

# Porter Pals

Preschool Program

*Playing and Learning Since 1993!*

## Family Handbook

### 2017 - 2018



## Welcome!

We are so happy to be working with your family this year.

This handbook is intended to answer some of your questions about your child's program, and to communicate some important information. We will also be sending newsletters and articles home throughout the year, in an effort to keep the lines of communication open. We hope that all of this information will be helpful to you. Please let us know if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Off we go!

## Our Team

**Room 307:** Mrs. Barbara Coviello, Teacher  
Mrs. Eileen Paulhus, Paraeducator

**Room 308:** Mrs. Jessica DelMastro, Teacher  
Ms. Linda Boucher, Paraeducator

### ***Other Important People:***

Mrs. Meredith Eberhard, Speech/Language Pathologist

Mrs. Sue Hogan, Physical Therapist

Ms. Tirza Roda, Occupational Therapist

## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide a high-quality, inclusive preschool education by focusing on the whole child. This means that we address the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical aspects of child development. We believe that young children learn best through guided play and exploration in an environment that has been carefully designed to promote learning. We also believe that children learn a great deal from each other, and that adults can do much to support this learning process. Therefore, children with and without identified Special Needs are brought together in order to help them to learn and grow. We believe that parents and guardians are the most important teachers in a child's life; therefore we view parents as our partners in the education of their children.

## What to Bring to School

Your child will need to bring a backpack, marked with his/her name. It should be large enough to carry a folder and lunchbox, as well as any projects or "treasures" which we need to send home. Please put a 2-pocket folder in the backpack, preferably a sturdy, laminated one, which we will use for notices, completed projects, messages, etc. We will check the folder every day for "mail" from home, and we would ask that you check it every day for "mail" from school, as well.

Please send in a change of clothing, including pants, shirt, underclothes, and socks, to be left in school, just in case! These should be in a plastic bag labeled with your child's name. We will store these here at school. If your child comes home in "spare clothes", please launder and return as soon as possible. As the seasons change (and

perhaps your child's size changes, too), you may want to send in different clothing.

For half-day students, please send a small, nutritious snack for your child each day, along with a drink and a napkin. This should be packed in a lunchbox or bag and placed inside the backpack. Your child will have about ten minutes to eat his/her snack. Please see the "Snack Time" section of this handbook for more information.

### **Additional Items for Full Day Students to Bring**

For full day preschoolers, there will be a rest time each day. You may send in a blanket from home which will be sent back home each Friday for washing. If you want to send in two blankets so that we have one extra to keep at school, that is fine too. If possible, please label each blanket.

Your child may also bring in ONE 12" or smaller lovey (stuffed animal) to snuggle during rest time. Please do not send in any other toys/stuffies from home. We have plenty of toys in the classroom!

This year, full day preschoolers will also be eating lunch at school. They can either bring a lunch from home or buy hot lunch. Please pack your child's lunch in a separate bag/lunch box from their snack; this helps students know what they should eat for snack and what they should eat for lunch. Please clearly label the snack bag and lunch bag/box.

There will be two snack times each day (one in the morning and one in the afternoon). You can pack both snacks in one bag/box labeled "Snacks".

## Arrival

Morning Class: Preschool staff will meet the students in the lobby at 8:15. Preschoolers who arrive on the buses will be met by a staff member and supervised in walking to the lobby to join their classmates. If you are dropping your preschooler off, please wait for a staff member to meet him/her before saying goodbye! If you arrive after we have already walked the children up to the classrooms, please ask Mrs. Zemantic to call us and someone will come down to meet you. We take attendance at 8:25. After this time, your child is considered tardy.

Afternoon Class: Preschool staff will meet the students in the lobby at 12:10. If you are dropping your preschooler off, please wait for a staff member to meet him/her before saying goodbye! If you arrive after we have already walked the children up to the classrooms, please ask Mrs. Zemantic to call us and someone will come down to meet you. We take attendance at 12:20. After this time, your child is considered tardy.

Full Day Class: Preschool staff will meet the students in the lobby at 8:15. Preschoolers who arrive on the buses will be met by a staff member and supervised in walking to the lobby to join their classmates. If you are dropping your preschooler off, please wait for a staff member to meet him/her before saying goodbye! If you arrive after we have already walked the children up to the classrooms, please ask Mrs. Zemantic to call us and someone will come down to meet you. We take attendance at 8:25. After this time, your child is considered tardy.

Saying Goodbye: A positive attitude on your part will help your child to separate from you. If your child senses that you are uneasy or worried, he/she may find it more upsetting

to say goodbye. It's best not to linger, but to say goodbye and leave with an air of confidence! It may help to talk ahead of time about what will happen when you arrive at school (for example, "We'll say hi to the teachers. I'll give you a hug and kiss, and say goodbye. Then you can have fun at school. I'll be back to get you after the Goodbye Song."). You can adapt this discussion to your own style and to your individual child's needs. You may enjoy developing a special goodbye ritual, as the characters do in the story *The Kissing Hand*.

### **Dismissal**

*Morning:* Dismissal time is 11:20. Please wait at the front desk in the lobby. We will bring the children to you. Please see the *Procedure* section below for details.

*Afternoon:* Dismissal time is 3:15. Children who ride the bus will be escorted to their buses by a staff member. If you are picking your child up, we will meet you in the lobby near Mrs. Zemantic's desk.

*Full Day Class:* Dismissal time is 3:15. Children who ride the bus will be escorted to their buses by a staff member. If you are picking your child up, we will meet you in the lobby near Mrs. Zemantic's desk.

*Dismissal Procedure (All classes):* We will bring the class to you at dismissal time. Each child must stay in line until we call his/her name and hand him/her over to the appropriate parent/caregiver. It will take a little while for the children to learn and remember this system. You can help by reminding your child about this rule. Please do not take your child from the line. We need to make sure that each child is

safe and has been dismissed to the appropriate adult. Please remember to sign your child out at the front desk.

For all classes: It is important to impress upon your child that he/she is NEVER to leave the building without the teacher, parent, or care provider. Please remind your child to WALK out of the building WITH you, not ahead of you, holding your hand and using "walking feet". There are lots of people and cars in the parking lot.

Please make sure that you note dismissal time. It can be scary for your preschooler when you are late.

If someone else will be picking your child up on a particular day, we need a note from you. In an emergency, you may call the office (228-9493) and let them know who will be picking your child up. If you wish, you may write a "blanket note" for a particular person who will be picking your child up on a regular basis. We cannot release your child to someone other than his/her parent/guardian without a note or call from you!

***Porter Pals Preschool Calendar Notes~ 2017 - 2018***

We will follow the school-wide calendar (available on the school website) with the following changes:

**August 30, 2017:** Preschool Visiting Day (by appointment)

**August 31, 2017:** Regular schedule begins (first day of regular preschool classes)

***No AM or PM preschool classes will be held on the following preschool screening days (The full day preschool class will be held):***

**October 25, 2017**

**March 20, 2017**

**March 21, 2017**

Emergency Weather Closing: If there is a late opening due to inclement weather: AM class will attend 9:50am to 11:50am, PM class will attend 12:45pm to 3:15pm. Full day class will start at 9:50am.

If there is an early closing due to inclement weather: AM class will attend at regular times, PM class will not attend. Full day class will attend until 1:15pm.

If there is a planned early dismissal day (see school calendar for these dates): AM class will attend 8:15am to 10:15am. PM class will attend 11:15am to 1:15pm. Full day class will attend 8:15am to 1:15pm.

The last day of school in June is an early dismissal day for grades K-8. Preschool "End-of-Year Celebrations" will be held on this day (to be determined based on number of snow days).

## **Family Visitors/Volunteers**

Parents and grandparents are welcome to sign up as classroom visitors. Please feel free to observe, or to accompany your child throughout his/her activities. If you would like to be an active helper, we will have suggestions for you. There are many things you can do, including: snack set-up/clean-up, reading to an individual or small group, assisting with arts/crafts projects, helping with buttons, zippers, boots, mittens, and backpacks, helping on the playground, etc. We would love to have you spend some time with us!

Whenever you are visiting the classroom, you will need to arrange a time in advance, and then sign in at the front desk and get a parent/visitor badge.

We will probably begin having visitors/helpers near the end of October, after the children have become accustomed to the routine and comfortable in separating from their parents. We will let you know when we are ready to begin!

### **Confidentiality**

When dropping off or picking up your child or when helping in our classroom, please help us to respect the privacy of each student and family by remembering that we cannot discuss a student with anyone but that student's parents/guardians. Whether or not your child has been identified as needing Special Services, his/her learning style, behavior, or other issues remain topics for preschool staff to discuss with you in private. It is, of course, your option to share information about your own child with other parents. Quite often, a friendly and supportive bond is developed among our preschool parents. However, please use discretion in talking to community members about situations

you may observe in our classroom when serving as a family volunteer.

Sometimes children ask about obvious differences (a wheelchair, a prosthesis, a child who uses sign language...). We do try to maintain an open dialogue with our students about individual differences, and will answer their questions in an age-appropriate and positive way. Our goal is to develop an attitude of acceptance and caring, and to provide a feeling of belonging for all of our students. We teach them that everyone has strengths as well as challenges, and that not every child is working on the same skills at the same time. Each one has his/her needs. We can cheer each other on, as well as learn from one another.

### Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on the State of Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), and includes the following areas: Cognition, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Health, Language and Literacy, Creative Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

Although all of the children are exposed to the same activities, we have different developmental expectations based on their ages and individual needs. Each child will approach an activity at his or her own level. (Please see the section on "Small Group Time" for more information about differentiated instruction).

Our program uses themes, which provide an organized and enjoyable way for our students to practice skills and develop concepts. Sometimes our theme is based on a storybook, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* or *Where the Wild Things Are*. Other typical themes might include: My

Body, Exploring Fall, Air and Wind, and many more. Each month, we focus on specific colors, shapes, and nursery rhymes, as well. More detailed information about curriculum, themes, and topics will be shared throughout the year.

### **Reporting Progress**

Connecticut's Preschool Assessment Framework is used as a guideline for tracking your child's developmental progress. Selected skills from the Framework are included in a preschool progress report, which is sent home in December, March, and June. Parent conferences are held in December and in March, and they include discussion of these reports.

### **Communication**

Monthly newsletters will be sent home with an overview of the themes for the month as well as any reminders.

Teacher websites may be accessed through [hwporter.org](http://hwporter.org). Go to "teacher websites", then "preschool", then "Mrs. DelMastro" or "Mrs. Coviello". Throughout the year, we will post updates and photos of classroom activities. Stay tuned!

Please feel free to contact the teachers with any questions or concerns: [bcoviello@hwporter.org](mailto:bcoviello@hwporter.org) (860-228-9493 x 307) or [jdelmastro@hwporter.org](mailto:jdelmastro@hwporter.org) (860-228-9493x308).

## Components of the Daily Schedule

The following schedule will give you a general idea of your child's day at preschool. We try to keep things very consistent and predictable for the children, although there are times when change is necessary (a fire drill, a school assembly or special performance, etc.). The children are provided with visual cues (a picture schedule, hung from left to right on Velcro strips), as well as auditory cues (special songs for transition times). The order of the activities may be slightly different, depending on our Related Arts ("specials") class schedule.

**Opening Circle**~ Students greet each other, practice oral language and Math skills, sing songs and listen to stories.

**Choice Time/Centers**~ Students develop self-direction, problem-solving skills, and sustained attention as they choose to play in centers such as: Art, Building, House, Fine-Motor, Math, Science, Sensory Table, Library, Computer, Dramatic Play. Specific skill-building activities are intentionally built into each of these areas, and preschool staff actively engages with students as they explore these activities, using strategies to promote growth and learning for each student.

**Snack**~ Social interactions and Speech/Language skills are promoted as students eat a healthy snack from home.

**Specials**~ PE, Art, Library, Music, Enrichment ~ Students will visit one special a day, accompanied by the classroom paraeducator.

**Small Group Time**~ The class is split into two small groups to work on specific skills. These skills include fine-motor activities, Literacy, Math, Speech and Language with Mrs. Eberhard, and large motor skills with Mrs.Hogan.

**Recess**~ Outdoor play, weather permitting

**Rest Time (Full Day Students only)**~ Full day students will have a daily rest time. They will have their own individual mat to rest on. Each student will be encouraged to rest quietly during this time.

**Lunch Time (Full Day Students only)**~

Students in the full day program will eat lunch in the cafeteria. Preschoolers will have their own special seating in the cafeteria and the classroom para will be with them during lunch time. Students should bring a nutritious lunch from home along with a drink and a napkin or they may buy hot-lunch from school.

Students may purchase hot lunch at a daily cost of \$3.00 for cash, check, or in-school payments. Online payments are available for \$3.13. For more information about the hot lunch program and to see monthly lunch menus, visit [www.hwporter.org](http://www.hwporter.org). \*Information about free and reduced lunches can also be found on the school website.

**Closing Circle**~ Students come together to bring closure to the day, with time for a story and a "Goodbye Song".

## Classroom Centers

The classroom is divided into distinct areas, called "centers". Each center contains materials that are related to each other (art materials, building materials, books, etc.). Your child will use these materials at his/her own level and in conjunction with individual interests and abilities. As the children become more aware of, and comfortable with, each other, they will often be influenced to try a different approach by watching their peers. Levels of play will range from solitary to parallel to cooperative and interactive, depending on the children involved. We encourage the children to talk to each other about what they are doing, and help them learn to share space and materials, take turns, and ask for or offer help.

Each child learns to hang his/her name card on a Velcro strip in the center where he/she chooses to play. The number of Velcro strips in each center limits the number of children playing in the center at a given time. This leads to some valuable lessons in using language to make requests, solve problems, negotiate, and take turns. A great deal of sympathetic adult support is necessary in this process.

### Building Center

***What materials are available?*** The Building Center contains all sorts of materials that can be used for construction. Standard materials are almost always available, sometimes on a rotating basis, while special items are occasionally added to complement a special theme or to entice reluctant builders! Standard materials include: wooden unit blocks, colored foam blocks, large cardboard "bricks", Lincoln logs, Duplos/Legos, and Bristle blocks. There are also cars, trucks, and other vehicles, and small figures (plastic bears, rubber dinosaurs, people,

etc.). These tend to stimulate children to create scenarios and do lots of dramatic play. In addition, materials for making "signs" are often displayed, and children are encouraged to label their buildings and roads.

***What will my child learn?*** In the Building Center, your child can practice matching and sorting by shape, size, color, or function, naming shapes, colors, and objects, counting, estimating, and comparing, planning and carrying out the plan, solving problems, using fine-motor and visual-motor skills, using spatial reasoning, using representational/symbolic thinking, measuring, using language and social skills, and more!

### **Story Center**

***What materials are available?*** The Story Center contains many books, as well as puppets and/or storytelling props related to our current stories. There is a dry-erase board with colored markers, as well as a collection of magnetic letters. There are also large "floor puzzles", ideal for inspiring storytelling. A standard collection of books is always available, in baskets on the shelves. Each basket has a colored sticker on it, and the books that belong in that basket have matching stickers. The children learn to return the book to the appropriate basket. In addition, a rotating collection of seasonal and thematic books is displayed on a special book display unit. The Story Center is not only used as a choice during Center Time, but is also used as the class meeting area for Circle Time. Therefore, calendar/weather displays and other instructional materials are kept here.

***What will my child learn?*** In the Story Center, your child can practice book-handling skills, develop expressive and receptive language, sharpen comprehension, memory, and retelling skills, learn about sequencing, become familiar with classic characters and stories, use visual, auditory, motor,

and social skills, develop phonemic awareness as well as print awareness, use symbolic and representational thinking, and more!

### House Center

***What materials are available?*** The House Center contains costumes, dolls, tools, toy dishes and food, toy phones, and a make-believe kitchen. As with the other centers, materials are sometimes rotated in and out during the year in order to spark new interests or to expand on a special theme. Sometimes the center is transformed into a store, restaurant, fire station, or other setting! Children are encouraged to use paper, pencils, markers, phone books, and other literacy materials in their dramatic play. Pictures are sometimes displayed in order to help the children think of new ideas for role-playing; these "menus" encourage thinking, planning, and understanding the concepts of character (who will you be?), setting (are you in a restaurant or a library?), detail (what props will you need?). These are important comprehension skills for reading and writing.

***What will my child learn?*** In the House Center, your child can develop symbolic thinking, initiative and planning, communication and social-emotional skills, vocabulary, motor skills, and basic Social Studies concepts, such as family roles, careers, and communities. Cognitive skills can be enhanced as the children move from simple use of materials to more advanced representation and scripting. Problem-solving comes into play when the children need to create a material or prop ("what can we use for an ambulance?" or "what can we use for the dog's bed?").

## Table Toys

***What materials are available?*** This center contains puzzles, pattern blocks, Unifix cubes, stringing beads, pegboards, form boards, shape sorters, and other manipulatives, as well as some simple games (Lotto, Concentration, Candyland Bingo, and others), which are featured at various points in the year. Thematic and seasonal materials are added and changed throughout the year, as well.

***What will my child learn?*** In the Table Toys Center, your child will make extensive use of fine motor and visual-motor skills. He/she can also develop problem-solving strategies, persistence, and increasing time on task. Many of the materials in the Puzzles and Games Center encourage attention to detail, and involve colors, shapes, quantitative concepts, numerals, and letters. Your child can estimate, make predictions, recognize and reproduce patterns, and much more! Many of these activities lend themselves to lessons in turn-taking (with adult support and encouragement).

## Art Center

***What materials are available?*** The Art Center contains crayons, markers, pencils, chalk, glue sticks, children's scissors, hole punches, many kinds of paper, and an assortment of collage materials (fabric scraps, yarn, craft sticks, pipe cleaners, magazines, cotton balls, etc.). Playdoh is available, along with various clay tools. Basic supplies are always available, while special new materials are introduced at various times during the year.

***What will my child learn?*** In the Art Center, your child can use fine motor and visual-motor skills, develop arm and hand

strength, and use the senses of sight, hearing, touch, and smell in exploring and transforming the materials. Many early Science concepts can also be introduced in this way. The children can use their language and social skills to describe what they are doing, to comment on a peer's work, or to ask for materials or assistance. In addition, the children have the opportunity to develop creativity, solve problems, explore color, shape, size, and other artistic elements, represent ideas and feelings in a nonverbal way, think symbolically, and more.

### Painting (Art, Part 2!)

Due to space requirements, the easel may be set up as a separate center. It accommodates two children at a time. Paintbrushes and an assortment of paints are available. Colors are introduced gradually, usually in coordination with our themes. Occasionally, "surprise" materials may appear in order to spark new interest or introduce a concept (for example, cork board, sandpaper, or foil may replace the easel paper, or the easel paper may be cut into interesting shapes; the brushes may be replaced with cotton swabs or feathers). Skills and concepts discussed for the Art Center (above) also apply here.

### Sensory Table

***What materials are available?*** The children know this area as the "sand table" or "rice table" or "water table", depending on what material is there. Each material is there for an extended period of time (at least a month or two). When we exchange the sand for rice or water (or even leaves or snow!), some of the children are interested in helping to design a new sign for the center. A group problem-solving and literacy lesson emerges for those who are ready (which letters do we need to change in order to make this

sign say "Rice Table" instead of "Sand Table"?). Equipment for this center coordinates with the sensory material being explored. There are usually buckets, shovels, sifters, cups, and small vehicles. Special materials appear when appropriate (for example, boats, toy fish, and rubbers ducks for the water table).

***What will my child learn?*** At the Sensory Table, your child can explore texture, volume, size, shape, number, color, and many other concepts, while developing the vocabulary to describe them. Children who crave a great deal of tactile play can find it here, while those who are extra sensitive to, or uncomfortable with, certain textures and sensations can gradually begin to explore and feel comfortable (with adult support and encouragement). For some, the process of playing with sand or rice will be relaxing and calming. Some children will be like little scientists, exploring, testing, and enjoying the process. Others will engage in dramatic play, making "soup" or "cupcakes" and sharing with peers. Many skills enter into these processes, including representational thinking, logic and an understanding of cause and effect, social skills such as turn-taking, sharing, and cooperative planning, and more.

### **Special Centers**

Special projects or activities are sometimes offered as an option during Center Time. This might be a special craft or game or a science experiment. These activities are often related to a theme or unit of study.

Rotating and available at various times during the year are other centers, such as a Listening Center (CD player with headphones where children can listen to stories and songs), a garden center where we grow plants, a writing center, a measuring center, and so on. These depend on the interests

and skills of the individual children in each class, and vary from year to year.

Our preschoolers are also introduced to some educational apps on iPads. We have been using the "Handwriting Without Tears" writing readiness program, as well as some other wonderful fine motor, visual motor, language, and counting apps. Touch-screen/desk-top computers may also be introduced as appropriate to the needs of the children and the curriculum goals. We do try to make sure that the amount of "screen time" for our preschoolers is kept in proper balance with the important hands-on, 3-D, and face-to-face experiences which are critical to early learning and development.

In addition, our therapists (Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Therapist) often set up special activities during Center Time, depending on the needs of specific children in the program. While they are designed with specific children in mind, all children are invited to participate.

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### **Small Group Time**

While "Center Time" (see above) is designed to be child-initiated, Small Group Time is adult-initiated. Each small group lesson should last no more than ten minutes, and involves about one-half of the class at a time, with one or more adults assisting. In some cases, the lesson presented may be designed to introduce, practice, or review a specific concept or skill (counting, color naming, cutting, using specific language patterns or speech sounds, etc.). In other cases, the intention may be to introduce a specific material, toy, or game, and to teach the children how to use it. The groups

may be led by the teacher, the preschool paraprofessional, or one of the therapists (Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, or Speech/Language Therapist).

The teachers usually have specific individualized goals for various children within in each group. For example, younger or less experienced children may be asked to "point to the square" while older children are asked, "what shape is this?" (a more difficult skill). Or a three-year-old may be given a turn to count a small group of 2 or 3 objects, while a four-year-old may be given a group of 4 or 5 objects to count. Children with Special Needs will be given tasks which support the goals and objectives in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

At times, it will appear that all of the children are being given the same task, but the teacher may have different outcomes in mind for different students. For example, students may be given a variety of paper shapes and asked to glue them onto a sheet of paper ("What can you do with these shapes?"). For a student with physical challenges, perhaps the main goal is a fine motor or visual motor one (Can he use his fingers to grasp the paper? Can she hold the paper in one hand while rubbing the glue stick with the other?). For a student with speech/language difficulties, perhaps her goal is to ask for a material that she needs or to tell someone what she has made. For a preschooler with strong or advanced developmental skills, perhaps we may be looking for a realistic or representational picture.

In any case, the children usually grow to enjoy working as a part of a group and learning how to follow through and complete a task. The activities are designed to be fun and interesting.

## *Holidays and Seasonal Celebrations*

We try to keep things "low-key" at holiday times...although we may plan a special activity to go with the season or holiday, we don't plan parties (except for our "End of the Year" celebration in June... more details to come later in the year!). Keeping the normal routines and activities going is helpful when children are excited. In addition, we try to be sensitive to the fact that not all families observe the same holidays. When possible, we try to talk about the many different ways families celebrate special occasions. We try to emphasize seasonal changes that children will experience, as well as sensory experiences like the sight of candles or pumpkins, the sound of bells, etc. For example, in December we sometimes do a unit on candles, and talk about the different ways families use them in celebrations (birthdays, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, etc.), as well as everyday uses. During October/November, we often include harvest and food themes. We also include discussion about social and family experiences (visiting relatives, having a big dinner party, etc.).

We don't eliminate all traditional holiday songs and crafts, but we try to use them selectively and in an age-appropriate way, and put them in a broader seasonal context.

Please let us know if you have a special activity, custom, or game that you feel would be appropriate to share with the class. Do you know a song in a different language that you would like to teach us? This does not necessarily have to be linked to a holiday or season. We are open to ideas and suggestions, and would like to teach the children that the world is full of many wonderful people who are the same in some ways and different in other ways.

We enjoy marking the children's birthdays with our own special classroom rituals. You are welcome to join us for your child's special day. Our school has moved away from using food for classroom celebrations. If you are interested in bringing in a special "treat" for your child's birthday (totally optional!), you may want to consider bringing a special craft, project, story, or game. We can help you to plan something, if you'd like. We usually celebrate summer birthdays near the end of the school year.

### *Daily Snacks*

Please send a small, nutritious snack for your child each day, along with a drink and a napkin. Your child will have about ten minutes to eat his/her snack. We use snack time as an ongoing opportunity to practice self-help, fine motor, oral-motor, speech/language, cognitive, and social skills. Your child will learn to follow the routine of washing hands, unpacking his/her snack, eating and conversing with classmates and teachers, asking for help when needed, and cleaning up his/her space.

During snack time, we remind the children of safe, healthy, and polite eating habits. We encourage counting skills (how many goldfish crackers are left on your plate?) and vocabulary development (did anyone bring a fruit or vegetable today? How many crunchy snacks are there at this table?), as well as conversational and social skills. Snack time provides the opportunity for lots of language and concept development in a very motivating setting!

*Full Day Students will have two snack times each day.*

### **Full Day Program Lunch Time**

Students in the full day program will eat lunch in the cafeteria. Preschoolers will have their own special seating in

the cafeteria and the classroom para will be with them during lunch time. Students may bring a nutritious lunch from home along with a drink and a napkin or they may buy hot-lunch from school.

Students may purchase hot lunch at a daily cost of \$3.00 for cash, check, or in-school payments. Online payments are available for \$3.13. For more information about the hot lunch program and to see monthly lunch menus, visit [www.hwporter.org](http://www.hwporter.org). \*Information about free and reduced lunches can also be found on the school website.

### **Health/Safety/Self-Help**

Please make sure that your child is dressed for safe and comfortable play, both indoors and out. Your child will need sturdy non-slip shoes, and warm clothing for being outside on chilly days. Sneakers are required for P.E. ("gym") days. We will send home a "specials" schedule for you so you will know when PE, Art, Music, and Library visits will occur. We will also let you know the "specials" teachers' names.

We will attempt to keep the children's clothing protected by using smocks when doing messy projects, but it seems as though there is always a spot that the smock doesn't quite cover! You may want to save the really special outfits for special occasions.

We teach and practice proper hand-washing each day before snack and after using the bathroom. In terms of coughs and sneezes, we teach the children to cover them by coughing/sneezing into the crook of the elbow rather than into the open hand. This prevents germy hands from

spreading illness. You can help with this by practicing at home.

We encourage the children to do things for themselves, but we help in whatever way is necessary. We are always gently nudging them to the next level of independence if it seems appropriate. This includes things like putting on/taking off coats, buttoning/zipping/snapping, toileting skills, using tissues, etc. We also teach them to "use words" to get help when they need it.

### **Behavior Management**

We try to use preventive discipline whenever possible. This means that we have provided structure, consistency, clear expectations, age-appropriate activities, and immediate feedback in the hope of preventing as many problems as possible. We will use verbal redirection, reminding the child of the appropriate behavior, whenever possible, and will try to do it in a positive way. We teach the children to use their words when they can (or alternative communication strategies like sign language, picture cards, etc.) rather than physical aggression. We walk the children through the conflict resolution process, helping them to work out their problems in a positive way. When necessary, time-outs may be used, but they are not always called "time out". Often, we offer choices (depending upon the behavior being addressed): "You can sit and listen for story time, or you can rest over here until you feel better". We help the children to remember to use indoor voices and walking feet in the classroom, to use nice hands, to use words to tell how they feel or to ask for help. It is our policy not to allow any weapon play, because at Porter Pals we don't play games that involve pretending to hurt people. Let us know if you have any

questions or concerns regarding your child's behavior at home or at school.

**Your Turn**

Are there other areas or topics that you would like to know more about? What have we left out of this handbook that would be useful to you? Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions. Thanks for taking the time to read this handbook.



