trouble is seldom avoided by a suggestion given from a distance.

If the staff member is standing near the cubbies, it will be easy for them to see that a child puts away their belongings before s/he goes on to play. If the staff member is not beside the cubbies they are not in a position to act effectively if the child chooses to disregard the reminder.

Choose the position for standing or sitting that will best serve your purposes, and check the spots that are strategically good for supervision.

The health and safety of the children is the primary concern.

The effective teacher/guide must be constantly alert to things that affect health, such as seeing that drinking cups are not shared, that materials that have been in a child's mouth are washed, that clothing is adjusted to changes in temperature or activity, and that children's clothes are changed if they are wet.

Staff must also be alert to things that concern the safety of children. Being alert to safety means observing and removing sources of danger, giving close supervision to children who are playing together on high places, or to children who are using such potentially dangerous things as hammers, saws, and shovels. The point is familiar but clear-cut and important. Never relax your watchfulness.

## Conflict Resolution

Elements Nature Program staff will use appropriate behavioral management techniques including:

- Maintaining proper adult-child ratio
- Redirection
- Positive, descriptive phrase
- Choices
- Positive reinforcement
- Teaching and Re-teaching appropriate behaviors
- Role-Modeling
- Natural Consequences without shame
- Adult proximity to children with problematic behaviors

— Removal from the group (Child sits out or sent home with continued support from parents.)

In the event of a child biting, hitting, or otherwise injuring another child or adult, the director will assess the adequacy of caregiver supervision and the context and environment in which the injury occurred . Assessment will include:

- Quality of relationship between the child and staff
- Staff knowledge of child’s needs, interests, routines, and preferences
- Environmental influences
- Layout of learning area (quiet centers, open spaces)
- Daily routines, transitions times, redirection

The child who was bitten or injured will be given immediate first aid, care, and concern by the HCS. The child with the challenging behavior will be taught in a caring and firm way that the behavior is unacceptable.

Once feelings and emotions have de-escalated the child will be asked to sit with the injured child offering emotional support. This will not be forced, and will be modeled by the adult if the child chooses not to partake. Modeling and instilling empathy is the goal. We ask the child who has caused the injury to ask the other child questions such as, “Does your body hurt?” “Can I get you anything?”

We, as teachers want to teach empathy . If we can teach that, we have done the most important job we will ever do . To help you reach our goal; a) Stay calm. b) Stop the biting/hitting/pushing. Get your body between the children. Say something like, “Hitting hurts people. I can’t let you hurt your friends.” c) Normally, no one is very hurt and normally there is a clear offender. Keep both parties proximate even if it means putting an arm around a child or holding their hand in a caring manner. d) Describe what you know to be true (e.g., “Susie is crying,” “I saw you take that from him,” “You hurt her.”). e) Draw the connection between cause and effect (e.g., “Susie is crying because you hit her,” “Johnny is mad because you took that from him,” “She screamed because you hurt her.”) f) Stop talking and wait... Let the children fill up that dead air. It sometimes takes awhile, especially for younger children to find words. It’s during this time that children will often spontaneously “apologize” by returning the taken item or attempting to hug their crying friend. g) Respond to whatever the offender says (even if they are trying to change the subject) by repeating what you know to be true and by drawing the connection between cause and effect. If the child clearly isn’t paying attention, grab that attention by asking clear yes-or-no questions (e.g., “Are you going to hit your friends?” “Are you going to take things from your friends?”)

Incident reports for the injured child will be completed by a Director with knowledge of the incident . See First-Aid section of Handbook, for guidance and requirements.

If biting/hitting becomes a habit for a child and ongoing positive guidance is not effective, it is time to set up a meeting with the child’s parents and the Director . During the meeting plan an approach



for addressing the behavior that can be applied consistently at home and at school.

Discuss and define the behavior and find the cause behind it. (For example, speech delay, attention seeking, frustration. A speech delay in a preschooler may cause the child to bite to express anger or frustration because they lack the language skills needed to express their feelings.)

Questions for parents to ask themselves: Has the child been eating at mealtimes. How much sleep has the child had at home? Has there been recent changes to the child's schedule at home? Is the child frustrated with a sibling at home? Does my child's speech seem to be understood by people besides family? Does my child have enough vocabulary to speak for themselves? Are my responses and behavior management techniques effective and respectful?

Parents may ask "What can I do at home?" Parents can never remove every frustration from their child's life, so they'll have to teach the child what to do instead of hitting and biting. It is also vitally important that, as parents, we don't make excuses for the child. Don't blame the child's action on another child and don't apologetically tell a parent, "he is just so tired!" That will teach the child that his/her behavior is justifiable and that he/she is not responsible for it. Let the parents know;

- Continue to help your child learn to speak for themselves.
- Have conversations with your child about hitting, biting etc., and what to do with their strong emotions instead.
- Make sure your child gets enough sleep each night. (An average 3-5 year old requires 10-13 hours of sleep per 24 hrs-including naps, if needed. An average 6-10 years old requires 9-12 hours of sleep per night.)
- Make sure your child is eating balanced meals. Added sugar in a child's diet can make them "crash", or be irritable and more likely to display unwanted behavior.

#### **Sending the child with unsafe behavior home for the day.**

When unsafe behavior, including toward oneself, peers, and/or teachers unsafe behavior continues throughout a day, week, or repeated over a period of time, Elements and the staff is unable to accommodate the child's needs, Elements' policy is to have the child picked up by their parents. Sending a child home helps us maintain a safe environment, for all the children attending. The priority must be safety. Often the child who shows aggressive behavior exhibits unsafe behavior is tired, frustrated or needing 1:1 attention. Going home allows the child's parents an opportunity to become immediately involved and work as a team with the teachers to help correct and teach acceptable behavior. Being sent home is not delivered as a punishment to the child, but as a way to help them get their needs met.

*Biting is less common in preschoolers (3-5) than toddlers (1-3). Once a child turns 3 years old biting may indicate other behavioral problems, especially if the biting incidents are frequent. When a preschooler bites, it may be due to something at home or at their child care program that is causing the child to be upset, frustrated, confused, or afraid. A preschooler may also bite to get attention or to act in self-defense. Because of the developmental nature of most biting, experts stress that biting is not something to blame on the child, parents, or teachers (Greenman & Stonehouse, 1994).*





## 4.0 General Information

### Hours of Operation/Schedule

During seasonal sessions of ENP hours of operation will vary slightly. ENP operates on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Parents must sign for both drop off and pick ups each day. A sign in/out sheet and pen are to be on a clipboard and used by the receiving staff member. Spring Elements Schedule is as follows:

- 8:00/8:30am Staff arrives
- 9:00am Children arrive
- 1pm Morning half-day children depart
- 3:00pm All children depart
- 3:30/3:45pm ENP closes, staff departs.

### Opening & Closing Procedures

#### Opening Procedures

The staff will arrive at 8/8:30 am to “open” and set-up for the day. Children will begin to arrive at 9am. There will be one staff member located near cubbies/sign-in sheet to greet parents and to assist children with sorting needed gear and unneeded gear, and one guide in the learning area greeting children.

Communication between the parents and teacher is essential to the safety and the best care of the child. Often the morning arrival time and afternoon dismissal time are quite busy for the teacher. Her primary focus is on the safety of the children so she should not hold a lengthy conversation at these times. Parents will be encouraged to email if they have a direct concern, so we may follow up with a phone call, email, or schedule a meeting if necessary. Phone conversations or teacher conferences are encouraged and best arranged outside of regular school hours.

Emergency phone calls should be made at any time and emergency calls will always be returned as soon as they are received. Parents are asked to fill out a form authorizing who is able to pick up their child from school and/or act on their behalf in case of an emergency. Children will only be released to people on this list.

#### Closing Procedures

Parents will begin picking children up at 4pm. Parents must sign children out before leaving. If there is an unexpected change in the person who is picking the child up, the Director must have prior confirmation from the parent who dropped off, before releasing the child to the adult picking up. A Director is required to remain with any and all children until they have been picked up by their

parent/guardian.

## Daily Classroom Preparation

Directors will be expected to carry out the following preparations and any others that are necessary

### Start-of-Day

- Bring necessary materials up from basement.
- Check that tent poles and stakes are safely in place.
- Arrange tarps, rugs, tables, etc.
- Set-up learning areas.
- Set out sign-in sheet, and daily plans.
- Hang puddle-pants in order.
- Fill the hand-washing jug.
- Make sure entrance area is inviting to children and parents.
- Add/Remove tent walls as needed.

### Mid Day

- Organize, put away necessary materials.
- Shake off blankets, set aside soiled blankets/towels.
- Set up afternoon learning areas.
- Hang puddle pants in order, wipe them clean if necessary.

### End-of-Day

- Wipe down furniture, roll up rugs and tarps.
- Wipe down and pack up puddle pants.
- Clean up materials, and store properly.
- Identify items left behind.
- Move all necessary items to the basement.
- Cover furniture with tarp if needed.
- Check the area for loose items and food.
- Add/Remove tent walls as needed.

## Payroll

Elements Nature Program is not set up for payroll at the present time. Our staff is fully volunteered organized and operated. Future payroll model may look like:

ENP follows a biweekly payroll, with pay dates on the first and fifteenth of each month. All employees will be paid on a 10 month (20 pay dates) schedule. All payroll will be processed through Direct Deposit. — Compensation is determined based on the staffing needs (where applicable) and communicated through the employment agreement. Pay rates will be discussed at the start of the Fall 2018 session. Pay raises will be addressed before the start of each seasonal session for the first two years of programming. Raises will be addressed annually after that time.

ENP Directors are full-time contracted positions. Salaries are negotiated at the start of each year. The 10 month full-time salary staff member includes two weeks paid vacation over the Winter break, and Summer break in accordance to our program calendar. Full-time staff shall be defined as working in the program for no less than 30 hours per week.

## 5.0 Health & Safety Policies and Procedures

### Health, Wellness & Safety

For consistency with children's Health and Wellness issues, each staff member should do the following:

- Be aware of all children's existing health conditions and allergies. If a child is running a fever or has another symptom as listed in the Family Handbook, separate him/her to await the arrival of his/her family or walk him/her to the infirmary area near the bathrooms where arrangements will be made for pick-up.
- If a child has a Health Plan or is taken to the infirmary, all support should be documented in the log.
- Evidence of any type of abuse or neglect must not be tolerated and must be reported to local authorities.
- Always put on exam gloves when treating or assisting a child with blood related injury, vomiting, or bowel and bladder control issue. All contaminated clothing should be placed in a plastic bag, zipped or tied and sent home.
- All staff members should follow the proper procedures when checking in or distributing medicines.
- All medicines will be stored properly out of reach of all children.
- Communicate safety issues to our Director.
- Communicate any incidents, complaints, and charges to the Director.
- Children shall not be deprived of meal, snacks, physical activity or outdoor play as a reward or behavior consequence.
- Children shall not be punished for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.

### Child Abuse Reporting

Staff of Elements Nature Program are required by law to immediately report, by telephone to the Massachusetts Department of Children & Families (DCF), any suspicious occurrences of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or child exploitation.

Any suspicious occurrences of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or child exploitation must be documented and dated with a written report, as well as contacting DCF.

*To report child abuse and/or neglect:*

*Weekdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm call the local DCF Area Office.*

*New Bedford: 508-910-1000 Fall River: 508-235-9800*

*Weekdays after 5:00 pm and 24 hours on weekends and holidays call the Child-At-Risk-Hotline 1-800-792-5200 [MA abuse reporting form](#)*

## First-Aid Procedures

First aid equipment for the less serious problems, e.g. common cuts, splinters, brush burn, shall be available. Both directors will carry a first aid kit with them at all times.

All staff members shall have knowledge of general first aid procedures.

Staff members are required to be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and have completed the Red Cross basic first aid course or the equivalent.

Injury Report: A written report shall be made to and signed by the parent on the day that an injury occurs. A copy of this report shall be placed in the child's record. The injury, first aid and parent communication shall be recorded in the center health log.

## Children with Special Health Care Needs

If there are children in the program who have special health care needs, specific health procedures shall be delivered, where appropriate, by a licensed/certified health professional or a staff person who has been trained to appropriately carry out such procedures. Such procedures may include, but not be limited to, Epipen, nebulizer, insulin injections, etc..

## Administration of Medication

Neither prescribed nor non-prescribed medications shall be administered to a child without written parental authorization. These written instructions shall include the name of the medication, circumstances under which it may be administered, dosage, and frequency of administration.

Any medication shall not be administered to a child without written order of a licensed physician (which may include the label on the medication) which indicates that the medicine is for a specified child and is in the original container.

All medications shall be administered by the Health Care Supervisor.

The center shall maintain, on a daily basis, a written record of every medication administered.

This record shall include:

- the child's name and dosage of medication administered;
- the date and time administered;
- the name and signature of the person who administered the medication;
- the name of the licensed physician prescribing the medication.
- In the event of an emergency, the daily log shall be transported with the child to the emergency treatment facility.
- Medications shall be stored in clearly labeled original containers, out of reach of children.
- Parents shall be advised that medications should be given at home whenever possible.

Storage of Potentially Dangerous Items All medical supplies, poisonous or toxic substances, and items of potential danger to children (cleaning supplies and equipment, paints, plastic bags, aerosols, etc.) shall be clearly labeled, locked and stored out of reach of children. *When possible, ENP uses Organic/All Natural/Non-Toxic products for safety of environment & children.*

## Staff Hygiene/Hand Washing

Staff shall wash their hands with liquid soap and warm running water as needed, and:

- after each toileting;
- after wiping a runny nose;
- before any food preparation or service.

Staff shall ensure that children wash their hands with liquid soap and warm running water as needed, and:

- after each toileting;
- before each meal or snack;
- after wiping or blowing their nose;
- after outdoor activities or returning from playground

## Children with Special Allergy/Nutritional Needs

For each child with special health care needs, food allergies or special nutrition needs, the program shall request the family to obtain from the child's health provider an individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care. The program shall protect children with food allergies and sensitivities from contact with the problem food. The program shall ask families of a child with food allergies to give consent for publicly posting information about that child's food allergy. If consent is given, then it shall post that information in the food preparation area and in the areas of the program the child uses so it is a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the program day. If consent for posting is not provided, then this information shall be shared with all relevant staff, including substitutes, to ensure that they are informed.

## Tick Policy

Ticks are small arachnids that feed on the blood of animals. They are most active from early spring through late summer but can be present and biting year-round. Ticks can carry a variety of diseases including Lyme Disease. Ticks can be very small, especially in the larvae and nymph stages, sometimes smaller than a speck of dirt or a poppy seed.

It is advised that parents provide consent for prompt tick removal if an ENP staff member

discovers a tick on a child. Transmission time of bacteria and virus from exposure to infection vary. The tick may have not been noted prior to arrival at ENP—thus lengthening the time of possible transmission. The Director or a staff person will still contact the parent by phone if possible before removal.

The ENP staff is trained in the best practice of tick removal. If they find a tick they will bring the child to a private spot to explain to the student the need for removal. The staff person will proceed with the 'tick kit' tools to remove the tick in a calm, efficient manner.

The ENP staff will use alcohol wipes on the bite area before and after removing the tick. They will use fine tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible, squeeze, and then exert slow, steady pressure upwards to remove it.

[http://www.tickencounter.org/prevention/tick\\_removal](http://www.tickencounter.org/prevention/tick_removal)

The tick will be taped to an index card and labeled with the child's name, the date, time and location on the body where it was removed. The card will be given to the parent/guardian at pick-up time.

A parent may choose to have the tick tested or just keep the card as a record. The complexities of tick testing are well described in this article from the Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services:

*Tick Identification and Testing Services:*

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/id/epidemiology/providers/tick/public-health-cdc-tickborne-identification-service.html>

All ticks removed from clothing or proximal area will be put in a container of alcohol to kill them. Children will be marked with a green circle on the bite location, so that parents may monitor for signs of concern.

## Emergency Procedures & Local Fire/Police

When calling 911 ENP Protocol is as follows:

If near buildings: One Director will quickly enter the RTB Education Center for the nearest landline to make a 911 call. The 911 caller will note the address of 92 Allens Neck Road, and the landmark of the sharp corner, the Holy Ghost grounds next door, and identify the small Audubon parking lot as the meeting point. The Director who is with the child will administer an EPIPEN if the child is experiencing anaphylaxis and remain in contact with the 911 caller via walkie-talkie, updating them about their condition. The Director with the child will also switch to Channel 1 to request one or two RTB team members who can assist with moving a child or supervising other children. The Assistant Guide will lead the other children in a "safe-circle", briefly discussing the situation and moving into a calming activity such as yoga or qigong away from the injured/ill child. If possible and safe to

move the child, the Director and/or RTB team member will bring the child to the top of the driveway/Audubon parking lot to meet an ambulance.

If away from buildings: One Director will switch to radio Channel 1 to have an RTB team member call 911 via landline. The other Director will stay with the child to monitor and assess the situation. EPIPEN will be administered if the child is experiencing anaphylaxis. The Assistant Guide will lead the other children in a “safe-circle” briefly discussing the situation and moving into a calming activity such as yoga or qigong away from the injured/ill child. The Director contacting RTB will also request for one or two team members to come and assist with removing a child from the area if needed, or supervising the children so that a Director may accompany the injured/unwell child. If possible and safe to move the child, the Director and/or RTB team member will bring the child to the top of the driveway/Audubon parking lot to meet an ambulance.

### Fire Drills

The administrator shall conduct at least one fire drill per month that they are in operation. Both obstructed and unobstructed drills shall be conducted. A record of such drills shall be maintained.

Children’s Evacuation Plans -Individualized evacuation plans for children with developmental delays and disabilities shall be in place when appropriate.

Round the Bend has an evacuation plan and diagram in place for emergency situations.

- MEMA’s Massachusetts Alerts smartphone app.
- MEMA’s Twitter or Facebook accounts and the social media accounts of public safety agencies in your community.
- MEMA's website: [www.mass.gov/mema](http://www.mass.gov/mema) and your local community government website.

### Local Emergency Contacts:

*Emergency Management Director: Edward Pimental (508) 999-0757*

*247 Russells Mills Road, Dartmouth, MA 02748*

In a Poison Emergency, call 1–800–222–1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911

Report a power outage to Desa Van Laarhoven, CEO of RTB

RIDEM Environmental Police

Phone: (401) 222–3070

*South Dartmought Police Department*

Address: 249 Russells Mills Rd, South Dartmouth, MA 02748

Phone: (508) 910-1700

*South Dartmouth District 1 Fire Department*

<http://www.dartmouthfire.com/Pages/index>

Address: 10 Bridge St, South Dartmouth, MA 02748

Phone: (508) 996-1596



## Websites

Regional Center for Poison Control & Prevention: [www.maripoisoncenter.com](http://www.maripoisoncenter.com)

American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

FEMA: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

RIEMA: [www.riema.ri.gov](http://www.riema.ri.gov)

US Coast Guard: [www.uscg.mil/news/stormcenter](http://www.uscg.mil/news/stormcenter)

National Weather Service: [www.weather.gov/alerts/ri.html](http://www.weather.gov/alerts/ri.html)

DHS-Homeland Security: [www.dhs.gov/dhspublic](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic)

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## Staff Handbook: Agreement

Thank you for reviewing this document. Your time and assistance are greatly appreciated. Please sign below, acknowledging that you have thoroughly read the Staff Handbook and understand the policies and procedures within. Please let us know if there are any policies or topics you would like us to address. If you are confused about any policy or content within, it is your responsibility to obtain clarification.

Thank you!

-Rachel & Cristy

Employee Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Director's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_