

Family Handbook



Maple Leaf Children's Center

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Message from the Director

"Play is the highest form of research." - Albert Einstein

Dear Families,

Welcome to Maple Leaf! Maple Leaf Children's Center, Inc. is a non-profit, tax exempt corporation that opened its doors to young children in January 1976. It was started by Joan Crosson and Mary Rodriguez in what is now the Thetford Hill Fire Station and moved to its present location in the First Congregational Church in February 1977. We have no religious affiliation with the church.

Please take the time to read our Parent Handbook carefully. It is an opportunity for you to learn about the values embraced at Maple Leaf. Investing in high quality early childhood education for your child is one of the most important things you can do to prepare your child for success in lifelong learning.

An essential part of our core values at Maple Leaf are the interactions between children and teachers. Our approach is one of child-led learning. The teacher's role is to act as a facilitator in the classroom. This requires the teacher to be a keen observer of children's play and their peer interactions. While a teacher observes the children, s/he gains insight into the "whole child," embracing a holistic model of children's development. With this knowledge and understanding of children, a teacher is then more prepared to meet the ever-changing needs of each individual child and can plan for and provide better opportunities for learning. When the teacher fully recognizes the needs of the children, s/he is also able to determine when a child requires an active participant or nearby support. This balance of support and freedom allows the child to build independence and self-esteem in a consistent and predictable environment. The teacher's role is a complex balance of inspiring, encouraging, nurturing, and empowering.

We feel that the best atmosphere for learning is one of acceptance, mutual respect, pleasure, fairness, consistency, encouragement, and clear limits and expectations. A predictable, organized environment with caring adults, clear expectations, and appropriate consequences supports the whole child in their ability to self-regulate and learn.

The outdoor play environment is an extension of the classroom, requiring the same level of adult planning, supervision, and involvement with the children. There are many benefits to outdoor play in the areas of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development for children. When children have ample outdoor time, their immune systems become stronger and their overall health and well-being improve.

Families are considered a fundamental part of our program. Daily communication and collaboration between families and teachers is encouraged. Support, encouragement, and assistance are vital in helping to ensure personal and professional success for caregivers and teachers. There is a strong connection between the quality of early childhood education and the quality of society.

Again, welcome to Maple Leaf! We look forward to providing your child with many wonderful experiences in their learning!

At the Heart of Our Center

Our Mission

Maple Leaf Children's Center is committed to each child's developmental process and strives to engage their minds and bodies in exploring their world through play and outdoor nature-based experiences.

Our Philosophy

At Maple Leaf, we believe in the importance of learning through experience. Our teachers make use of three teaching resources: our natural and physical world, social interactions, and everyday opportunities. Since our start in 1976, our center has encouraged children to grow through experience using skills they are developing, learning, and mastering. We create intentional trusting relationships with children, families, and the community.

Our Vision

Our vision is to strengthen children and create a nurturing community through interactive learning and family support.

Center's Statement of Goals

- ☆ To provide a developmental stepping-stone and foster an environment for young children to express their individuality, independence, and creativity.
- ☆ To provide its employees with a decent living wage and a challenging, rewarding workplace to grow, set goals, and prosper.
- ☆ To provide families in our community with high quality childcare at a fair, affordable price.
- ☆ To create a facility that inspires involvement by and for others in the community.
- ☆ To create a fiscally responsible business that provides excellent job opportunities and services to the local community.

Home & School Connections and Communication

Hours of Operation & Access

Maple Leaf Children's Center is open from 7:30am to 5:30 pm Monday-Friday unless otherwise noted in our calendar or cancellation due to inclement weather. The center will be closed when Thetford Elementary School is closed due to inclement weather or area power outages.

Upon entering the center, parents/guardians are required to check in their child with a teacher after assisting their child with handwashing and putting personal belongings in their cubbies. During the pick-up time parents/guardians also need to check in with a teacher before leaving with their child.

As part of their Family/Center Contract, parents/guardians and the Director together create a consistent schedule for each child. Maple Leaf has two pick-up time options: 3:30, and 5:30. If parents need to add additional hours to their regular schedule on a single given week they may contact the Director in advance to arrange the dates and times as needed. A table of current rates is attached at the back of the handbook.

Maple Leaf requires all part time families to enroll their child for at least 16 hours a week.

Maple Leaf requires that parents/guardians give one month's written notice if they decide to reduce their child's regularly scheduled hours at Maple Leaf. Additionally, families are required to give one-month notice for withdrawal from Maple Leaf programs. If such notice is not given, the family may be expected to pay the next month's tuition in full. Families may also work with the Director to add hours to their child's regularly scheduled week at any point if there are spaces available within their child's program.

Parents/Guardians have access to the center and their children without prior notice.

Parents/Guardians may pick up their child at any point in the day, even if it is before their regularly scheduled pick-up time. Parents/Guardians are also welcomed to visit or volunteer in the classroom, although we ask that you arrange a time in advance with your child's teacher. Parents have access to their children's records which are kept at the school. Any copies requested of the child's documentation will be made available within (5) business days.

Authorized Pick-Ups

We will let your child leave Maple Leaf only with those persons who are listed as an authorized pick-up person on your registration form. We do realize that occasionally parents/guardians need other family members and friends to assist in transporting their children to and from school. We welcome other family members; however, we do ask that the Director be notified before a person other than the parent/guardian arrives to pick a child up. A phone call is sufficient, but written notice is preferred. For your child's protection, we will ask for identification to be shown from any persons picking-up who are not known to the staff.

Illness Policies and Procedures

If your child will be absent because of illness or any other reason, please call and let us know. This lets us notify other families about any exposure to illness, and helps us know how many children to plan for that day.

If your child needs medication during the day, you may leave us the medicine in the original container with your child's name on it and fill out and sign a medication form. The teacher administering the medication will also sign and date each time the child receives it. We cannot give any medicines, including Tylenol without your written permission.

If your child becomes ill while at Maple Leaf, s/he will need to be picked up. If neither parent is available to do so, you can choose a relative or friend on your contact sheet. Your child's return to school depends on their illness.

*See page 16 for a complete list of illness policies and procedures.

Some things are better left at home

We do not allow children to bring toys from home. Toys always seem to get lost or broken, or cause arguments and feelings of possessiveness. We do allow children to share books and music from home. Children can bring in a stuffed animal and/or blanket for use at rest time but must remain in their cubby or rest bag during play time.

Starting with the right kind of clothes

One of the qualities fostered at Maple Leaf is independence. You can help by remembering a child's need to do things by themselves and send them in easily, manageable clothing such as elastic waist pants or shorts, slip over shirts, or dresses. Also, please bring your child dressed and ready to play! Whether you or your child choose the clothes, we like to remind you that they explore with paint, markers, glue, and lots of fun textile "goop." We also play outdoors a great deal and in most types of weather. Children will get wet, muddy, and dirty.

It is important to keep 2 complete changes of clothing in their backpack. It is the parents' responsibility to make sure that clothing is labeled with the child's name. We play outside even when it is cold or wet, so send along coats, hats, mittens, sweaters or sweatshirts, warm boots, and rain gear as necessary and appropriate for each day's weather.

Staying Involved

The school provides several ways for families to stay actively involved in their child's school life. Here are some ways to stay involved:

- **Visit the class.** Of course, parents/guardians are welcome at school anytime. Feel free to stay a while in the morning and play, drop by for lunch, or come in to share a special talent or help with an event.
- **Home/Classroom Communication.** We know parents/guardians are the most significant adults in a child's life. We strive to create mutual respect between parents/guardians and the Center staff, a partnership for the benefit of the child. Our doors will always be open to parents/guardians. Communication between the parents/guardians, child, and teacher is important to ensure a good working relationship. We encourage daily communication between parents/guardians and teachers, as well as daily communication about their day between the parents/guardians and the children. The daily schedule will be posted where parents can see it along with a dry-erase board where you can find special announcements, information about class events, or anything else the teachers think you might be interested in.
- **Schedule a Parent-Teacher conference.** During the school year, two parent/teacher conferences are scheduled to discuss your child's development at school. Each child will have an assessment portfolio. These portfolios will include anecdotal records, reports, pictures of the child, and samples of the child's creations.
- **Fill out an evaluation of the School.** Parents will have an opportunity each year to fill out a formal evaluation of the school. Your comments and suggestions are welcome throughout the year as well.
- **Parent / Family Events.** Throughout the year parents are invited to join in on family events.
- **Participate in Volunteer Events and Fundraisers.** Each family is expected to volunteer for at least one event each school year. If you are unable to volunteer your time, a donation of \$100 may be made in lieu of volunteering.

The Importance of Classroom

Accidents and Incidents

In the event of an accident or incident, a staff member trained in Child CPR and First Aid will be required to complete an Incident Report and have it signed by the Director and the parent. A copy will be made for the child's file.

Behavior Management Policy

It is the policy of Maple Leaf and the State of Vermont to neither spank nor physically punish a child. Children will not be shamed or embarrassed, denied food or rest, forced to eat, punished for soiling or wetting. Constructive, positive techniques for managing behavior and maintaining child's self-worth will be applied. The goal of behavior management is to teach the child self-control. This is based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of the child. The Director will provide guidance to the staff in these skills.

When behavior management is needed, positive language and actions will be used, and the following steps will be taken:

- 1) The child will be reminded of the ground rules of the classroom and the reason for following them.

- 2) The child shall be re-directed to an appropriate activity.
- 3) The use of the word “no” will not be used when re-directing a child. Instead, use of a positive phrase and giving the child an alternative of what they *can* do will be used.
- 4) When a child hurts another child, they will be taught empathy. Staff will teach the offender how their actions hurt another child and possibly made them cry. The child will be directed to check-in on the injured child, but never forced to say sorry. The adult will model the use of the word by saying, “I’m sorry, x that you were hurt. Do you want a hug?”

We practice problem solving with the children. Problem solving is how we teach them to form positive relationships, resolve conflicts, learn self-discipline, and show respect for others. We see inappropriate or destructive behavior as a problem to be solved, primarily by the children involved and with the help of a teacher.

- 🎯 **Active listening** acknowledges a child’s feelings. It lets children express and think through their problems and find their own solutions.
- 🎯 **Negotiation** teaches children to talk to each other about their problems, look for solutions, and resolve conflicts nonviolently.
- 🎯 **Setting limits** teaches children to stay within safe boundaries and learn self-control. Limits are based on safety, responsibility, and respect. We set limits, explain about consequences, and the importance of making good choices.
- 🎯 **The learning environment** is built around the child’s need for nurturing relationships, safety, comfort, physical activity, emotional expression, social interaction, and intellectual stimulation. Whenever possible, we modify our environment and adapt it to meet children’s individual needs, instead of trying to force children to adapt to the environment.
- 🎯 **Affirmations** are the ways we make children feel important. Affirmations include positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, praise for trying, and praise for small successes.

Daily Routines

The organization of your child’s day will be as important as his or her classroom and playground equipment. A predictable routine helps children develop a sense of competence and involvement in their world.

Drop-off Time. Saying good-bye to your child(ren) each morning can be difficult but can be facilitated by establishing a regular routine. Planning to stay for a few minutes before you leave for work can make your departure a little easier for some children. Reading a book with your child or helping leave, you can have a usual good-bye place (by the door or in a favorite area in the room). There might be times that your child may need help from a teacher. A teacher can assist with this transition by holding your child as you depart. Your child may cry when you leave, but usually children stop crying and get involved in an activity soon after the parent leaves. If you are concerned, you can call the center after leaving to see how your child is doing. Never leave without saying good-bye, even if you think this is easier. This can create a sense of abandonment once your child realizes you are no longer there.

We ask that children are dropped off in the morning no later than 8:45, so that they may have the time and opportunity to become acclimated in their classroom and with their friends before the day begins. We ask this not only for your child’s benefit, but also for the benefit of the other children in the classroom; it can be very disruptive when a child is brought in after the program’s day has started. Please keep in mind that if arriving prior to 7:30 am, you will be required to wait with your child outside of the center. The teachers need uninterrupted time to finish their preparations so that they can greet you properly and give

you and your child their full attention when the day begins. If your child will be absent for any reason, please call and let us know so that we know how many children to plan for that day.

Free Choice Time. When many families think about “free choice,” they think that that children are just playing. In fact, children learn the best through play. The term “free” refers to the child’s ability to choose where they play, what they will play with, and who they will play with. This activity will take place for the bulk of your child(ren)’s day. In free-choice time, children practice cognitive and motor skills as they use learning materials. They also practice planning, time management, decision making, and problem solving. They decide where they will work and play, who they will work with, and how long they will play in each area. They learn how to make friends, communicate, negotiate, follow rules, and be responsible for their behavior. Well planned free-choice time in early childhood programs gives children a strong foundation for life. Teachers offer different activities for children to choose from during this time. Activities include math, language arts, science, art, fine motor activities, gross motor activities, etc. Teachers will facilitate this play and extend children’s learning through engaging in their play alongside the children. They ask children questions that will push their play beyond their current thinking and leading them to new information.

Mealtime. Mealtimes, such as snack and lunch, are to be social and learning experiences for children. Mealtimes need to be pleasant activities in which conversation is encouraged and independence fostered appropriately. At least one adult sits with the children during meals. Information will be provided for families about well balanced meals that may be brought from home.

Children’s appetites vary for many different emotional and physical reasons. Every effort, within reason, will be made to encourage children to eat. However, it is our policy to allow children to eat at their own pace. We never force children to eat all their food. Children are never punished for eating too much food or for not eating at all. When packing your child’s lunch, please keep in mind to give them the same amount that they would regularly consume on a stay at home day. We promote good nutritional eating habits, therefore we ask that you do not include candy, gum, other highly-sugared foods (such as desserts or fruit snacks/gummies), or soda/juice in your child’s lunch. We try to send home any uneaten food in your child’s lunch box so that you can see what they are and are not eating. We do not provide any snacks, so please provide enough food in your child’s lunchbox to accommodate lunch and 2 snacks (morning and afternoon).

Rest Time. All children are invited rest and relax. All children are asked to spend 30 minutes engaged in quiet resting. After 30 minutes, children that are awake are free to move on to another activity. Children should bring from home his/her own sheet (crib sized), a blanket, and a “stuffy” (if they wish). We supply cots, soft music, and a cozy atmosphere.

Pick-up Time. A transition that often gets overlooked is pick-up time. Children must now make the transition from the center back to their families. They often greet their family member(s) with confused emotions: “I am so happy to see you” is expressed along with “I’m angry that you left me,” or “Why did you come so early?” These emotions can be manifested in tantrums, refusal to cooperate, indifference to parents/guardians, a sudden need to do all the puzzles again, etc. Parents/guardians often feel confused and upset by their child’s behavior, especially if they expected the child to race into their arms and tell them happily what fun they had and how much they missed them. This can be a difficult part of the day and needs to be given thought and planning. Teachers are here to help. Please do not hesitate to request assistance if needed.

Please note that our scheduled pick-ups of the day are 3:30 and 5:30. We ask that you **arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your pick-up time** to give time for gathering your child’s belongings, perhaps touring your child’s classroom per their request, and to speak with their teacher. Our staff schedule their daily plans based on these times, so if you know that you will be late please call the center immediately. **Please note our late pick-up policy: a fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged when your child is picked up past the times of 3:30, and 5:30, even if a phone call was made.** The center must pay our staff to stay beyond their scheduled time when families are late to pick-up.

Fire Drills and Emergency Exit Use

Fire drills will be performed monthly, in accordance with licensing requirements. Drills will be scheduled keeping in mind the climatic conditions and the well-being of the children. The State of Vermont Child Care Licensing Regulations require that one fire drill per year be done during rest/nap time. This will be scheduled near the end of rest time to ensure that all children have had a chance to rest.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education happens when children with disabilities participate and learn together with typically developing peers in the same class. Research shows that when a child with disabilities attends classes alongside peers who are developing typically for their age, good things happen. Typically developing children are a good model for those who have developmental delays. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act clearly states that all children with disabilities should be educated with typically developing children their own age and have access to the general education curriculum. Inclusive education is based on the simple idea that every child and family is valued equally and deserves the same opportunities and experiences. Inclusive education is about children with disabilities - whether the disability is mild or severe, hidden, or obvious - participating in everyday activities, just like they would if their disability were not present. It is about building friendships, self-esteem, confidence, and being offered the same opportunities as everyone else. Inclusion is about providing individualized support children need to learn and participate in meaningful ways.

The philosophy of inclusive education is aimed at helping all children learn, therefore everyone in the class benefits. Children learn at their own pace and style within a nurturing learning environment such as at Maple Leaf.

Mandated Reports

All employees of Maple Leaf Children's Center are Mandated Reporters in the State of Vermont. We are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect (physical, verbal, or sexual) to the Department of Children and Families. Reports made are not typically disclosed to the families and are kept confidential.

Going Outside and Gross Motor Development

Children need to participate in a great deal of physical activity daily. At Maple Leaf, this means we are outdoors for a minimum of 120 minutes every day. This enhances gross motor development, a better night's sleep, and self-regulation. Maple Leaf designs its daily curriculum to include moderate to vigorous physical activity that is facilitated by our teachers. When outdoor play is not an option due to thunder storms, excessively hot or cold days, or other prohibiting factors, children are provided gross motor play in the form of free play using an indoor gross motor set-up including a climber with slide, tunnel, large foam climbing blocks, tumbling mats, etc. Children go outside in all weather! Parents/guardians are expected to send in weather appropriate gear (please see our list of what to bring) so that children can enjoy the outdoors in comfort. Please do not instruct your child to stay clean or dry. Clothing worn to school must be clothing that can be made dirty. If your child is too dirty or wet, they will be assisted in changing into a clean and dry outfit that you have provided to keep at school.

Orientation

Our goal as educators and caregivers is to make each child feel welcome and safe in their new environment. We want to make their transition to the center as smooth as possible. Once enrolled at Maple Leaf, following your initial visit and tour of the center, you will be strongly encouraged to visit once or twice before your child's first day of school to help orient them to their new surroundings and teachers. A child's first day at a new center can be scary and unsettling to them. Your child's time spent at the center with you prior to starting will help ease their feelings of uncertainty.

Program Development

Curriculum Objectives. Our curriculum is centered around play, building on the interests of the children. Our goal at Maple Leaf is to provide a curriculum that challenges children both mentally and physically. Teachers strive to provide the children with a warm, nurturing environment with new ideas to explore and new problems to solve.

At Maple Leaf, we think of curriculum planning not as a series of recipes for activities, but rather as *emerging* opportunities for a variety of experiences offered to the children to help them deepen their understanding of their world. Teachers plan based on the different interests and abilities of the children. Often ideas emerge through conversations and open-ended questions. Children's questions are what enliven and give direction to the curriculum. There are no pre-planned workbooks or planning binders for our curriculum. It emerges from the children and teachers working collaboratively. Teachers actively listen to the children's desires and then act. This approach allows for teachers to change and modify the curriculum easily in response to things that happen in the day. An unexpected question can lead to an interesting discussion or an opportunity to have a parent share a special skill with the children. Our child-centered approach allows teachers to look carefully at children and create a flexible program that meets their individual needs

Planning the curriculum in each classroom will be based on:

- ⇒ Knowledge of child development
- ⇒ The understanding of developmentally appropriate practices
- ⇒ Sensitivity to children's personal experiences and interests
- ⇒ Knowing that children learn through first-hand observation, play, and direct experience

What is Emergent Curriculum?

Emergent curriculum describes the kind of curriculum that develops when exploring what is socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to children. The basic idea is that organic, whole learning evolves from the interaction of the classroom participants, both children and adults. As caregivers, we make choices for children that reflect our values. We need to keep our plans open-ended and responsive to children. In emergent curriculum, both adults and children take initiative and make decisions. This power to impact curriculum decisions and directions means that sometimes curriculum is also *negotiated* between what interests children and what adults know is necessary for children's education and development. Ideas for curriculum emerge from responding to the interests, questions, and concerns generated within a particular environment by a particular group of people, at a particular time. Emergent curriculum is never built on children's interests alone; teachers and parents also have interests worth bringing into the curriculum. The values and concerns of all the adults involved help the classroom culture evolve. The curriculum is called "emergent" because it evolves, diverging along new paths as choices and connections are made, and it is always open to new possibilities that were not thought of during the initial planning process.

Emergent curriculum arises naturally from adult-child interactions and situations that allow for "teachable moments." It connects learning with experience and prior learning. It includes all interests of children and responds to their interests rather than focusing on a narrow, individual, or calendar driven topic. It is process driven rather than product driven. The curriculum is typically implemented after an idea or interest area emerges from the group of children.

Children are individuals. Teachers strive to know each child's strengths and interests, and to offer and facilitate educational experiences well suited to each child's unique abilities. The initiative and involvement of the children in their own learning process is a crucial factor. Children have numerous opportunities for input regarding curriculum, school events, and rules. Teachers evaluate progress individually with respect to children's unique growth and development.

Developmental Assessments

Developmental assessments of children take place continuously. They are the responsibility of the teachers in each room. The assessments serve to record progress and establish goals for each child. They will be accumulated and placed in each child's portfolios and will include anecdotal records, reports, pictures of the child, and samples of the child's creations. These portfolios will be used for parent/teacher conferences, which are scheduled twice a year. Portfolios are powerful instructional tools. They offer children, teachers, and parents/guardians insight into each child's growth and development.

Art in the Classroom

Art has traditionally been an important part of early childhood programs. Friedrich Froebel, the father of kindergarten, believed that young children should be involved in both making their own art and enjoying the art of others. To Froebel, art activities were important, not because they allowed teachers to recognize children with unusual abilities, but because they encouraged each child's development fully. More than a century later, early childhood teachers are still concerned with the "all-sided" development of each child. Our curriculum includes activities that will help children develop their cognitive, social, and motor abilities. As Froebel recognized, making art and enjoying the art of other people and cultures are very important to the development of the whole child.

Cooking in the Classroom

Childcare experts agree that children appreciate a wider variety of food when they participate in preparation. There are several reasons cooking should be a regular part of children's lives. Cooking encourages creativity - it allows children to make decisions, add extra features, and do as much of the work as possible. Cooking teaches chemistry, how things change. Through various processes in the kitchen – heating, freezing, grinding, and beating – food is made ready to eat. Through the simple mixing of ingredients or watching water boil or freeze, children can experience different states of matter. Cooking builds self-confidence. Realizing they can take part in and contribute to the adult world provides great satisfaction for children and develops positive self-esteem. Cooking experiences develops children's small motor control. Using cooking tools, such as shredders, graters, grinders, and melon ballers develops fine motor skills and promotes a healthy self-concept. In the classroom, we find that preparing food and cooking activities are of great interest to children. Cooking teaches about other cultures as well.

Music & Movement in the Classroom

A child's initial musical experience is vital to development. Music utilizes speech, motor development, and sensory integration. Although scientists, therapists, parents, teachers, and music experts may have different motivations for opening the world of music experience for each child, the benefits of music development are overwhelmingly positive for the child. Music has been shown to:

- optimize brain development,
- enhance multiple intelligences,
- facilitate genuine bonding between adult and child,
- build social/emotional skills,
- promote attention to task and inner speech,
- develop impulse control and motor development, and
- communicate creativity and joy.

Music involves the whole child in the process of learning. Music activities prepare the brain for more difficult tasks needed later by preparing the brain to work from both hemispheres. Music helps the

brain to process higher-level thinking. Music is a tool to help wire the brain to reach this higher level of thinking. When we put instruments in a child's hands in the early years, we are teaching them an activity that is positive and will last them a lifetime.

Toilet Training

We ask that children who are toilet training use underwear and not pull-ups because they send a very mixed message. When ready to toilet train, if after two weeks gains are not made at school or home it will be suggested that toilet training be put on hold for a period. We encourage children to take care of their own bodies by taking their bottoms off and cleaning themselves, but we are always there to assist them every step of the way. We hope that the same is done at home to keep things consistent. Be sure to leave at least 3 sets of clothes to change into after any accidents that may occur. At Maple Leaf, no child is ever shamed for having an accident. We find that when a child is *truly* ready to be toilet trained and they consistently wear underwear, it can be a speedy process.

The Importance of the Home and the Classroom Merging

Birthdays

To avoid hurt feelings, invitations to birthday parties should not be delivered at school unless everyone is invited. Special snacks for birthday celebrations are welcome at Maple Leaf. Please let staff know ahead of time so that we can accommodate children with allergies and special diets.

Celebration of Holidays

As we are a nonsectarian school, we do not celebrate holidays in any religious way, but rather with a focus on the family and cultural elements of holiday festivities. We also try not only to include traditions from all belief systems of the families in the school, but to understand and foster respect for the customs of people everywhere.

While children appear to enjoy holidays, working with them in a group reveals some problems. Even as early as September, stores have displays relating to the Christmas or Hanukkah holiday, three months away. Many preschool-aged children have difficulty with the concept of time. For example, they may not be able to understand time as it relates to when a parent/guardian will pick them up for the day or knowing when the Friday special walk is coming. For these children, and the adults who work with them, sustaining a level of excitement in anticipation of a holiday three months away can be unbearable. As adults, we might need three months to prepare for our holiday season. Children, however, still need to meet their other developmental tasks in physical development and social/emotional development (getting along with others and understanding themselves), while still being excited about the coming holidays. Sometimes it makes sense to not include holidays in the group care situation just because of this issue.

Our actions have deep and lasting effects on children in their cognitive development. We must acknowledge that our actions - and perhaps unconscious messages - also have deep and lasting effects on children's social and emotional development. Our goal is not to avoid celebrating the holidays, but rather making sure that we observe them with an age-appropriate perspective and maintain a balance within our programming. Parents/guardians are encouraged to participate and share their family's traditions during any time of the year in our classrooms.

Childcare Licensing Information

Maple Leaf Children's Center is licensed by the State of Vermont's Child Development Division. A copy of the regulations is available for review at the facility as well as available online. The web address is:

https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Docs/Licensing/CBCCPP_Regulations_FINAL.pdf

Fees and Continued Enrollment

Maple Leaf's tuition payments are PRE-PAID on the 1st of each month and are due no later than the 10th to avoid a late fee. If you anticipate any problems meeting this schedule, please contact the Director and a payment plan that works for your family can be discussed. If payment has not been received by the 10th and a payment plan is not in place, a late payment fee of \$25 will be charged. If payment is not received by the 15th, your child may not return to school until a payment has been made or a payment plan has been arranged. There will be a \$35 return check fee assessed for any checks that do not clear.

Maple Leaf tuition is based on enrollment – not attendance, so no refunds can be made for illnesses, vacations, or other absences. The center's operating costs do not vary with individual absences; it isn't possible to make individual fee adjustments. Also, any savings from closing the center for holidays are spread over the entire year to keep tuition as low as possible.

If you have to withdraw your child during the school year or decrease your child's schedule in any way, **we need at least THREE WEEK'S notice.** This is not intended to be punitive, but rather to provide us with enough time to fill your child's spot and adjust staff schedules accordingly. If this notice is not given, you will be expected to pay for the 3 weeks even if your child is not in attendance.

Please inform teachers of any changes (i.e. family separation, one parent/guardian has to take a trip, new baby, loss or illness in the family, moving, parents/guardians changing jobs, etc.) before they happen or as soon as possible. Changes at home often lead to changes in behavior at the center. We can care for and work better with your child if we are aware of the changes at home. It is of utmost importance that you notify the center of any changes in address, phone numbers at home and at work, caregivers, or emergency phone numbers.

Grievance Procedure

It is Maple Leaf's philosophy that we model appropriate problem solving and conflict resolution for the children. Hence, it is our feeling that as adults we must also practice these methods ourselves. When a staff member has a problem or challenge with a co-worker, a parent/guardian, the Director, or anyone else they are in association with through Maple Leaf, he or she is encouraged to speak with that person first. The Director is available to provide support and guidance as needed to assist effective resolution of issues. If speaking with the person directly does not resolve the problem or any person does not feel satisfied with the proposed solution, he or she should communicate the issues to these persons in the following order:

For issues with Teachers, Substitutes, or a child's guardian or family member:

1. The Director
2. The Board Chairperson
3. The full Board of Directors
4. A mediator agreed upon by all parties

For issues with the Director:

1. The Board Chairperson
2. The full Board of Directors
3. A mediator agreed upon by all parties

Hours of Operation

Maple Leaf Children's Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Over the course of the school year, we close for major national holidays, two staff development days, two professional weeks, and an occasional snow day.

Holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving, the Friday after Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, and July 4th

We also close for the 3rd week in August (prior to the start of the school year) and the week between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Maple Leaf offers two schedule options: School Day - 7:30-3:30 or Full Day - 7:30- 5:30. Children registered for our Early Preschool or Preschool program must be enrolled for a minimum of 16 hours a week. We require this to ensure consistency for the children in our program. On occasion, if there is less than 16 hours available a child may be permitted to attend for fewer hours with the understanding that they will move up to a minimum of 16 hours per week as soon as the extra hours are available.

Immunization Policy

Before attending the program, a copy of your child's immunization record *must* be on file at the program site. It must conform to the schedule of immunizations determined by the Vermont Department of Health. Exceptions will be made only if families have religious, or medical exceptions. These must be documented and kept in your child's file at Maple Leaf.

School Cancellation Policy

Maple Leaf will typically close when Thetford Schools close for snow days. We do not, however, automatically close when the Thetford Schools close and encourage families to seek out closing information specific to Maple Leaf via local news and email updates. We are also on WCAX where school closings are relayed via local channels and the WCAX website.

Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children, you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher in the mouth, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting –more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.

- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, only excluded if more than two cases in center, and then may return when on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours, without over the counter medicine.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.

- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious,
and
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage
through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

**** During a pandemic, these health guidelines are subject to change. All changes will be communicated with families.**

Maple Leaf's Emergency Response Plan

We cannot predict when a disaster might strike, but we can be prepared!

The Child Care Team at Maple Leaf will ensure that the children are well cared for, including if they need to be evacuated from the center. We have an emergency plan of action in place that is practiced throughout the year. First aid will be administered to those in need. Phone calls will be made as soon as possible to inform families of the situation and when / where they can pick their child up.

The following are the Response Actions taken:

Evacuation: May be inside or off-site and is activated when necessary for staff and children to exit building or an incident in the building poses an unsafe condition.

Secure Campus: Action taken when program has been threatened from the outside (non-custodial parent, crime in progress near program, etc.).

Drop and Cover: Action taken to protect staff and children from explosion, earthquake, tornado, or gunfire with no warning.

Lockdown: Action taken to clear children and staff from all common areas/hallways and secure them in classrooms or other designated Areas of Refuge (safe areas).

Reverse Evacuation: Action taken to bring all children and staff back inside the building quickly to avoid a dangerous situation outside.

Shelter in Place: Action taken to shelter staff and children inside the building in the case of a Hazardous Material incident.