



Preschool

Family Handbook

AllTogetherNow! Preschool

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Welcome to AllTogetherNow! Preschool

AllTogetherNow! Preschool is a 5 STAR, licensed, multi-age, Universal Preschool approved, Early Childhood Education Program, committed to providing a nurturing, enriched environment for children to explore and grow. We are open year-round, Monday-Friday from 8am - 4:30pm, for children ages 3-6. We are centrally located in East Montpelier, on 10 acres, in a beautiful farmhouse, with expansive views, open fields, and a 500 acre wooded preserve across the road. Also on the premises, we also offer vacation/summer camps and after-school art classes for ages 7-13, Music Together classes for our preschool children, an in-ground salt water swimming pool offering swim lessons, and a variety of adult classes. Our facility also houses Art Tiles Studio, organic gardens, barnyard animals and the residences of friends and family.

Our preschool curriculum is designed to inspire learning across all developmental levels and learning styles by offering a wide range of learning opportunities through both thematic studies and free play. The children's social, artistic, intellectual, physical, and emotional development is nurtured through opportunities to explore art, music, dance, dramatic play, math, natural science, literature, cooking, gardening, animal husbandry, and cooperative games, without the use of T.V. or computers. Although we ask that each child is present for circle and mealtimes, participation in activities is optional, as we believe that children learn in many ways. We teach respect through loving kindness and do not tolerate violent or hurtful behaviors, even in play. We encourage alternatives that help everyone feel safe and involve children in problem solving, rather than punishment.

Throughout the year, we cycle through various curricular themes, such as insects, water, seasons, solar system, etc. Themes provide a focus for our explorations and help to inspire a love of learning. Many themes are chosen through observing the children's interests during free play. We often invite guest speakers from the community and participate in field trips. Parents are always invited to share traditions, experiences, and talents with us. We encourage you to further your child's understanding by connecting this learning to experiences at home.

Our Three Guiding Principles: Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Gentle

These principles are from a book called *Adventure Play*, by Nancy MacPhee Bower, in which she proposes them as a foundation for creating a peaceful community. Children can remember these three simple phrases, which cover most of their experiences in their social, emotional, and

physical world. They have an internal sense of what safe and unsafe are, what words hurt and don't hurt, and what actions are gentle and not gentle. Using these 3 Principles of Peace, all behaviors can be addressed by asking questions, such as, "are you being safe with that?" or "is that kind?", or "how can we play in a gentle way?". When situations arise we can allow children to reflect on, and be responsible for, their own actions, and also help each other be safe, kind and gentle. Please consider adopting these Principles of Peace in your own home.

We encourage alternatives that help everyone feel safe and involve children in problem solving, rather than punishment. For example, if a child is hurtful to another we first help the child verbalize their feelings and brainstorm other options of expressing their feelings that are not harmful to others. Next, we help the child choose an alternative and practice their choice. Finally, we ask the child to think of a way to help the other child feel better, such as offering an ice pack or hug. We find a positive approach much more successful than punishment or humiliation and have never needed to put children in 'time-out' unless they need time to cool down before solving their problem.

Positive guidance techniques may include:

- * Reflection and discussion around these three principles: Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Gentle
- * Guiding children through modeling and encouraging expected behaviors by setting clear, consistent and fair limits
- * Valuing mistakes as learning opportunities
- * Redirecting children to more acceptable behaviors
- * Listening and helping children talk about their feelings
- * Encouraging cooperation and respect among all children
- * Guiding children to resolve conflicts among themselves
- * Class Meeting
- * Role playing through puppets and storytelling

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. If in an extreme case where a child is having dangerous behavior repeatedly in a way where the child is not able to be safe or needs

one on one attention for a significant amount of time, the family will be asked to come pick up their child.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

In the event a child's needs or behavior are consistently outside of the realm of support for AllTogetherNow!, after attempts to adjust care within the context of our program, staff will notify parents in writing of the need to find a more suitable setting for care.

Music Together

AllTogetherNow! students participate in an internationally acclaimed music program taught by one of our teachers Brenda Mooney and musician Aro Venó. The program includes a new song collection every semester, Fall, Winter and Spring, featuring great arrangements of original and traditional songs in a wide variety of tonalities, meters, and cultural styles. Throughout the semester, the preschool will focus on the repertoire, woven into our daily activities. For more information about the Music Together program visit the website at www.musictogether.com.

Calendar Year

We are open year-round except for the following paid holidays: Town Meeting Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, and the days including and between Christmas and New Year's Day. We are also closed for two additional staff in-service training days, two days for parent-teacher conferences, and close one hour early, once a month, for staff meetings. A full school year calendar will be sent out at the beginning of the school year. We will close or delay for inclement weather if the Washington Central Supervisory Union district is closed. Also, if the electricity is out for more than 2 hours we will need to close. **To find out if we are closed or delayed due to inclement weather go to www.wcax.com. It will also be broadcast on most local TV and radio stations.**

Birthdays/Holidays

We like to celebrate each child's birthday and encourage you to bring in a low-sugar treat, such as muffins, to share. If you are unable to supply a treat, please let us know ahead of time so we

can plan to make something here. Please check with us concerning specific children's dietary restrictions.

We are an inclusive approach to holidays and try to present a variety of cultural and seasonal celebrations. Although religious aspects are not emphasized, they may be mentioned in a context such as, "some people believe...". Please let us know, in advance, if this is a problem. We also welcome you to share how your family celebrates a particular holiday.

What to Bring/What not to Bring

* Please bring a healthy lunch, 2 snacks, and a water bottle. (at this time, we no longer provide snacks, due to Covid) Please do not include any sugary treats (less than 8 grams of added sugar) - they will not be served.

* We supply spoons and forks. If you choose to bring your own, please label!

* Parents are responsible for supplying 2 clean facial masks, a fitted crib-size sheet, blanket, pillow, appropriate seasonal outdoor clothing and several changes of extra clothes. Also important is a waterproof suit, such as a Muddy Buddy, to protect your child in wet conditions. Please check often to be sure your child's box is sufficiently stocked.

*** PLEASE LABEL ALL PERSONAL BELONGINGS!**

* It is best not to bring special toys from home, especially if it is difficult for your child to share them, or if it would be difficult for your child if they were lost.

Daily Schedule

8:00-9:30am – Arrival/free play/thematic activities

9:30-10:00 – Snack

10:30- 11:00 – Circle time, library, or music/art class

11:00-12:00- Free outside play*

12:00-12:30- Lunch

1:00-1:30 - Wind down - mindfulness activities, stories, yoga, lullabies

1:30-2:30 - Rest time** We wake sleeping kids around 3:00, non-sleepers up at 2:30.

2:30-3:00 - PK Group activity

3:00-3:30 - Snack

3:30- 4:00 - Outdoor play, clean-up, pick-up

* We play outdoors daily if temperatures are above 10 degrees. Please send proper attire!

** Please try not to pick-up your child from 1:30 – 3:00 because it disrupts our rest time!

Arrival

Please remember to sign your child in and out each day on the sign in/out sheet at our entrance. There is also a column to write comments or information about your child that you would like us to know. Please check the sheet when picking up your child since we may write a note to let you know something about your child, such as accomplishments, concerns, or a minor injury. Also check for other notices posted in this area. Our current themes are written on the calendar above the sign in/out sheet. Let us know right away if there is any change in your personal situation, such as, contact numbers, residence, etc., or if your child needs medication of any kind, or if someone other than those specified will be picking up your child. Your child will not be released to anyone else without verbal or written permission from you.

Illness/Medications/Emergency

We must have on file each child's physician's name and telephone number, your preferred hospital's name and number, parent's home and work numbers and the name and number of another adult to contact in case of an emergency. The state also requires that parents give written permission, specifying dosage, content, and schedule of all prescription medications. Please give all medicines to an adult to administer.

For the wellbeing of your child and others, please keep your child home if they show any of the following symptoms:

* Oral temperature of over 99 degrees

* Diarrhea

* Severe coughing

* Pink eyes or yellow skin

* Vomiting

* Parasites

* Rash

We will contact you immediately if your child develops these symptoms or shows any unusual physical or emotional symptoms during the day. It is very important to let us know right away if there are any changes in your emergency information.

The State of Vermont requires that each enrolled child have on file at ATN a completed immunization record listing types and dates of immunizations. The record should attest that the child has been immunized in accordance with the schedule of immunization determined by the Vermont Department of Health.

If a child is not, or only partially, immunized for medical, religious or other reasons, you must give us a Vermont Department of Health Exemption Form. These forms are available online at http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2017/03/ID_IZ_CCP_annual_exemption.pdf

Immunization records are required to be updated on a yearly basis.

In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease present at the Center, all susceptible children—including those with medical or religious exemptions—are subject to the exclusion guidelines as described in the Vermont's Early Childhood Program Licensing Regulations.

Covid Protocol

We require:

Masks for students and adults indoors, **please be sure your child has 2 clean, labeled masks daily.**

Students and adults stay home if showing *any* signs of illness

If your child has been exposed to anyone that tested positive for Covid, please notify us and test daily for 5 days.

If your child shows Covid-like symptoms they must have a negative Covid test before returning to school.

Physicals

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, AAP.org A copy of your child's physical should be received before but must be received no later than 45 days after your child begins the program. Families are

responsible for ensuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

Separation

It is quite normal for children to experience feelings of anxiety when being dropped off, particularly when they are new or going through changes in their home life. Parents are welcome to stay as long as they like to ease transition, though experience has shown that once you say goodbye, and assure your child that you will return, it is best to leave swiftly and confidently. Children rarely cry after their parents are out of sight. Our staff has many years of both personal and professional experience in helping children through this stage. We will always call if your child is having difficulty and you are always welcome to call later to check on your child.

Rest-Time

We offer a daily rest time for children (and adults!) of all ages and activity levels. We feel this is an important introspective time for all of us. We spend up to a half hour winding down with stories and relaxing together and then one half hour of quiet time. We allow sleeping children to wake naturally unless you request a specific limit on how long you would like your child to sleep.

Rates/Billing

Tuition Fall 2022-June 2023 (September 1- June 30)

(No Act 166 Funding)

3-5 Year Olds

_____ 5 days/week Monthly \$1200.

_____ 3 days/week Monthly \$840.

_____ 2 days/week Monthly \$569.

Ages 3-5(Act 166 Funding Credit included)

_____ 5 days/week Monthly \$856.90..

_____ 3 days/week Monthly \$495.50.

_____ 2 days/week Monthly \$325

There is a first time registration fee of \$50 and a deposit of ½ month's tuition required. You will receive an invoice on the 1st of the month and payment is due by the 5th of the month. There is a late payment fee of \$10 per week. Additional drop-in days are \$69 per day. **We ask that you schedule an automatic payment with your bank unless you discuss special arrangements with Mia.**

Payment is required if students are absent for any reason. **One month's written notice is required to change an existing contract.** There will be a two-week trial period during which either party may terminate the contract or immediate release if the contract is breached.

Children must be picked up promptly by 4:30. We charge \$5.00 for 1-10 minutes late, \$10.00 for 10-20 minutes late, etc. Please don't make us ask you for this fee, you know when you are late. Also, please call or text Mia at 802-272-5001, if your child will be absent or if arriving after 9:30 a.m., or if you'd like to pick up before 3pm.

Communication

We value ongoing, open communication and encourage you to discuss any concerns about your child or about our program by phone, in writing, or by setting up an appointment to talk in person. We offer parent-teacher conferences twice during the school year and will complete a *Teaching Strategies Gold* assessment, required for Act 166 funding, that will be shared with the public school in your district. We are also happy to set up a time to conference with you and any or all members of the staff any time. You can call Mia directly at 272-5001 or email alltogethernowpreschool@gmail.com

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Survey

At the end of each school year, we ask that you fill out a survey. We like to hear your opinions and we value your feedback. It helps us to continue to improve our program.

Family Involvement

One of the strongest aspects of AllTogetherNow! Preschool is our commitment to our families. Throughout the year we have events that families can join in. We have Family Night potlucks with music and information. We have Family Work Days to help improve our facility. We will also invite you to participate in seasonal whole community events: All Species Day, Ice on Fire, and Enchanted Forest. We always welcome parents to come in to share a talent, cultural tradition, or interest with the children.

Non-Discrimination

ATN believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in child care. Children are admitted without regard to race, color, culture, sex, gender expression, religion, ethnicity, ability, parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs and will do our best to provide a safe, supportive environment. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on their individual capabilities and needs.

Staff Qualifications

Our teachers and staff are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Typical staff *minimum* certifications are as follows:

Position Title	Education/Certification	Experience
Teacher	Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education	2 years
Assistant Teacher	Child Development Associate Credential	1 year

Care providers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by AllTogetherNow! Preschool.

Outings and Field Trips

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. Permission slips for each trip must be signed by the child's family.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities of child care programs. Proper restraint systems (seat belts) and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from the child care program as well as during field trips.

Cultural Relevance and Social Justice

We provide a learning environment that both reflects and honors the cultures, languages and

backgrounds represented in our classrooms and exposes children to the diversity of lived experience not present in the school community in a fair, accurate and respectful manner. We utilize books, music, games, art and a wide range of activities to engage children in this learning. We integrate developmentally appropriate anti-bias activities into our curriculum and support the development of critical thinking skills.

Financial Aid

To apply for state funded childcare financial assistance, please visit this website: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/ccfap> or call the Department for Children and Families at (802) 241-3110.

Child Records

You have full access to your child's records as required by state licensing regulations. We will produce records within 5 business days of the time of the request.

Child records will be kept on file for 365 days after the child's last day of attendance.

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

Food Prepared at the Center

Occasionally we will prepare a dish with the children as part of our curriculum. Such things as stone soup, applesauce, dough on a stick, etc. We encourage families to send water bottles with their children. Water is always available throughout the day. Please send in a hearty lunch for your child each day, We support the development of healthy eating habits, and ask that you refrain from sending sugary foods in with your child's lunch.

Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main area and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in child care and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises during school hours. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Suspected Child Abuse

As childcare professionals the staff at AllTogetherNow! are mandated by law to report to state agencies if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. This includes physical injury, emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, inadequate food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, or abandonment. Our goal at ATN is to support our families. If you are in need of resources, please reach out to us so we can connect you with local supports. In the event that ATN makes an abuse or neglect report, the child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency or of an accident, the Center will contact the family and the physician. If it is impossible to reach either and emergency treatment is required, the child will be taken to Central Vermont Medical Center. The family's authorization for the Center to contact your child's physician and take whatever emergency medical measures are deemed necessary is part of your application. It is critically important that families keep the Center updated in any changes in any of their telephone numbers, including cell phones and workplace numbers.

Emergency Contacts: Families must provide the Center with the name, address and home and daytime telephone numbers of at least TWO people to contact in an emergency if the family cannot be reached. The family provides this information on the child's enrollment form. Be sure to update as necessary.

We have developed an Emergency Response Plan for a variety of emergency situations both natural and human-caused. A copy of the Emergency Response Plan is on file for you to view upon request.

Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with hardwired combination smoke and CO alarm with battery backup. Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a yearly basis. We conduct monthly evacuation drills with children and staff.

Emergency Transportation

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

Quality Assurance

We are committed to providing the highest quality child care we are able. To obtain a copy of the Child Care Licensing Regulations for Center Based Child Care and Preschool Programs, please visit <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-regs> or email the Director at alltogethernowpreschool@gmail.com.

If you have a concern about your child's treatment while in our care, we ask that you speak to Ellen, or a teacher first. If your concern is not addressed to your satisfaction, then you should contact us in writing. We will respond to your concern with a phone call or email.

You may also contact the Child Care Consumer Hotline at 1-800-649-2642 to share any concerns you may have with the Department of Children and Families Child Development Division.

