



**The
Patchwork
School**

Family Handbook 2018-2019

This handbook is designed to give you information about the school's policies and practices. There is also a wealth of information on our website regarding our philosophy and inspirations. We hope you find both the handbook and website to be helpful, and please do not hesitate to contact us regarding any questions or concerns you might have. Our goal is to have open communication with parents to ensure the best possible experience for you, your children, and the community.

-The Patchwork Staff & Board

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MISSION STATEMENT

PATCHWORK IS: RECREATING SCHOOL, SO CHILDREN AND ADULTS LEARN THROUGH MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE AS CITIZENS OF A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY, ADVOCATING FREEDOM, RESPONSIBILITY AND COMPASSION.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

To foster an equitable, nurturing, and stimulating environment for educational experiences and community building, The Patchwork School affirms that its students, staff, volunteers and guests have a right to be free from discrimination. We invite all people to participate in the activities, events and community of our school. We do not discriminate on any basis (cultural background, ethnicity, race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, sex, disability, marital status, immigration status or spirituality) in the administration of our care, instruction, admission, employment, or tuition assistance policies.

DESCRIPTION

The Patchwork School is an innovative non-profit organization promoting children's rights and meaningful educational options for all, at the heart of which is a community-based democratic school for young children, located in Louisville, Colorado. By respecting children as people with ideas, interests and opinions, and by utilizing our community's resources, we have created an experiential learning environment that fosters critical thinking and problem solving, develops communication and leadership abilities, nurtures self-confidence and self-direction, promotes compassion and sustainability, and most of all preserves a passion for learning. Through the school, our parent education, teacher training, and community building, we advocate freedom, responsibility and compassion in community.

CONTACTING US

- **Hours of Operation** – 8:00am-4:00pm, Monday through Friday
- **Phone** – During our Hours of Operation you will be able to reach us at: 720-271-6729. If we are unable to answer, please leave a message. Messages will be checked periodically throughout the day and calls will be returned as soon as possible.
- **Fax** – Our fax is 303-604-4365. You may use this to fax us any forms for registration.
- **Email** – The best way to reach us outside of our normal operating hours is by email. Please email scheduling and any concerns to info@thepatchworkschool.com. You may also email your child's teacher (*firstname@thepatchworkschool.com*) for specific questions relating to your child.

THE PATCHWORK SCHOOL'S NON-NEGOTIABLES

Guidelines for Patchwork board, staff, students, parents, interns and volunteers: *The primary expectation at Patchwork is a willingness to deepening one's self-awareness and engaging with the community in a respectful manner. All community members are expected to take responsibility for their own responses and reactions, to engage in the ongoing process and be open to learning and feedback. The following "Non-Negotiables" are intended to help clarify our philosophical goals and be a guide. This is a "living document" where the essence of each point is held but perhaps the exact wording or implementation is fluid.*

1- View of Children & the world-- We share a basic understanding that:

- Children must be respected and taken seriously; we treat children as capable people, coming to the community with their own identities, personality, ideas, and valuable opinions.
- We actively see life, and especially childhood, as a time where people develop into themselves, thus we build our days so that each person can be actively engaged with their personal process towards self awareness.
- Much of the world operates from a punitive space but we strive to be more restorative: rather than using punishment/rewards or seeing each other as perpetrator/victim we seek to understand the underlying needs behind behaviors.
- We value all forms of experience, this means students and community members will experience both success and failure, and that learning happens at different speeds.
- We view parents as partners in the learning process and vital to the life of our school.
- We believe that when we offer children tools and opportunities to speak their minds, they will learn to stand up for themselves and each other, allowing them to become agents for change in the world.
- Our current education system often perpetuates structures in our society that are unjust and unsustainable. At Patchwork we strive to model an alternative; in our daily work in the community we strive to care for each other, the earth, plants and animals. We expose children to topics and situations that face our world, offering opportunities for students to think critically and create solutions.

2- Communication-- We strive to use respectful communication, verbal and written, to create shared understanding:

- We practice active listening and validation no matter how something is stated.
- We recognize that we cannot expect someone who is experiencing stress or trauma, especially stemming from oppression and/or violence, to state their concerns in a prescribed format.
- Addressing when someone shares an experience of oppression within the community is of the utmost importance.
- We strive to embody the willingness to share and receive feedback and a responsibility to be aware of our judgements and reactions when others disagree or hold different beliefs from our own.
- We strive to hold ourselves accountable for speaking from our own experience. And at the same time, avoiding shame, blame and judgement when communicating.
- We continuously work to hold marginalized voices as important and valid.

3- Learning Philosophy--

- We are challenging the status quo regarding the actual structure of "school."
- We place a high priority on the social/emotional well-being of everyone.
- We trust that learning is a process and that it will look different for each human; we acknowledge and support everyone's right to learn at their own pace and style as an individual. .
- At Patchwork our primary teachers are each other and the environment-we are all teachers and learners and co-constructors of knowledge

- We are committed to fostering self direction and self regulation.
- Play is important. Play is the natural work of children, and is the primary modality in which children learn, process and experience new things. At Patchwork, children will be found playing all throughout the day.
- We believe that children must have freedom in order to learn and that with freedom comes responsibility to one's community.
- We believe in teaching and modeling compassion so that children learn how to lead, to follow and to resolve conflict.

4- Democracy in Our Community-- We are a democratic school and community, thus, we take responsibility for understanding the meeting processes and communication agreements in conflict resolution, decision making, and when a non-negotiable is not upheld. This is a short summary of the conflict resolution meeting process - more details can be found in the Handbooks:

- When any member of the community wishes to raise a concern or notices a non-negotiable being broken, they may “call a meeting” with any other individuals.
 - Any party may then request a pause (ie. our “10 minute rule”, a teacher may ask a family to keep a child home for a day, etc.) until the meeting can be arranged, and so that everyone has an opportunity to collect their thoughts.
 - At the meeting, the first step is to offer all parties a chance to make an “I statement” expressing their feelings.
 - Next, each party can optionally state their want, need or goal.
 - Finally, the group as a whole works to find solutions that every person is willing to consent to.
- Any person can raise an “objection” should a proposed idea be intolerable to them, at which point they are encouraged to offer additional solutions.
- Should any party be unwilling to meet or if consensus cannot be reached, the concern can be raised to a mediation council (either a student mediation council or the staff/board mediation council) who will then support a resolution either through a meeting or some alternate solution. The board has the final say if matters cannot be resolved in this manner.

5- Social Justice-- To foster an equitable, nurturing, and stimulating environment for educational experiences and community building, The Patchwork School affirms that its students, staff, volunteers and guests have a right to be free from discrimination. We invite all people to participate in the activities, events and community of our school. We do not discriminate on any basis (cultural background, ethnicity, race, color, nationality, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex, disability, learning style, marital status, immigration status or spirituality) in the administration of our care, instruction, admission, employment, tuition assistance policies or any other process within our school and administration. Because of our commitment to being apart of creating a more just and sustainable world, Patchwork hopes to engage with these components of oppression in our community.

- Systems of oppression exist and everyone embodies these systems. Patchwork does not exist in a vacuum and therefore we must engage with these as they come up in our daily lives. We also strive to support children in engaging with these as well.
- Oppression in any form (sexism, racism, adultism, etc) is an act of violence and privileged identities are not oppressed for that identity.
- People who experience oppression are the experts of their experience. Rather than asking people who experience oppression to be responsible for sharing or educating others, we are committed to owning our privileges and seeking our own understanding of our roles as both oppressor and oppressed.

- We recognize our experiences are subjective and each person comes with their own perspective. There is an ongoing process of becoming aware of our own prejudices and privileges; this means that impact may be different from our intent.

6- Self-Awareness-- We strive to create community where people can show up as they are and be in relationship with others, therefore we continuously work on becoming self-aware by: striving to own our own needs, feelings and experiences while examining and challenging our beliefs. People who can trust their hearts and think for themselves are the same people who will take action when it matters.

7- Safety-- Our goal is to look to our children, our surroundings, and our community to make accurate assessments of the true risks at hand as we work together to protect the physical and emotional well-being, as well as the rights, of the children (and the adults) in our community. As such, we strive to:

- Create space for people to regulate their own sense of well-being and risk.
- Rather than constantly shielding or protecting, we encourage empowerment, and recognize that discomfort can be a part of the learning process.
- There is a difference between safety and comfort. We do not expect that being in a learning community will always be comfortable, in fact we know deep learning and understanding is uncomfortable.

8-Community-- We have a commitment to forming an inclusive and compassionate community, as community is the driving force behind our organization. We expect active participation of all members.

- Each member of the community has responsibilities that help keep the school operating. These responsibilities vary depending on position(s) held within the school, for example, each adult is responsible for paying certain fees that go towards keeping the lights on, learning materials, students are responsible for helping to keep their learning space clean etc.
- We value the voices of all members, and share responsibility for acknowledging our own and other's experiences and feelings.
- We recognize and celebrate that relationships are a natural product of this type of community, and we strive to maintain a clear boundary between professional relationships and personal relationships.
- We emphasize self care and understand any restrictions that keep people from being able to meet the needs of the community over the needs of one's self.
- By participating in this community we agree to be open, honest, and timely with payments and terms & conditions (such as financial requests, schedule, staffing etc), as well as with communicating our needs around any requests for exceptions from community responsibilities.
- We understand that different people need different forms of support, and we strive to support people and recognize the limits of our own capacity, which sometimes means that we support people in finding support elsewhere.

Again, it's good to remember that these are not rules, but are guidelines. There is no finish-line or 'final destination' in following these non-negotiables. Instead, we recognize the fluidity of learning and change. There are few role models for the implementation of these and similar philosophical goals. We are committed to participating in the process reflected in these "Non-Negotiables" to the best of our ability.

TEACHERS & STAFF

- **Directors** – Michele Beach is the Director with a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology, a teaching license for Early Childhood from the Colorado Department of Education, and a Director Qualification from the Colorado Department of Human Services. Michele (Mitch) Leonard is the

Assistant Director. For more background and biographical information, please see the “Teachers & Staff” section of the website. For additional information on the Board of Directors, please see the “Board of Directors” section of the website.

- **Teachers** – All of our teachers have been chosen based on their commitment to the Patchwork philosophy, their previous experiences working with children, and their educational qualifications in the field of Early Childhood Education. You can read the teachers’ bios and qualifications on the website.
- **Training** – all teachers and interns are certified in CPR and First Aid as well as Universal Precautions. Teachers are also all provided with at least fifteen hours of professional development each year on topics related to education, philosophy, licensing and regulations, child development, etc.
- **Hiring** – all teaching and staff positions, including the position of Director are re-evaluated by the staff and board each year. The executive committee must reach consensus each year on positions, salaries, hiring, promoting and any other staffing changes. All Staff members are required to have background checks, fingerprint checks and are checked against the National Sex Offender Registry.

PROGRAMS

- **Toddlers** – The Toddler program is open to children ages 1 to 3 who are able to walk or get around on their own well. There is one group of 10 children with two teachers for a student to teacher ratio of 1 to 5. Children may be enrolled for a minimum of two half-days and a maximum of five full-days.
- **Preschool** – The Preschool program is open to children ages 2.5 to 5. There are a maximum of 18 students per day with 3 teachers for a student to teacher ratio of 1 to 6. Children may be enrolled for a minimum of two half-days and a maximum of five full-days. Please note that children are not required to be potty-trained for any program.
- **Kinder** – The Kinder program is open to children ages 4.5 to 7 who are ready for Pre-K, Kindergarten or 1st Grade. There is one group of up to 14 children with two teachers for a student to teacher ratio of 1 to 7. Children may be enrolled for a minimum of two half-days and a maximum of five full-days. This program combines with the Preschool program in the afternoon.

PAYMENTS, FEES & DISCOUNTS

- **Registration** – There is a \$225 registration fee per child each year. The registration fee is non-refundable and will be pro-rated for students starting in the Winter or Spring quarters.
- **Tuition** – Tuition for all programs is paid on a quarterly basis and **must always be paid three months in advance**. Tuition must always be pre-paid and is **non-refundable and non-transferable**. Please see the website for tuition rates. The first quarter’s tuition will be pro-rated if the child is registered after the quarter begins. Please see “Explanation of Quarter Commitment” below for more information.
- **Tuition & Registration Deposit** – When enrolling via our online registration system, families should note that a deposit will be required and the remaining funds can then be paid upfront or monthly.
- **Sibling Discounts** – Any siblings (after the first child is enrolled) will receive a \$25 discount on Registration.
- **Drop-In** – Please see the website for Drop-in rates. Payment will be required on or before the drop-in date, or will be billed to you. Siblings who aren’t enrolled may drop in on a case-by-case basis, but will need to have all paperwork completed prior to first visit.
- **Payments** – Payments may be made in cash or check payable to The Patchwork School, or by credit card or e-check through the online registration system.

- **Returned Checks** – The returned check fee is \$25.00.
- **Late Fee** – If payment is received after the due date a \$25.00 late payment fee will be assessed.
- **Overtime Fee** – After a ten minute grace period, any late pickups will be charged \$10.00 for every ten minutes (or any portion thereof).
- **Tuition Increases** – Our goal is to keep tuition increases between 2-4% per year in order to cover cost-of-living raises for teachers and other rent and utility increases, while avoiding any large jumps in tuition which might be a strain on families.
- **Schedule Changes** – Parents may choose to change their child’s schedule at each quarter, provided that the requested days & hours are available. We will not make any schedule changes or refunds mid-quarter, unless you would like to add a new day, add an afternoon, or add new after care, and we have openings for the requested addition. Additions mid-quarter will be pro-rated.
- **Explanation of Quarter Commitment** - Unlike many child-care centers, our staff are not scheduled by the month or day, but are paid annual salaries, and are expected to attend weekly staff meetings and regular professional development trainings. What this means is that our teachers are committed to being here, and this is why we ask for at least a quarter commitment from you. Ideally we would like for families to commit and pay for an entire year upfront since that is what we ask of staff, however we understand that life changes occur, so our quarter scheduling is our compromise. We hope this helps you to understand why we are thus unable to do mid-quarter refunds and changes.

ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION

- **Registration Forms** – All registration and authorization forms must be received via the online registration system prior to the child’s first day.
- **Student Photo** – Please submit a digital photo of your child (to info@thepatchworkschool.com or via the registration system) prior to August 15th or first day for use on cubbies and other personal items.
- **Health Status Forms** – Health Status forms must be filled out by a physician who has seen your child for a well visit within the last year. The Health Status form must be received within 30 days of the first day of school. Health forms will also need to be updated at each well child doctor visit.
- **Immunizations** – Please have the certificate of immunization filled out by your child’s physician, along with the Health Status Form. If you choose not to have your child immunized because of medical, religious, or personal reasons, please sign the appropriate section of the form. This must be returned on the provided form prior to your child’s first day.
- **Asthma Forms** – If your child has Asthma, you will need an additional form signed by your physician (this can be our form or theirs). If they require an inhaler, it will need to be provided in the original packaging (with prescription label). We will also need the dosage and doctor’s directions either on the Asthma form or separate.
- **Allergy Forms** – If your child has any severe allergies requiring medication, you will need an additional form signed by your physician (again this can be our form or theirs). Any prescribed medication needs to be provided in the original packaging (with prescription label). Medication name and droppers must match the prescription exactly (ex. If prescription states “Benadryl” we cannot accept generic, or if prescription states “1 tsp” we cannot take a dropper with only mL).
- **Student Information Changes** – Whenever anything from the student information form changes, please be sure to let us know as soon as possible. It is important for us to have current medical, pick-up, and contact information.
- **Photos/Images** – We do use pictures and videos throughout each day to document the learning taking place so that we can share it with the children, with parents and so we can reflect on it as teachers.

This means we do need each family to sign our “Image Release” form. Images of children will always be used with first names only and will always be displayed in a manner that is respectful of the child. We ask that families please ensure that any photos shared with you digitally are kept for your own personal use and not shared further, especially if other children are in the picture.

- **Special Needs** – For any child with a disability, defined by the ADA as a “physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,” we will make all “readily achievable accommodations” possible, in accordance with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. Therefore, children will be accepted on a case by case basis. Children with disabilities will be fully integrated into the school’s regular activities. Teachers will work with parents to determine if and how the school can meet the child’s needs. The school may also offer various screenings which parents may take advantage of if they choose. Children with special needs may require additional health care plans which will be reviewed by the school nurse. Staff may reach out to various mental and/or behavioral health consultants or other experts for support as needed, however no child will be referred to or evaluated by any outside personnel without parental consent. Please see more information regarding Special Needs in our Special Needs Statement near the end of this handbook.
- **Diagnosing Disabilities** – As is mentioned in our Special Needs Statement, we are not in the business of trying to “label” or diagnose children, and we do not perform any screenings to determine social, emotional, behavioral, learning or any other such disabilities. As teachers make observations of your child, these will certainly be shared with you, and we may at times recommend that you look into additional outside support, screenings or therapeutic programs based on our knowledge and expertise in child development and our relationship with your child. However, we do not accept responsibility for or make any guarantee that teachers will always notice or be aware of a particular challenge that might typically be given a label or diagnosis.
- **Kindergarten Readiness** – Our philosophy is to be a social, emotional and academic support for children and families rather than “covering” a specific curriculum. Despite not seeking “kindergarten readiness” as a goal in and of itself, we do find that children are generally very well prepared for environments they will enter into after Patchwork, having practiced communication skills, self-awareness and responsibility and they are able to adapt and catch on quickly. Please let us know if you have concerns about this and/or would like support in helping you child prepare to transition to Kindergarten or any other place you may be headed next.
- **Individual Plans** – For children with special needs, for students with particularly challenging behaviors, for students that have broken a “non-negotiable” limit, for students displaying signs of an “emotional” emergency,” or in any other exceptional case, we reserve the right to call a mandatory meeting with the family. What this means is that for us to continue having your child attend, you will be required to meet with your child’s teachers and/or with a director to discuss the particular situation and participate in finding a plan moving forward that will support your child, as well as the other children and staff, in getting their needs met. In some cases there might be a recommendation for something simple such as a schedule change, and in other cases we may decide that additional support is required, such as a one-on-one teacher, play therapy, special repair meetings, or whatever the teachers and staff determine is necessary. In cases where a significant change is warranted, a two-week trial will often be utilized, giving everyone any opportunity to make observations and share concerns and reconvene to discuss a more long-term plan. Should a conflict between two children be part of the discussion, we will not ever guarantee that we can offer schedules where those children won’t see one another - instead we will work with all children and families to ensure that children can get space as needed and that any necessary repairs and conflict resolution strategies are in place going forward. We will also have a conversation about whether any credits can be offered for unexpected schedule changes, and

whether any additional financial commitment might be necessary for extra support staff. Our goal is always to come to consensus on how to proceed given the recommendations and needs of the staff and the desires of the family. If consensus absolutely cannot be reached, the decision will rest with the Executive Committee.

- **Withdrawals** – We ask that families give us as much notice as possible before withdrawing their child from school as it is helpful for all parties to be able to find closure and say goodbye. We do not offer any refunds of tuition. If tuition is not paid by the required date, we will have to assume that the child is being withdrawn and will offer their space to another family. The Patchwork School does not anticipate any scenarios under which an eligible student would be refused service – we hope to work with families to ensure that teacher, parent and child are all in agreement regarding the child’s needs. However, in the unlikely event that we are unable to reach consensus with a family regarding any issues that may arise, The Patchwork School reserves the right to disenroll the child with no refund.
- **Immigration Status** -- We do not discriminate or request information regarding immigration status and will not report any information that is provided.

HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS, SICK DAYS & CLOSURES

- **School Holidays** – Please see the school calendar for closure dates.
- **Student Vacation/Sick Day** – Families will not be refunded for school days (or After Hours Care) missed for family vacations or student illness. Please notify us as soon as possible if your child will be missing one of their regularly scheduled days.
- **Extended Absences** – In some cases, if a student will be missing four or more consecutive weeks of school due to health, travel or otherwise, upon request and approval by the staff, the family may receive up to half of the missed time in drop-in credit, to be used within the same school year (it will not roll over to summer or future years). The drop-in credit can only be used as space is available. This will allow families some flexibility with extended absences, while also supporting the family and the school in holding the student's space.
- **School Closures** – The Patchwork School will be closed on all days for which the Boulder Valley School District declares a school closure (this could be for snow or other emergencies). There is always a chance that we will need to close the school for some other reason. In such a case (such as a natural disaster), parents will need to call the school office (720-271-6729) to reach an automated message that will contain updates about school closures. Feel free to call any morning to verify that school will be open. Again, no tuition will be refunded for any school closures.

ILLNESSES

- **Sick Children** – If your child appears to be too uncomfortable to participate, or seems to have an illness that could be contagious, we will ask that you keep your child at home. If they become sick while at school, we will call you to pick them up. We request that you keep your child at home until they are symptom free, fever free and/or on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school. If you are working, please be sure to plan for alternate care for your child when they become sick, as illnesses do occur more often in group situations.
- **Medication** – Any prescriptive or non-prescriptive medication can be administered by faculty members only with written authority from a physician AND written parental consent. You may use the form provided (available in the office) or any equivalent alternative. Epinephrine or inhaled/nebulized medication must also be accompanied by a written protocol (See “Allergy Forms” above). Please provide the medication in its original container with pharmacy label (if applicable) and labeled with your

child's first and last name. Medication will be stored in a child-proof area and administered only by a teacher that has been delegated with medication administration from the Nurse Consultant in compliance with the "Nurse Practice Act." All students with diabetes, seizures, severe allergies or asthma must have a Health Care Plan on file.

- **Lotions/Creams** – Topical preparations provided by parents, including diaper creams, lotion and bug sprays can be administered with written parental consent as long as they are not applied to open wounds or broken skin.
- **Contagious Illnesses** – Please report any contagious illnesses (including pink eye, strep, chicken pox, measles, mumps, hepatitis, etc.) to a director as soon as possible so that we may alert other families. Your child's name will be kept confidential. Certain illnesses and accidents must be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care. We abide by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment guidelines for infectious disease control in childcare and school settings, which can change at times to ensure the health of our community.
- **Cuts/Scrapes** – Due to licensing regulations, we are not permitted to apply antibacterial ointments or remove splinters. The mandated treatment of minor cuts and abrasions is to wash thoroughly with soap and water and apply a bandage. Such an injury will be communicated to parents with a "Bandaid Receipt."

EMERGENCY & SECURITY

- **Pick-up** – Children will only be released to the adults for whom written authorization has been given. In an emergency, the child may be released to an adult for whom the child's parent or guardian has given verbal authorization. If the caregiver doesn't know the adult, identification must be required to assure the adult is authorized to pick up the child. The last teacher to leave the school each day will be responsible for using the sign-in sheets to verify that all children have been signed out. If for some reason a child is not picked-up at the end of the day, the teacher will attempt to contact the parent, guardian, and or emergency contacts until someone is reached that can pick the child up. If no authorized person is located after two hours, the teacher or director will notify the Police and/or Social Services. Overtime fees will apply. Please note that if a teacher senses that a child is genuinely uncomfortable about leaving with an authorized person, the child will not be forced to leave. Another parent or guardian will be contacted to come and pick the child up.
- **Contacting Parents** – In the event of an emergency, our first priority is to attend to the child(ren). Emergency services will then be called if necessary, after which parents will immediately be contacted. If we are unable to contact you, we will contact the emergency contact listed on your Student Information Form.
- **Contacting School** – If parents should ever need to contact the school, they should call the school phone number. If we are not able to answer, please leave a message. Messages will be checked periodically throughout the day and calls will be returned as soon as possible.
- **Door Code** – There is a security keypad on the door through which you will normally be entering and exiting. You will be informed of the code on your first day of school. Please be sure not to give the code out any more than is necessary. If you feel the code has been compromised, please let us know so that we may change it.
- **Emergencies** – If an emergency situation (such as a tornado warning, blizzard warning, fire, etc.) were to occur while your child is at school, you will be notified as soon as possible. You will be directed as to how and where you can pick up your child. Teachers will remain with the children until they are all

picked up. Certain incidents will be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care, as required.

Lost Child Emergency Procedure — In the event that a child cannot be located, faculty will begin by searching the immediate area. A director will be notified, as well as all other faculty as they are encountered. A faculty member will be assigned to stand watch at the front gate, and other faculty members will be assigned to each area of the school. If the child cannot be found within 5 minutes, 911 will be called and parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible.

MEALS & SNACKS

- **Snacks** – We offer a morning and afternoon snack time. These will occur roughly at 10am and 2:30pm, but times will vary according to the children’s needs and the various programs. Snacks are provided by parents and request that you try to meet the needs of the special dietary restrictions for your child’s program, as well as keeping sugar to a minimum. Please contact your child’s teachers to find out how to sign up.
- **Lunches** – Children will need to bring a lunch with them every day for which they are in attendance at lunch time. Please be aware that children will not be able to share any food from their lunch with any other child (including a sibling) due primarily to allergy concerns. We are not able to heat food up and we recommend including ice packs in lunches, as we are not able to store any lunch items in the refrigerator. Please be aware that children will never be forced to eat if they don’t want to, and may choose to eat all of their food at times other than the usual meal-times, as we encourage self-regulation. Also, see the Nutrition Addendum at the end of this Handbook for great food ideas and information!
- **Dietary Restrictions** – We will do our best to work with you to ensure that all of the children’s dietary needs are met, despite any restrictions you or they may have. However, if a child requires food that significantly differs from the menu for the rest of the children, we ask that parents either bring food or provide reimbursement for special items.
- **No Nuts** – We are a nut-free school, so no foods containing peanuts, tree-nuts, or other nut products may be brought into the school. Generally, at least one of our students has a severe, life-threatening allergy to nuts and thus it is critical to avoid any contact with this food. Please help us in reading labels before packing any foods for school – especially muffins, granola bars, cereals, etc. to check for “hidden” ingredients. If your child has eaten nut products before coming to school, please be sure his or her hands and face have been thoroughly washed before entering the building. Please note that Sunflower Butter and Soy Butter are both excellent alternatives to nut butters.
- **Milk/Drinks** – Please bring a water bottle or cup labeled with your child’s name so that they have access to it throughout the day. No juice or other drinks will be served except possibly for special celebrations. No milk will be provided, so if desired please provide in a leak-proof container in your child’s lunch box with ice pack. Please make sure that all drink containers are taken home each day to be washed (or for water bottles, at the end of the week).
- **Treats/Special Occasions** – For birthdays and other special occasions, we are happy to have parents bring in special foods. Please check with a teacher to find out about any allergies or other dietary restrictions of children that will be attending that day, and please bring a list of ingredients for anything home-made. Again, please try to keep sugar to a minimum.

DAILY LIFE

- **Drop-Off/Parking** – We understand that it can be very difficult to get young children to and from places on time because they don't really think of time in the same way that adults do. Therefore, we would like to encourage parents to drop children off anywhere between 8:50 & 9:20, or between 8:00 and 8:15 for morning care. Having staggered drop-offs allows us to welcome each child individually as they arrive, and helps parking to go more smoothly. Please do make sure that you park only in the spaces directly in front of the school. Please do not park in front of the businesses to the north or the south of the school or in the middle school parking lot. If you are visiting the school for any reason besides just dropping off or picking up or expect to stay longer than about 10 minutes please use alternate parking in front of a nearby residence (not business) or along Griffith street to the south in order to keep the traffic in front of the school moving smoothly. If you arrive during meeting or any other group activity, please remain with your child until the gathering is over to keep disruptions to a minimum.
- **Sign-in/Pick-up** – Please be sure to fill out all information on the sign-in and pick-up sheet. This will help us to ensure that your child is picked-up only by those persons authorized by you on the Student Information Form. Teachers will also use the sign-in sheets throughout the day to confirm that all children that are signed in are accounted for. Please be sure to pick children up early or on time (there is a ten minute grace period after which overtime charges will apply). Keep in mind that children will sometimes be engaged in an activity at pick-up time, so plan enough time to help them transition, change out of any wet or messy clothes, and gather their belongings.
- **Visits** – Parents and families are always welcome. Anyone else that would like to visit your child may also do so (grandparents, etc.) with your permission. Please let us know when they will be coming and ensure that they are prepared to show identification and sign-in upon arriving.
- **Television** – There will be no TV watching at school. Teachers may occasionally show the children a short educational video or clips from the Internet pertaining to something we are studying.
- **Computers** – Computers will be used with teacher supervision throughout the day for the purposes of research, communication, and expression. Computers are used for research only, not for entertainment, meaning no video games or movies.
- **Celebrations, Traditions & Religion** – We would welcome your help in celebrating your child's birthday or any other family holidays. Please let us know about any traditions you would like to share, and see the "Treats/Special Occasions" section above for information about bringing food. We do not have any religious affiliation and do not teach any religious curriculum. Should a student ask a question about religion, politics, or any other potentially controversial topic, we will support them in seeking out their own answers, being careful to help them find accurate information.
- **Walks** – We will occasionally take walks with the children to nearby locations. Please ensure you have given permission on the Student Information Form. Walks will likely be to the park, library, or other neighborhood facilities.
- **Field Trips** – Parents will be notified of plans for any field trips requiring vehicular transportation. Transportation will be arranged by recruiting parent volunteers. We would appreciate your help in volunteering, and may request small fees if appropriate. All children requiring car seats or booster seats will need to have their seats dropped off with them in the morning. All children will always be required to remain seated and securely fastened in the vehicles, and no parent or teacher will be responsible for driving and/or supervising more than four children at one time. All chaperones must carry a cell phone at all times so that they may immediately call 911 in an emergency. All chaperones will be provided with instructions as well as emergency contact information for the directors, teachers, and the children. Should a child arrive after a small-group field trip has departed they will be allowed to

join an alternate group. If a child arrives after an all-school field-trip, the parents will be required to bring the child to the field trip location and will not be able to leave the child at the school. If you do help drive, please be sure you are properly insured and provide us with a copy of your insurance card.

- **Outside** – We will ensure that children have an opportunity to be outside at least once a day when weather is permitting. Please be sure to bring clothing that is appropriate for the weather (including snow pants and boots when necessary). We will apply sunscreen to any child who remains outside in direct sunlight for more than ten minutes. We will provide sunscreen, but you are also welcome to provide your own (please label). We appreciate you bringing your child wearing sunscreen during the warmer months.
- **Naps & Still Time** – All children staying in the afternoon will be provided with an opportunity to rest and/or sleep after lunch or whenever they appear to need it. Nap mats with individual sheets will be available and children are encouraged to bring any blankets or comfort items that might help them to sleep. Due to licensing requirements, we are not permitted to wake sleeping children.
- **Diapering/Toilet Learning** – We do not require that children be “potty-trained” by any particular age. We ask that you provide any diapers or pull-ups that your child may require (cloth or disposable), along with a container of diaper wipes. During toilet learning, it is also a good idea to provide multiple changes of clothing, as accidents will happen. If your child is toilet learning, please be sure to let us know so that we may be as consistent as possible at school (although we will not offer any rewards). Children will be encouraged to use the toilet, but will never be forced to do so. If children have two accidents in one day, we will put them in a diaper or pull-up in order to manage teacher capacity and maintain cleanliness. An important piece of our philosophy is to meet the child where they are at while also meeting the needs of the community. We would be happy to meet with you to help support your family’s needs during what can be a challenging process.
- **Clothing Limits** – If children are hot, messy, or doing water play at school, we will offer that they can wear a swimsuit (inside or outside and weather permitting). If they do not have a swim suit, children in the Preschool or Toddler programs may be permitted to wear just a diaper or other appropriate clothing. School-aged children (5 and up) must always be wearing something more than underwear, but are also welcome to wear swimwear (weather permitting). Our general rule is that children must be clothed in something that would be appropriate wear for a public park.
- **Body Exploration** - It is natural that as a part of learning about the world, children will be curious about their own and others’ bodies. We respond to developmentally appropriate anatomy explorations without judgement and utilize appropriate and correct body vocabulary while redirecting behavior to appropriate activities for a school setting. We ask open ended questions to further understand the child’s curiosities and answer children honestly, with only as much information as is needed. We will also let parents know of any instances of a child exploring their body at school so that we can work together to respond with understanding to the child’s natural curiosity. All staff members are trained (and we offer training to Parents periodically) to respond to children’s questions and explorations about their bodies supportively with active listening. Staff members are mandated reporters of abuse and will always follow up on anything outside the norm.
- **Healthy Living & Breastfeeding** - In accordance with Boulder County Health Department’s “Healthy Eating, Active Living” (HEAL) recommendations for Caregivers, we abide by the following guidelines: We encourage families to bring healthy lunches with a variety of protein, fruits and vegetables and limited sugar, we never use food as a reward, we do not offer any sugary drinks, we ask that sugar is limited even for celebrations, we ensure that a significant amount of active movement opportunities are available every day, and we have no “recreational” screen time. In addition, we support breastfeeding

by offering spaces for breastfeeding, offering space in the refrigerator for breastmilk, and regularly conferring with families about their needs.

- **Items From Home** – It is important to the philosophy that we maintain an environment full of open-ended materials that meet our criteria for promoting social justice, creativity and critical thinking in play, and are communally shared. Therefore, we would like you to help us in holding the following limits. Items may only be brought from home if they fall into one of the following categories:
 - o They are a special comfort/lovey item that can be kept in the cubby for nap time or sad moments.
 - o It is something to be shared with the group at meeting and then put away.
 - o It is part of what the child is wearing for the day (such as a costume, but not costume accessories).
 - o It is for a pre-arranged offering for the day, to be shared with everyone (please speak to a teacher about how to arrange this kind of thing (for example, a child may want to share a game).
- **Supplies/Belongings** – Your child’s personal belongings will be kept in a cubby at school. Because some project work will be messy, please be sure that your child is dressed appropriately and that they have a change of clothing available. Please help children take home items they are done with to keep the cubby accessible. The following items should be available at all times:
 - o Extra clothing
 - o Diapers or Pull-ups (if applicable)
 - o Sippy Cups and/or water bottles
 - o Coats, boots, mittens, hats, slippers, etc.
 - o Blanket or other comfort items (if applicable)
 - o Swimsuit & towel (during the summer)

See the attached school supply lists for details on what school supplies to provide.

PLEASE LABEL ALL PERSONAL ITEMS (see our website for a labeling company)

- **Communications** – We strongly encourage parent involvement, and will make every effort to keep communication open and ongoing. Please be sure to speak with one of us whenever you have a question, idea, comment, or concern. We will also be communicating with parents daily at drop-off and pick-up, regularly through notes in parent mailboxes and documentation in the school, and monthly through newsletters. We will also offer “Learning Dialogues” between teachers and parents at regularly scheduled intervals, and can meet beyond that as needed.
- **Comments/Concerns** – We encourage parents to attend our parent meetings to voice any comments, concerns or feedback. If you are unable to attend, please feel free to contact any staff or board member.
- **Family Participation** – Besides regular communication, we hope that parents will be frequent participants in the daily lives of the school. We offer numerous ways for parents to volunteer, and various resources to help support you. Please see the “Parents” section of the website for additional information and the “Parent Education” statement at the end of this handbook.
- **Adjustment Period** – Children all respond differently to change. Some will be excited about trying something new, some will be nervous, and most will have both feelings at different times. It is normal for your child to cry when you leave, but it is also normal for them not to miss you at all. It is also normal for them to be anxious for the first few weeks and then fine, but it is also normal for them to be excited at first and then have a few weeks where it is more difficult to say goodbye. Keep in mind that the anxiety about saying goodbye is usually the most difficult part. Once the parent leaves, children are almost always fine within minutes. We will work with each family to find a drop-off routine that works well for both the parent and the child. Also, please know that if a child is truly having a difficult time

adjusting, and doesn't seem to feel better shortly after you leave, we will absolutely let you know so that we can work together to find a solution.

- **Conflict Resolution** – In order to support the children in conflict resolution, we use strategies found in democratic learning communities, specifically adhering to a restorative justice approach. Our stance on conflict resolution is heavily influenced by our belief in an education based on relationships within the learning community. This means that we will not use any treats or rewards, or punishments such as time-out. Rather than developing morals, punishments and rewards merely keep children obedient. Autonomy and self-regulation is encouraged by validating, listening and allowing children to construct their own understanding. At times we must contain children/behavior, but rather than using unrelated punishments, we help hold necessary limits as children infringe upon the rights of others in the community or break agreements. We view conflicts, either with the environment or with others, as opportunities for learning rather than something to be summarily extinguished. In this approach, the teacher appreciates all perspectives and works to create an inclusive community. In addition, the teacher begins with an image of the child as successful and capable of working through problems within a group. The teachers are committed to honest communication through questions and conversation. Thus the teacher's role is to observe, scaffold, and mediate as conflicts arise. We are always happy to meet with families to discuss strategies used at school, useful language, and ideas that can be used at home. Consistency in language and conflict resolution methods can further strengthen the connection between home and school.

EMOTIONS & SELF-AWARENESS

Our goal when communicating with children is to work with what is happening in the present moment, using the power of awareness to help support children in working *with* their emotions, rather than hoping that they will remember a specific set of strategies. If we can make space for feelings to be felt and understood, it naturally creates opportunities for kids to create positive emotion “concepts” in the brain, building resilience for handling a variety of situations.

We also recognize that one cannot “teach” self-regulation without practicing it themselves, so the most essential aspect of working with children is actually being willing to “work on yourself.” Society generally teaches us to set aside our emotions in order to “power through” or press on with the agenda. Traditional education in particular suggests that feelings are not welcome and are in the way of the learning process. “Chin up” or “pull yourself together” are often the main strategies offered to students.

Instead, our primary goal with regard to the social/emotional realm is to create a space where feelings are accepted as perfectly normal and people have opportunities to feel empowered to acknowledge their feelings and learn effective strategies for pursuing what they want and need.

In order for children to accept their feelings as a natural process, the teachers in the space must be willing to get in touch with their own feelings. It is important that our first response in ALL situations is to check in with our own bodies to assess what feelings we are bringing to the table, as there is no such thing as being truly “neutral.” Because humans (and other mammals) try to synchronize our experiences with one another to connect, the feeling (or arousal level----fight/flight/freeze) you are having is often very similar to what the child is feeling, and just by stating the feeling it can help create connection. Stating our feelings out loud is a very valuable tool to build connection to ourselves as well---as adults, we often rely on shutting down our feelings and using only logic to resolve situations, when sometimes all the body needs is simply time to feel fully what is happening while taking care of

our physical states as needed (through deep breathing, moving and stretching, etc.), without acting on feelings or labeling them as "wrong". As we learn how to accept and handle our own experiences, this then creates more space to approach the issue with openness and to solving issues with creativity and teamwork, as opposed to simply attempting to exert control over the situation.

Here is an example with phrases in quotes, bringing in the above information to illustrate how we are using the self-awareness tools described above to inform our scaffolding of a child in conflict/distress. There are many complex scenarios such as this every day, which is how and why our teachers have a lot of practice and professional development in the area of social/emotional development.

Example:

Child A is about to throw something at child B. I notice immediately that my body feels very tight/full of adrenaline, and I want to take the object out of child A's hand (I am having a fight response instinctually and I want to keep everyone safe). At this point, I would move in between the children, trying to assess the threat level more accurately. I might also say, "I feel scared, I want to make sure everyone stays safe" as I do this, giving language to the emotional sensations. Often, simply getting between the children will meet my immediate need for physical safety, as I am now a barrier between them. I might also take a big breath, modeling that I feel safe enough to take care of my body, and mentioning how it feels. It can be helpful to narrate my understanding of the situation in objective terms, checking assumptions and helping to build the child's understanding as well.

When it seems like the child is ready to think about a more proactive solution, it can be helpful to continue breaking the situation down into objective terms such as, "it sounds like you want a truck to play with" or "it sounds like you don't want people to take the thing you are using", helping the child to have the language to state their needs. This can also help to prompt the idea for a solution, such as "I wonder if you want to tell him you were still using that, and ask if you can have it back?" When it comes to problem solving, a guiding concept that we often repeat is, "I wonder what we could do that works for everyone?"

We want to be clear that we understand teaching and parenting is different, and also that "doing it perfectly" is not the goal. Instead, our goal is to model an openness to learning about the sensations in our bodies that we experience as feelings, and to offer children opportunities to gain social and emotional awareness that will lay the foundation for positive social connections in their lives.

PARENT EDUCATION & INVOLVEMENT

We are so fortunate to have such wonderful, involved parents, and we know that you understand how important your involvement is to your child and to the school. We like to think of it as "enrolling the whole family!" In order to create the type of community and school that we all want for our children and ourselves, we provide opportunities to hear everyone's voices, and means of participation that are exciting and available to everyone:

Community Events – Every month or two we offer a community event where parents, staff and community members can come together to experience the Patchwork approach. These will vary - some are park days, some are field trips, and some are work days or potlucks. There are generally

offerings for families, children, adults, and you can also bring your own offerings or ideas to share. Some past events and activities have been: Communication Workshops (see below), Parent Input Meetings (see below), Free Massage, Gingerbread houses, knitting circles, Camping Trips, etc. Please see the school calendar and check the emailed announcements for details.

Parent Input Meetings - We have a Board of Directors made up of parents, staff and community members that meets regularly, using a consensus model just as we do with the staff and with the children. All parents are invited to apply to be on this board. In addition, we host various parent meetings where everyone can hear updates about what is happening with the school, to meet other parents, and to make decisions about or bring up items of importance to you.

Parent Education – We offer various opportunities for parents to meet and/or gather to learn more about the Patchwork communication skills such as Listening techniques, Non-Violent Communication, and other topics that may come up. These may be Discussions with a Director, one-on-one meetings with parents, workshops, or community speakers. Please let us know if there is something you'd like to discuss in more detail.

Classroom Participation – We understand that parents are very busy people, whether you have a job outside the home or not. We know that you also want to play a role in your child's education, which is probably one of the reasons you have chosen Patchwork. Our hope is that every parent or guardian will make time to spend a morning at the school and/or find another way to contribute outside of school hours (whether this is joining a committee, participating in a work-day, or helping with an event).

SPECIAL NEEDS STATEMENT

At The Patchwork School, we believe that every child has their own unique strengths and their own challenges, and we strive to get to know each child as a person so that we can support him or her in the best way possible. Thus, we do not really think of a child with "Special Needs" any differently than any other child, but instead prefer to treat every case uniquely. We do also understand that some children will require additional support in order to accomplish tasks that may come more easily for a "typically developing" child. This could be a physical, learning, emotional, social, or behavioral challenge. We understand that certain challenges can make participation in various activities especially difficult. We strive not to "label" children, but to find strategies and resources that can help us to be properly equipped to meet the child's needs. We try to view any special challenges as opportunities for learning -- both for the child and the community. At times other children (and teachers) may need help learning how to work with a particular student which ultimately helps everyone learn how to be in community with (not just tolerant of) people that are different.

We also know that we must be realistic in our abilities to meet every child's needs and thus will evaluate each situation with regards to how well we can support the child, what effect that child may have on the other children, what strain any extra support needed will place on the teachers and other staff, and what the effect will be on the community as a whole. Working with a child that requires extra support can be both time consuming and stressful, and it is important for everyone involved that we not take on more than we can truly handle well.

Therefore, we will try to carefully evaluate whether or not we believe we currently have the resources available to accept a new child with Special Needs. After enrollment, we will work with each individual

family on a periodic or as needed basis to share observations, set goals, and discuss any necessary adjustments. Adjustments may include requesting that the family provide extra support people, special trainings for staff, access to necessary professionals, schedule changes, research or other data, etc. We will work with the family to ensure that we have consensus on the plan for meeting their child's needs and that everyone is working together to support one another.

SAFETY STATEMENT

We frequently get questions from parents about safety, including security, abuse policies, hitting, and other related topics. This is to be expected, given the weight of the decision that you are having to make. We understand that trying to determine who you want to place your trust in, when it comes to your child's well-being is not an easy matter. Therefore, we would like to let you know our philosophy regarding the topic of safety. First, the safety of your children is of the utmost importance to us. If children are not safe, then we are not meeting the most basic and necessary goal of our school. However, given that it is not always entirely clear what "safe" means, we want to define it more completely. To start with, we want to ensure that children **feel safe** when they are here, that they are kept **safe from serious injury**, and that their **social and emotional well being** is nurtured and protected. To this end, we adhere to all required safety measures, starting with background checks and fingerprinting as well as checking the National Sex Offender Registry for every teacher. We are licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services, have inspections by the Boulder County Health Department, and get fire inspections from the Louisville Fire Department.

We also strive to build solid relationships between teachers, parents, and the children. Strong, open relationships are our best defense against the undesirable aspects of the world. As we work with parents, and we encourage them to become a part of the community, we get to know each person individually, so that we know when someone new walks in the door, and we know who we can really depend on. As for teachers, we do not just interview them and hire them based on a resume. Instead, we ask them to spend some time in the school alongside a current staff member, allowing us to get to know them first. We even have out-of-town interviewees stay at our houses. Then, as a staff, we regularly have open and frank conversations and trainings about risks, concerns, safety, body and sex education and more. We have a community contract welcoming any member of the community to raise a concern, knowing that all issues are open for discussion. We also have a co-teaching environment that in a very natural way, ensures that teachers are not working alone, but are handling problems as a team. We have created a close-knit community rather than a collection of strangers.

In addition, we also believe that with the responsibility of the protection of children, comes a **responsibility for the protection of their rights**. Besides asking us to watch over your child, you are also charging us with ensuring that your child has the right to participate, the right to speak their mind, and the right to the pursuit of happiness. This responsibility is no less important to us, and in fact must even be more present in our minds, as society is often quick to punish for failing to protect, but rarely recognizes failures to allow. Thus, we seek to **balance the need for protection and participation** in such a way that honors adults' concerns and fears about safety, but at the same time also honors the child's need to take reasonable risks, to explore their world freely, and to experience success and failure first-hand.

We understand that parents are constantly bombarded with books, media, workshops, TV programs, and more, insisting that your child's safety and wellbeing depends on your adherence to a specific set of safety guidelines. We also live in a world where parents are blamed, and even persecuted, when any ill befalls their child. "Assertive advocacy groups, ambitious politicians, and sensationalistic media promote unrealistic fears... Real risks exist, but they are often far less than adults believe. Even when school shootings seemed to occur everywhere, Americans faced a far greater risk of being struck by lightning than falling to school violence" (Rudkin, Hall, 2010). Thus, we feel that any media that aims to counsel parents on how to keep their children "safe" should be considered carefully and utilized as provocation for discussion, but that we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be taken in by frightening statistics.

We believe it is important to ensure that children have opportunities to take risks. It is beneficial for them to experience the normal bumps and bruises that accompany a true and authentic experience, so that they have a chance to learn first-hand what the consequences of their actions are. Therefore, we want to create a space that is "...as safe as necessary rather than as safe as possible" (Rudkin, Hall, 2010). This allows the children to experience small risks in a safe environment where they are supported as they experience and learn to handle pain, disappointment, and conflict, as well as excitement, friendship, and joy. We work to empower children to say "no" to anything they don't like, to seek help when they need it, and to stand up for one another. **Our goal is to look to our children, our surroundings, and our community to make accurate assessments of the true risks at hand as we work together to protect the physical and emotional well-being, as well as the rights, of the children (and the adults) in our community.**

If you have additional specific questions about security, safety, or anything else, we are of course more than happy to talk with you in person, or on the phone. We also recommend the following resources, which echo our ideas about how we can approach the topic of children's safety, and from which we have drawn upon to compose the above statement:

RESOURCES

Barrett, Lisa Feldman (2018). *How Emotions are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*.

Siegel, Daniel (2012). *The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*.

Rudkin, J., Hall, E. (2010). *Seen and Heard: Children's Rights in Early Childhood Education*.

Skenazy, L. (2009). *Free-Range Kids: How to Raise Self-Reliant Children (Without Going Nuts With Worry)*

Bronson, P., Merryman, A. (2011). *Nurture Shock: New Thinking About Children*

Faber, A, Mazlish, E. (1999). *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*

Berkower, LCSW, Child Abuse Prevention Specialist/Educator. (2014). *Parenting Safe Children: Keeping Children safe from sexual abuse--in your community*.

- **Colorado Department of Human Services** – The Patchwork School is licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care, 1575 Sherman Street, Denver Colorado 80203-1714 (303-866-5958). This department is responsible for issuing and renewing licenses for child care facilities and handles all questions, concerns, violations, and complaints.
- **Boulder County Family and Children’s Services** – The Boulder County Department of Social Services handles reports of suspected abuse or neglect via a 24-hour telephone service (303-678-6247). We are required by law to report all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

ADDENDUM: NUTRITION GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES

We frequently get questions from parents about food, and so have compiled these nutrition guidelines, in conjunction with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to support families in creating healthy eating habits:

The focus around food should be on best practice vs. nutrition: “think long term!”

- Although it seems important, it’s not about getting them to eat vegetables “right now”; helping support children in developing best practice over time is much more successful in terms of helping your child develop healthy eating habits, rather than forcing the issue for an immediate result.
- Kids are born able to self-regulate food intake.
- Most children go through a picky stage around 3-5, this is normal.
- Over emphasizing the intake of certain foods, or avoidance of others, pressure, or focus on nutrition, is associated with disorder eating habits later in life. The over-emphasis on nutrition can impact mental/social health.
- Kids may be more sensitive to bitter tastes (possibly a protective mechanism), so when they say “it’s gross,” respect that this may be true. (but see below about continuing to offer foods)
- Remember, children do not need as much protein as adults. See further info at choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers.
- It can take exposing a certain food 20+ times to a child in 20 + different ways before they like it. Keep offering foods (if they are part of your “normal” family diet) even if your child has expressed dislike for them. However, include at least one food that they *do* like if you know you are serving a previously disliked item.

Things to avoid:

- Focusing/over emphasizing eating less or more food
- “You can eat this if you eat that first”
- The one bite rule (although it can get them to eat what you want them to in the moment, chances are it will cause stress and they won’t automatically begin to like the food. This is also a form of pressure/control)
- Putting values to certain foods by labeling foods as nutritious/healthy vs. not (not age-appropriate and not beneficial for developing overall healthy eating habits- actually is associated with disordered eating later on in life)
- Using food as a reward
- Restricting/forbidding all of one kind of food (such as sweets or salt) is associated with disordered eating later on (both over-indulgence and food restrictions)

- Putting desserts or treats on a pedestal

Supportive Ideas:

- Have more veggies and less “crap” around the house (“if you don’t want them to eat it, don’t keep it in the house”)
- Create a snack drawer or area at child level, full of snacks they can have at any time (you pick what you want to include here- nuts, seeds, dried fruit are some options. Or allow your child to have free reign of a fruit/veggie drawer)
- Make snack time, mini-meal time if you are noticing that “all they want are snacks” [Snacks For Kids](#) If you don’t want them just eating Goldfish, don’t have Goldfish as a possibility. Whole-grain crackers or apples paired with cheese or nut/seed butters are examples of “mini-meal” snacks.
- Add veggies to things you cook (muffins, smoothies, pasta etc..)
- Serve dessert with dinner and make it part of the meal
- Model eating foods and share observations about food **without** using the words “healthy” or “nutritious”
- Allow children to take part in the buying of and preparing of food
- Try serving dinner family style and allow children to serve themselves
- Remember that **healthy eating is flexible**
- Make meal time low-stress/pressure and limit the stress around eating in general
- Squeezies are okay as long as that is not the only exposure to the actual fruit/vegetable

Resources and ideas:

- Cooking classes for kids
- Whole Foods story times
- Farmers market
- Farms(7th generation etc...)
- Allow your child to pick something new from the store
- Kids cooking shows
- Themed food (Stone soup etc...)
- <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/>

These notes were gathered from a talk given by Joy Pieper, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Ph.D. in Nutritional Biology with a background in childhood eating behaviors. Thank you for this helpful information, Joy! See more at: Joyineating.com

