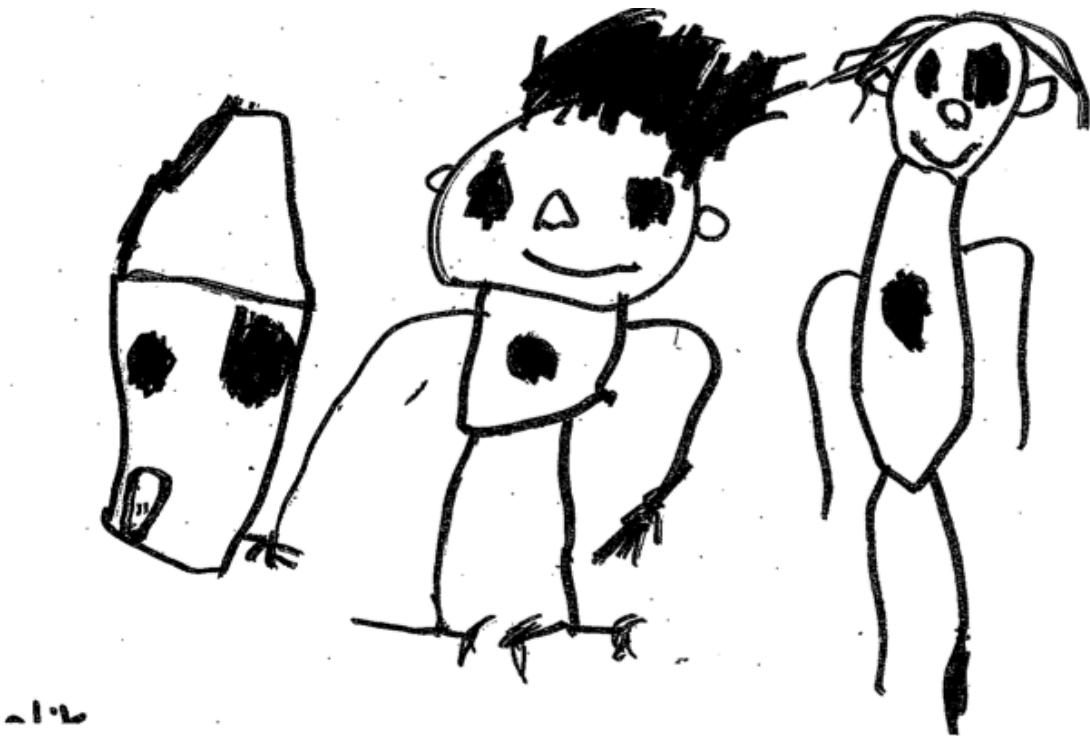


**Bellows Free Academy
Preschool Handbook
2023-2024**

A play based inclusive preschool program



75 Hunt Street, Fairfax, VT 05454

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WELCOME

Welcome to BFA Fairfax Early Education Program! We look forward to having your child in our program and working with you to meet your child's needs. This handbook explains our program's philosophy, goals, procedures and policies. Please feel free to ask questions and make suggestions. We believe that you are your child's first and main teacher and look forward to being an educational partner with you on behalf of your child.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of our district's Early Education program is to nurture young children's sense of wonder while laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning through a play based, inclusive environment.

PHILOSOPHY

The BFA early education program is based on the belief that young children learn best through active involvement in their environment and develop their skills and knowledge through these experiences. This involvement promotes the growth and development of the whole child; physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually.

We believe that children learn best in a hands-on environment that is nurturing, inviting, and supportive to experiment and take risks. Ultimately, children are encouraged to embrace their own specific learning style. Our classroom learning environment is designed to make children feel safe physically, psychologically, socially and intellectually. This environment allows children to explore and interact with adults, other children and to self select a variety of materials. With compassion and insight, we implement best practices in our work with young children across all developmental domains.

Teachers focus on developing relationships, taking time to get to know all children, their families and background, their interests and passions, their learning styles and the way they think. Teachers act as facilitators: asking questions, presenting challenges, and supporting the children's efforts to make meaning. Sometimes teachers take a more active role by introducing new content, ideas and materials. Teachers create a community within the classroom where all children feel encouraged to share ideas and opinions. They observe, document, cheer and reflect in order to nurture children's self esteem and skill development. The children learn as much from each other as they do from adults in their learning community.

Teachers include families in the learning community. Each child's family and cultural identity is respected as partnerships are formed between home and school. Ongoing communication is vital so that teachers and families work together to support the uniqueness of each child's learning and development. Teachers are architects of a community of learners, wherein all children have a sense of belonging. Working together, teachers and families can fortify this sensibility outside of home and school, constructing a caring community into which every child can step with confidence. Childhood, we believe, is and of itself, important and to be cherished.

PROGRAM GOALS

Our Early Education Program will provide:

- A child-centered environment that encourages competence and self esteem.
- A positive, non-competitive atmosphere that fosters the acceptance of the uniqueness of self and others.
- A physical setting that allows a child to safely explore self-selected activities.
- An inclusive program that meets the needs of all children.
- A learning environment in which teaching means facilitating a child's intellectual growth through guided discovery in a prepared environment.
- An experiential, hands on curriculum flexible enough to meet individual and group needs.
- Developmentally sequenced activities that not only contribute to a child's total progress but are also enjoyable and meaningful.
- Effective communication skills (oral, written, listening, reading) that are interwoven into the child's daily experiences.
- Opportunities for family involvement that strengthen the educational program, enhance the child's experiences, and lay a foundation for the future of the home-school partnership.
- An assessment of each child's ongoing educational and developmental needs in terms of physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The positive approach to behavior management demonstrates the teacher's respect for students to do their best. In the preschool classroom, the focus is on guiding children's behavior in positive ways so they learn self-discipline. Children are encouraged to express themselves by talking through their problems when conflicts arise. Teachers support children in making choices to change inappropriate behavior. Teachers act as mediators, modeling and facilitating communication rather than directly solving children's problems. On occasion, a child with challenging behaviors will need a plan with goals developed jointly by the school staff and family to help the child learn more appropriate skills and to ensure the safety of the child and others within the classroom. Our goal is to maintain all children within our program. Our goal is to help children learn how to interact in acceptable ways, become "problem solvers" themselves, and relate to others in a caring and respectful manner.

EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM STAFF and CONTACT INFORMATION

Early Education Teacher	Caryn Zambrano	czambrano@fwsu.org	849-2222
Early Education Teacher	Erica Marcelino Howard	emarcelinohoward@fwsu.org	849-2222
Early Childhood Special Educator	Chelsea Metayer	cmetayer@fwsu.org	849-2222
Speech/Language Pathologist	Francisca Ovitt	fovitt@fwsu.org	849-2222
Teacher Assistant	Desiree Vatter	dvatter@fwsu.org	849-2222

ADMINISTRATION AND CONTACT INFO

Principal
Director of Student Support Services
Director of Curriculum

Tom Walsh
Rachel McIntyre
Scott Thompson

School Telephone
School Fax Number
School Website

BFA 802-849-2222
849 2611
www.bfafairfax.com

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Early Ed Daily Schedule

We have three schedule options for next year:

1. Morning session:
 - Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8:00-11:20
2. Afternoon session:
 - Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 11:50-3:10
3. Extended Days:
 - Monday, Wednesday 8-1

SCHOOL CLOSING / DELAY

Notification of school closing will begin around 6:00 a.m. via BFA's School Messenger System. Other means of notification will be made through Schoology and over radio stations (VPR, WWSR, WVMT, WXXX, WIZN) and television stations (Channel 5 and Channel 3).

PROCEDURES

DROP OFF /PICK UP- SIGNING IN/OUT

Child care licensing regulations require you to sign your child into and out of the classroom each day. This can be done when you bring your child to the preschool classroom at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day when meeting us at the awning by the Elementary School door #16.

We will open the doors at **8:00 a.m.** daily. Due to various meetings and student services, the classroom is not available for early drop off or late pick up. Please pick up your child no later than your scheduled time.

DAILY NEEDS

Backpack - It is important that your child has a standard size backpack or bag to transport artwork and other important papers. Please label their backpack with either the child's name or initials. (Keep in mind that backpacks should be large enough to hold a 9x12 folder without bending it. Backpacks without wheels are best). Your child will receive a school folder that should remain in his/her backpack to be used for school notices, "daily highlights", newsletters, and other parent-school communication. Please be sure to check this folder each school day for any information sent home from school. We will also check the backpack daily for incoming communication from home.

Clothing- For everyday wear, choose simple clothing that can get messy and that your child can handle by him/herself. Make sure children are properly dressed for the weather as we do go outside for recess as much as possible. **Shoes must be worn at school at all**

times. When weather requires wearing boots to school, please send shoes to change into. Please provide an **extra set of clothing** in a labeled Ziploc bag. These clothes will be kept (in your child's backpack in case they are needed) at school in case they are needed. Please **label all clothing**, especially sweaters and jackets that may get left behind. Winter weather clothing is always a challenge to both parents and children alike. Encourage your child to be as helpful and independent as possible when preparing for cold and snowy weather dressing. (Suggestions: Sneakers have proven to be the best choice of footwear. Sandals are often unsafe during outdoor play on the mulch and climbing equipment. Mittens are much easier for children to put on than gloves)

Pull Ups- Please send in extra pull ups and wipes if your child is toilet training. Communicating directly with the staff may be helpful so a consistent plan can be followed both at school and home.

CLASSROOM PROGRAM

The children will participate in a variety of different activities, such as:

- Choice time: promoting development of social and cognitive skills through children's independent activity choices
- Small and large group activities including: language arts, fine motor, developmental concepts, art projects, math and/or scientific inquiry, circle/meeting
- Story time: with stories, puppets, songs and finger plays
- Large motor activities: outside play and group games
- Specials: Library

The classroom activities presented will relate to the children's interest. Families will be provided with communication that highlights the learning that occurs in our classroom through our newsletter, blog, or daily note home.

The children in our program are invited to share in other age-appropriate activities that occur at school. These may include puppet shows, concerts, and other special educational events provided by other classes and community groups.

SNACK and LUNCH

Please provide your child with a healthy snack that includes a drink and an ice pack. Suggested healthy food items are as follows: fresh fruit , vegetables , cheese, hummus or yogurt, Fig Newtons, raisins, bagels and cream cheese, animal crackers, Graham Crackers. Please do not send candy, sugary snacks or soda. Children will be encouraged to serve and feed themselves. Snack time is an opportunity for adults and children to have wonderful small group conversations and it is a time for meaningful and relevant learning.

For students joining the morning session, students can access breakfast at school or bring their own. Students in the afternoon session can access lunch at school or bring their own. Students in the extended day can access breakfast at school or bring a snack, and will be able to access lunch or can bring their own. We ask that snack be sent in separately from lunch to help students know what to eat each meal time. Per the new childcare regulations please be sure there are 2 ice packs included in your child's lunch.

On occasion, we do prepare special snacks at school. Please let us know if there are any dietary restrictions such as allergies, intolerances, religious dietary requirements, or other special dietary needs. We will work with you to accommodate your child's dietary needs.

CELEBRATIONS

Sometimes, families like to send in a special snack to share with the class for a birthday or special occasion. Due to food allergies, it is our policy to celebrate birthdays in ways that keep our children safe. **Advance notification of your snack plan is necessary to ensure the safety of all children.**

If you choose to send in a snack, your child's teacher will inform you of any food allergies that may be present in your child's class and must then approve the snack before it can be served in the classroom. If you plan to send in a purchased item, please bring the original packaging which lists the ingredients in each product for the teacher to review for approval.

Alternative ideas for sending in baked goods are: providing a special activity or craft and non-baked goods (for example, fresh fruit, cheese and crackers, etc...)

HOLIDAYS

Holidays are special times when families and cultures celebrate and pass on traditions to children. Customs and traditions among the preschool families are diverse so the preschool does not sponsor or endorse any particular set of holiday practices. We introduce many traditions around the world but leave the religious aspects of celebrating for families to share at home. We do, however, encourage parents to share their specific traditions and celebrations with our class.

SCHOOL PICTURES

School pictures are offered in the fall. Picture Package information will be sent home to you along with the specific date and time for "Picture Day". Class pictures as well as individual photos for student records are taken on this day. If your child is not scheduled to be in school on that particular day, we will have your child's picture taken on the "Retake Day". Please return the forms to your child's teacher **before** your child's picture day.

BOOK ORDERS

Once a month we will send home order forms for you to purchase books for your child through one or two of the book clubs that make books available to schools at reasonable prices. Sometimes, we may make suggestions about books that we know are particularly good. Please do not feel you must order books at any time. This is just an option that we extend to parents as an inexpensive way to increase your home library. If you prefer to order **On-Line**, please let us know and that option can be made available.

When ordering, please make sure that:

1. Your child's name is on the order form
2. Checks are made out to the book club itself (not to the school or teacher)
3. The money and order form is sent in a sealed envelope with your child's name as well as the purpose of the funds (Book Order) written on the outside

PROGRAM COMMUNICATION

Program updates will be sent home to keep parents informed of events happening at school. Some online communication may be accessed through SeeSaw providing some photos and classroom news as well as links to additional family resources. Access is available to families by invitation only and is another way to receive school information. "Classroom Highlights" sent home weekly in your child's folder will be the primary written source of information for program activities and should serve as "conversation starters" at home. Talking with your child about what he/she did in school strengthens the home-school connection for your child and helps develop oral language skills. As always, feel free to contact us at school whenever the need arises.

CONFERENCES

Parent/Teacher conferences are typically in late fall and at the end of the school year. During conferences we will reflect on your child's performance in the classroom program covering areas such as social interactions, personal responsibility, and basic skill development as assessed through the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment measure. A conference may be requested by the Early Education Staff or by a child's family at any time during the school year. Please feel free to contact us at any time.

POLICIES

Licensing and Accreditation

The Early Education Program at BFA has been awarded Five Stars (the highest number awarded) through the State of Vermont's "Step Ahead Recognition System." The program is also licensed through the State of Vermont through the Child Development Division. A

copy of the state licensing rules and regulations are available and on display in each classroom. We also operate under the policies adopted by the BFA School Board. These policies are available for you to review in the main office of BFA and include no smoking on school grounds and drinking water that has been tested and is free from lead. A copy of the School Health Policy, as it pertains to the Early Education Program, is included within this Handbook. Parents will be asked to participate in questionnaires during the year to help in our self-evaluation process.

Enrollment Procedures

1. Register your child for a school based screening at the beginning of April by contacting the program.
2. Once confirmation of placement is sent please pick up a registration packet from the guidance office and return by the appointed deadline.
3. Permission forms (medication, transportation, field trips, picture day, volunteer opportunities, emergency medical attention, ...) will be completed at Parent Information Night.

Parent Access

Parents can access our program and their child(ren) at any time without prior notice. Each child's documents will be maintained for 365 days after a child's last day of enrollment or attendance. Each child's documents will be made available to a child's parents within 5 days of the request.

Pick-up Authorization

Only those listed on your registration form will be allowed to pick up your child from preschool. We must be informed in writing each time your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent or person listed on the registration form. When this is to occur, please remind the individual picking up your child that he/she must have proper identification (e.g. license) for us to release your child to him/her.

Emergency Plan

Our program follows the Emergency Response Plan of our elementary school for a range of emergencies, both natural and man made, including fire drills, lockdowns and leaving the premises. Parents are notified of emergencies through the school's Messenger System, which will inform you of the relocation site. Teachers maintain an emergency kit with necessary supplies, medications and contact information to maintain the safety and supervision of our children. A complete evacuation plan is available for you to review in our school office.

Confidentiality

All members of our staff shall maintain confidentiality regarding each child and family enrolled in our program. Information is only shared when parental permission is specifically granted, except to the Division or other entities with statutory authority for issues relating to the health, safety and protection of children. This includes records, files, videotaping, tape recording, photographs, assessments or any other type of documentation.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All school employees are mandated reporters. Therefore, we are required by state law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to The Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF) within 24 hours of an incident.

Abuse is defined as a physical injury inflicted by a parent or other person responsible for the child's care by other than accidental means, or any other treatment, including sexual abuse, which places the child's life, health, development or welfare in jeopardy.

Neglect is defined as the abandonment of insufficient care of a child by parents, guardians, or other custodians, i.e., lack of proper food, clothing and supervision.

HEALTH POLICY

Well Care Exam: Within 45 days of enrollment a copy of your child's age appropriate well care exam is needed for his/her file. (form attached) *This is a state licensing requirement and must be signed by a physician.*

Immunizations: All students shall be adequately and appropriately immunized for his/her age in accordance with the Vermont Department of Health recommended schedule. If the child has not been immunized due to a Vermont allowed exemption. A copy of the Vermont Department of Health Exemption form is needed for his/her file.

Injured Students: If we are unable to reach the parent/guardian, the school nurse shall exercise judgment regarding what procedure shall be followed

Allergies: Families with a child identified with life-threatening allergies should contact the school nurse to share medical information and determine what procedures need to be taken. Providing a safe environment for students with life-threatening allergies does not mean an environment guaranteed to be free of the allergen, but one in which precautions have been identified and undertaken to minimize exposure to an identified allergen/s.

Illness: When all efforts to reach a parent/guardian or designated caretaker fail, the sick child shall remain in the nurse's office, under supervision, until time for dismissal

Signs and Symptoms Illness Chart: Teachers will use the Signs and Symptoms Illness chart to assess whether a preschool student needs to be seen by the school nurse. The school nurse will determine when a student needs to go home. The chart will help you decide whether or not your child should attend school. If a child is unable to participate in the daily routines of preschool because they don't feel well, then they should stay home. A copy of this chart is at the end of this parent handbook and can always be found in the Child Care Licensing Regulations book within your child's classroom.

Administration of Medication:

1. Most medicine can and should be given at home. Parents/guardians should give the first dose of any medication.
2. All medication administered at school will be given by the school nurse
3. Written permission from parents and the physician is needed to administer medication in school.
4. **Medication should be hand delivered by the parent or guardian to the school's health office.** To ensure your child's well being and the safety of our students, do not send any medication to school via the bus, backpacks or lunch boxes.
5. To administer medication must include the following for both prescription and non-prescription medicine:
 - Name of child
 - Child's date of birth
 - Any medication allergies
 - Medication must be in its original pharmacy container and properly labeled for the child
 - Name of medication
 - Dosage to be given
 - Time when medication is to be given
 - Route of administration (mouth, ear, nose, topical, inhalation)
 - Reason for the medication
 - Start and end dates for administration of the medication
 - Administered prior to the expiration date on the container
 - Any other special instructions.
6. Un-used medication will be returned to the parent when no longer needed by the child.

VOLUNTEERS

Building a strong partnership between school and home is a priority for our preschool program. Therefore, family members are encouraged to become involved in their child's education. Many opportunities will be offered throughout the year for you to participate and support your child's learning and development. Please let your child's teacher know if you are interested in becoming a classroom volunteer which typically begins in the month of October. **Volunteers must complete a background check form online prior to volunteering in the classroom or attending a field trip.** If you do not have internet access at home, please call the school office and they will complete the process for you over the phone. Let us know if you have some expertise or special interests to share or would like to spend time at home working on materials for the classroom.

Process for Sharing Concerns:

1. Parents are encouraged to address all concerns and complaints with their child's teaching staff (Early Education Teacher, Early Childhood Special Educator and Speech/Language Pathologist).
2. If concerns are unresolved after talking with the teaching staff, or if the parent doesn't feel comfortable with talking to the teaching team directly, the parents are encouraged to set a time to meet with the school principal.
3. At any time, complaints and concerns can be shared with the Child Care Consumer Line by calling 1-800-649-2642
4. Parents can access the Center Based Child Care and Preschool Program Regulations which are posted in your child's classroom or by accessing them online at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/child> care licensing