

# **Imagine Preschool Family Handbook**

# **Family Handbook Policies and Procedures**

## Table of Contents

Welcome to Imagine Preschool  
Mission, Vision, Values and Philosophy  
Statement on Diversity  
General Information  
Enrollment, Tuition and Fees  
Imagine Preschool Staff  
BrightStars  
Security  
Crisis and Emergency Plan Policies and Procedures  
Daily Admission and Release Policies and Procedures  
Arrival Time  
Curriculum, Teachers and Family Involvement  
Clothing and Personal Belongings  
Constructive Guidance and Discipline  
Meeting Children's Needs  
Health Policies and Procedures  
Nutrition  
Acknowledgement Statement

## **Welcome to Imagine Preschool!**

Dear Family,

Welcome to Imagine Preschool!

We are so excited to share our passion for young children's learning with you. Each day you will hear from us and your child about the delightful experiences that we've shared together. Our goal is that your child will come home everyday bursting with excitement and anxious to tell you about the wonders they've discovered and the adventures that they've had throughout the day. We will be encouraging your child to ask questions, to explore their own ideas and to document what they learn through play to become independent learners.

For your child to enjoy and benefit from all of our learning opportunities, we ask you to partner with us by preparing them for each day. This handbook will help explain how you can support them, what you can expect from us and what we can expect from you. On occasion, we may find it necessary to add or change information in this handbook. In that case we will provide you with a printed addendum.

We welcome your questions, comments and ideas. Our preschool is a learning environment - not only for children but also for parents and staff. We look forward to partnering with you in your child's education.

Sincerely,

Simmy Carter  
Imagine Preschool Director

# **Imagine Preschool Mission, Vision, Values and Philosophy**

## **Mission**

To provide high-quality preschool education, creating life-long learners of children ages three to five years old through a curriculum inspired by the natural curiosities of children and guided by the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards.

To accomplish our mission and act on our beliefs, we focus our curriculum on the whole child – cognitive, physical, social and emotional, always remembering that they are growing within a family. Our teachers recognize the importance of safe, supportive relationships and interactions with children and their families. We use developmentally appropriate practices that promote child-guided, active explorations of meaningful questions and all those important “wonderings” about their world. Since children’s world views begin in their homes, family voices and culture are incorporated into our classrooms and programs.

## **Vision**

To be recognized as a leader in Rhode Island for early childhood programs that prepare children for success in kindergarten and in their future educational endeavors. Imagine Preschool students will be independent thinkers with a love of learning.

## **Values**

Imagine Preschool is rooted in values and beliefs that support a positive learning environment:

- We value young children’s healthy development and learning.
- We believe that a high-quality early child care environment is a safe, respectful, responsive and positive place to learn and grow.
- We believe that children should be nurtured in a way that respects their families’ own cultural and familial beliefs.
- We value the participation of parents in their child’s early learning experience.
- We value our unique partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island and we are committed to supporting the instruction of future early childhood educators.

## **Philosophy**

Imagine Preschool is a safe, respectful, responsive and positive place to be. It is a place that supports children in actively engaging with their world to establish healthy relationships with others, in solving interesting problems and in figuring out who they are and how they fit in their family and community. Families feel connected to Imagine Preschool knowing that their children are cared for and nurtured in a way that respects their own cultural and familial beliefs. It is a place where families will learn and have their voices valued.

## Statement on Diversity

Imagine Preschool's focus is on the individual and our acceptance of differences and it is because of this philosophy that we are committed to incorporating and celebrating diversity in our program. One of the most important things that we do in our work with children, families and students is to encourage recognition and acceptance of each individual's intrinsic and uniqueness. This includes a variety of practices. For example, we offer a scholarship to full-time CCRI student, faculty and staff to support and encourage diversity in the families that enroll children at Imagine. Each year we also enroll a number of students with disabilities whose inclusion enriches our program in many ways. We encourage all families to share various aspects of their cultural heritage as part of our program on an on-going basis. For example, families have visited our program to share stories, songs and lessons about their culture which are used and re-used throughout the year. This type of on-going activity strengthens the link between a child's home and school and encourages acceptance of differences.

We do not, however, sponsor school-wide celebrations of various holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas, Valentine's Day Easter and Chinese New Year. This is a result of a conscious decision that grows out of one critical goal of Imagine Preschool which is to foster understanding and respect for diversity. Imagine Preschool cannot celebrate all possible holidays by having special events. Due to the variety of cultures represented at our center, the number of potential celebrations is prohibitive. Thus we would have to choose certain holidays to celebrate. By Imagine focusing on some holidays and not others we would validate some individuals/groups and make others feel ignored and/or excluded. Without intending to, we would build a barrier between the program and some children and families. One of our most important priorities is to include *all* children and families. While we do not sponsor school-wide celebrations of holidays, we do invite children and families to share aspects of their heritage, culture and experiences. We welcome families to share songs and stories that can be recorded. We invite families to cook or share a recipe that can be copied and re-used throughout the year. While we also do not hold formal birthday party celebrations, we do invite parents to provide a special snack to celebrate a child's birthday. Again, if a holiday or celebration is important to a family, and a child would like to share a special item(s) related to that holiday or celebration, we welcome that and will include the opportunity for discussion during circle time or on a "Share Day."

There are many ways for children and families to share aspects of their culture and heritage with the Imagine community. We welcome and celebrate this sharing. We do not deny the important role that holiday celebrations play in family life yet we feel that it is not appropriate for these celebrations to take place in the school setting. Rather, cultural diversity is experienced daily through music, literature, dramatic play and many other classroom practices.

An anti-bias approach to curriculum is one that challenges prejudice, stereotyping and bias. At Imagine, we feel it is not enough to observe people of different gender, ethnicity, and abilities, but rather we must actively intervene and challenge images that perpetuate stereotypes and bias. A natural task for a young child is figuring out who they are and how they feel about themselves and others. Children construct their identity and attitudes through interactions and experiences within their environment. Gender, ethnicity, culture and physical ability are identity issues that children struggle to understand during this period of development. Research shows that children notice differences early. Our goal is to develop an environment that encourages children to ask questions about their physical characteristics, provide accurate information in response to their

questions or comments, help children feel pride their identity, develop respect for each other and challenge biases they encounter.

One of the important things that we do in our work with children is to create an environment that is rich in possibilities for exploration of gender, race, culture and ability and we accomplish this in numerous ways. We use images and materials in the classroom that reflect a wide variety of gender, race culture, age, and ability. Pictures include images of diverse family structures, people with different physical abilities, men and women doing jobs in and out of the home, etc. Books accurately reflect diverse images of people. Materials such as puzzles, Lego people, and games depict a variety of children and adults of different gender, race and ability. Through music, art and language children have the opportunity to explore and experience diversity.

At Imagine Preschool our goal is to develop positive attitudes about the many ways people differ from one another through active, purposeful intervention and opportunities for expanded experiences.

## General Information

### Preschool Hours

**7:30 a.m. – 5:45 p.m.**

Please do not ring the door buzzer *prior* to 7:30 a.m. Children cannot enter the Preschool before 7:30 am each morning and all children must be picked up by 5:45 pm or a late fee of \$1. per minute will be assessed for pick-ups after 5:46 pm (using Imagine Preschool's clock). Fees must be paid **prior** to the child's next day. Please make sure that you allow yourself enough time at the end of the day to help your child end her/his day and gather her/his things so that you are not in the building after Preschool hours.

**Open:** Year Round  
**Licensed by:** RI Dept. of Children, Youth and Families, Child Care Bureau  
**Phone Number:** 401-825-1152

### Holidays

Imagine will provide families with an updated calendar annually.

### Snow Days and Acts of Nature

If the weather is questionable, please tune into WPRI Channel 12, WJAR NBC 10, WHJJAM 920, WHJY FM 94.1 and WSNE FM 93.3 (EyeWitness PinPoint Closing Network) for closings, delays or early dismissals. *\*The Pre-K Demonstration Project follows the Warwick School Department closing schedule. If the Warwick School Department has a delay, closing or early dismissal then the Pre-K will do the same.* Since we are an all-day program we follow the school department's schedule of all-day programs. Please disregard the media message of "No AM Pre-K/K". This does not apply to the Pre-K Demonstration Project students because we are an all-day program.

If the Community College of RI's Warwick Knight Campus closes early, delays or cancels classes Imagine must comply with that decision as share their facilities.

- Warwick Public Schools cancel classes = **No Pre-K**
- Warwick Public Schools delay classes = **Pre-K Delay**
- Warwick Public Schools delay classes and no AM Pre-K/K = **Pre-K Delay, class still meets**
- CCRI closes = **Imagine Preschool closed, no Pre-K or Preschool programs; No staff or families in building**
- CCRI delay = **Imagine Preschool and Pre-K delay**

### Confidentiality

At Imagine Preschool, we will maintain confidentiality and respect all families' right to privacy, refraining from any and all disclosure of confidential information. In addition, neither staff nor administrators will disclose children's records or have verbal communication about children with other professionals until family consent has been obtained. Personal information including medical records family history and assessment information is stored in a secure location within the center. Access to this information is limited to teaching staff, administrators and state licensing authorities.

The only exception to this policy is if there is reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk. The Preschool is obligated to share confidential information with agencies that may be able to intervene on the child's behalf. Any staff member who suspects that there is reason to believe a child's welfare is at risk will inform the Director who will take the appropriate action.

This policy of confidentiality applies to all staff members, volunteers, interns, and various professionals/researchers who observe and/or interact with children.

## **Enrollment, Tuition and Fees**

### **Enrollment**

Children between the ages of 3 and 5 may enroll in Imagine Preschool Multi Age classroom. Enrollment will be on a first come first serve basis.

When you enroll your child in the Imagine Preschool Pre-K program you will receive the following:

- Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form
- Emergency Treatment Consent Form
- Child Health Assessment/Physical Form
- Imagine Preschool Agreement of Services Form
- Imagine Preschool Family Handbook

Please take the time to review these papers carefully and complete them fully. Please feel free to contact the program administrator with any questions regarding the paperwork or the Preschool.

**All forms must be completed and returned to the program administrator by your child's in the first day program.**

Health Assessments/Physical Forms must be completed AND signed by a physician or CNP. If your child receives any inoculations between their year physical for the program, you must bring a note from the doctor so we can add this information to their file.

All other forms should be kept updated. If information changes (phone numbers, addresses, release persons, work addresses, insurance, etc.) we must be notified.

### **Tuition for Before and After Care**

Imagine Preschool offers an Before and After Care Program.

- You will be responsible for the weekly Before/After Care tuition fee stated on your signed Imagine Preschool Agreement for Services form.
- Weekly payments are due every Thursday.

(See Program Administrator for individual needs and tuition and fee schedule)

### **Payment Options**

- If you choose to enroll in any of these programs you will be responsible for the amount of weekly tuition stated on your Imagine Preschool Agreement for Services form.
- Weekly payments are due on the Thursday of week during which the child uses the Before and/or After program. Families may pay by direct debit (VISA, MasterCard or Discover) in addition to check, (made out to: The Providence Center) money order or cash.
- Holidays observed by the Preschool are paid as part of the weekly tuition. Families will not be charged for vacation weeks (see annual school calendar)
- Children may lose the ability to use Before and After Care if payments are not kept up-to-date.

Parents must conform to all Imagine Preschool policies and procedures. If policies are not complied with, the Preschool reserves the right to terminate services. The following are examples of termination circumstances:

- Families become physically or mentally abusive with teachers, children or other parents.
- Families fail to provide Preschool with current or up-to-date child health assessment.

- Differences between the Preschool and family cannot be resolved through discussion

## **Imagine Preschool Staff**

The Pre-K Demonstration Project classroom is a publicly-funded project administered by the RI Department of Education whose purpose is to gather information on whether participation in a Pre-K program improves educational outcomes. The children who participate in this project are 4 – 5 years of age who are chosen by lottery and are residents of the city of Warwick. The curriculum is research-based and developed from and guided by Imagine Preschool’s educational philosophy and the Creative Curriculum Gold. In addition, it is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach and is aligned with the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards.

At Imagine, we believe that children learn through interacting with not only their teachers but their peers. Peer teaching and learning has intrinsic value because it not only enhances a child’s sense of mastery and worth, but also facilitates cooperation and appreciation of others. However, we do not believe that “one size fits all” and will accommodate the developmental needs of all the children.

Each classroom has a Lead Teacher who develops, plans and assesses the curriculum experiences. In addition, there is a Teacher Assistant who works with the Lead Teacher. The ratio in the classroom is 1: 9 and that is maintained at all times.

Imagine employs an Education Coordinator who works with the Lead Teachers and the Director to supervise, guide, assess and plan curriculum. Additionally, our Director, Simmy Carter, functions as our Medical and Mental Health Consultant.

### **Practicum Students**

CCRI students will often share activities and ideas with us in our classroom. They interact with the children and assist with activities. Their presence allows teachers to give students additional attention. CCRI faculty and Imagine staff supervise all Community College students working in the Preschool. For Early Childhood Education students, the Preschool serves as a training site where they have the opportunity to observe a repertoire of teaching techniques, language activities and the planning of appropriate developmental practices for young children. Our CCRI connection is an important part of our program offering many exciting opportunities to the children, including individual attention and commitment to the young child’s needs.

### **Staff Qualifications**

The quality of our staff directly relates to the quality of our Preschool. We strive to maintain a high quality staff. In addition, the staff has met the following qualifications:

- Criminal background check
- Child abuse history check
- Physician’s health assessment
- First aid and CPR training
- RI licensing requirements in early childhood education and experience
- At least 20 hours of professional development training in early childhood education per year

The above –listed information is what we do to meet minimum standards, however, we strive to go beyond the minimum requirements. For example, our teachers are supported through tuition reimbursement in continuing their professional studies in early childhood education and are often compensated for attending additional RI Department of Education trainings. Teachers also maintain memberships in a number of

national early childhood education support and training associations such as the Nation Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA)

as well as interact and train with top-tier research organizations such as the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education (NCRECE) and the National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research (NIEER).

## **BrightStars**

BrightStars is a premier quality rating and improvement system created to improve the care and education of infants, toddlers preschoolers and school-age children in Rhode Island. States with strong child care quality rating systems see significant improvements in the quality of care and learning that children experience. United Way of Rhode Island supported the design and launch of BrightStars.

Imagine Preschool was one of the first programs to participate in BrightStars and completed the evaluation process in 2009. We earned a rating of 4 stars in our first year of programming. This independent evaluation confirms the high quality of care and education provided by the Preschool. Currently we are working to bring our program to the next level. Please feel free to look at the information on Imagine Preschool on the BrightStars website: [www.brightstars.org](http://www.brightstars.org).

For additional information on the quality rating system, please visit the BrightStars website at: [www.brightstars.org](http://www.brightstars.org).

## Security

To assist in keeping your child safe, all doors are locked and a security system is in place. Please ring the bell for entry into our Preschool. Our staff will open the door for you. Please do not use the gate to the playground to enter the building. It remains locked.

## Crisis and Emergency Plan Policies and Procedures

The following emergency plan has been developed in coordination with CCRI Security to ensure the safety of all children and staff at Imagine Preschool. A graphic evaluation plan is posted in each classroom space. In case of emergency evacuation the following procedures will be in place:

- The children will be escorted out of the Preschool space and into the Vincent A. Cullen Field House (athletic complex) adjacent to the Preschool facility.
- The Education Coordinator and/or Director will review attendance report and recheck Preschool facility. The on-site administrator (see above) will bring daily attendance report and emergency contact forms out of the Preschool facility.
- The children will be brought to the court –level of the Vincent A. Cullen Field House and will be seated against the wall by the automatic handicapped door, which is located to the left of the court.
- The Providence Center Administration (401-274-2500) will be notified of the situation.
- Imagine Preschool staff will remain with the children until families are able to pick up the children or the Preschool is cleared of the emergency.
- We will have a box of items such as water, canned food, books, diapers, wipes and flashlights that we will take with us.
- Radio announcements and/or parent phone calls will be made if an evacuation is necessary. Please have plan in place in the event that your child must be picked up as soon as possible. We do not expect any difficulties at Imagine Preschool, but it is best to be prepared.

Two emergency evacuation *rehearsals* take place each school year.

### Fire Drills

Fire Drills are held 15 times per year in accordance with licensing requirements. The following procedures are rehearsed:

Staff members remain calm and reassure children. If a fire is in our space, the person noting the fire sounds the alarm and call 911 and campus security (2109). In the event that an alarm sounds due to fire in another area of the CCRI complex, staff members escort the children to the nearest safe exit and congregate in front of the Vincent A. Cullen Field House (CCRI athletic building). Plans for evacuation are posted in each classroom.

### Accidents

first Aid kits are kept in each classroom with additional materials located in the Administrative office space. Emergency numbers for children and volunteers are filed in the Administrative office. All Imagine Preschool staff has first aid and CPR training. In a serious emergency, 911 and CCRI Security will be called and parents and the Preschool Director will be notified. When going for treatment, the child's complete file and injury report form (if applicable) will be taken. This file contains a summary of the child's medical history, as well as medical emergency permission forms. Children not requiring treatment or observation remain supervised and reassured that their friend is being well cared for. Any incident or accident, including the administration of Syrup of Ipecac, or the transportation of a child that occurs on Preschool premises will be reported to the parent in written form. Parents are responsible for any expenses

as a result of emergency room care. Hasbro Children's Hospital will be used for emergencies unless otherwise specified by family in writing.

### **Emergency Transportation**

The preschool obtains written emergency transportation authorization from each parent/guardian before a child begins attending the Preschool. We will not accept any children whose parents/guardians refuse to grant permission for emergency transportation. If a child is injured and needs treatment immediately, the Preschool will call 911 and CCRI Security for assistance in transporting the child. A staff member will go to the hospital with the child and will take the child's records. The parents will be called to meet the child and staff person at the hospital. The staff person remains at the hospital until the parent arrives or longer if possible.

### **Accident/Incident Reports**

If your child is injured during the day, the teachers will contact you to let you know what happened. They will also complete an accident report for your review and signature. Our director is a registered nurse and she will be contacted to decide if she needs to see the child. She will then make recommendations for care if needed. After all necessary signatures are obtained on the accident report the teacher or administrator will make copies and send one home with the family. The original document will be housed at the Preschool.

An incident report is a vehicle to document a challenging incidence of behavior and an how to prevent it from reoccurring. We are here to teach your child how to communicate their needs without resorting to aggression toward another person. If your child has harmed him/herself, another child, teacher or someone's property, your child's teacher will fill out an incident report and take the time to speak with you about the incident and to determine the best plan of action to support you and your child so that this behavior is not repeated.

In addition, Imagine Preschool staff are mandated by law to report any observed or suspected child abuse or neglect to the RI Department of Children Youth and Families (1-800-RICHILD).

## Daily Admission and Release Policies and Procedures

We require that all children be signed in and out of the Preschool by parents/guardian/designees whether picking up or dropping off each day. **Please sign legibly and use your full name.** (Please do not sign “Mom,” “Dad,” etc.) You must sign your child in/out each day as the sign-in/out sheets are used for emergency evacuations and fire drills.

For your child’s safety:

- Children are to stay with their parents upon arriving and leaving the Preschool building as children may not go in or out of the building without a parent/guardian/designee.
- Always alert a staff member to you and your child’s presence upon morning arrival. Children may not be dropped off without staff knowledge.
- Children may not open playground gates.
- Upon entering or leaving the playground, adults must be sure doors to our classroom are closed.
- Children must walk inside the building.
- Please do not leave valuable or children alone in your car.
- Please do not open the door to the atrium, even for another parent, if you do not see a staff person close by. Answering the door is part of a staff member’s job.

Children enrolled in the Preschool will be delivered directly to and picked up from their designated care setting by parents/guardians/designees. We cannot release your child to anyone unless their name is listed as a “release person” or “emergency pick-up designee” on our Release forms. We require that you provide any additional names in writing. Anyone picking up your child should have picture identification (i.e. driver’s license) and be at least 16 years of age. Any person unfamiliar to a staff person will be asked to present identification and you may also be contacted for permission. Please remember, this is for your child’s safety.

**Divorced or Separated Parents:** We must allow a child to leave Imagine Preschool with either parent unless we have a copy of a court order giving only one parent custody. We must also have written notification, which will be kept on file, indicating that the other parent is not permitted to pick up the child.

### Arrival Time and Family Involvement

All children should arrive by 9:00 a. m. From 7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. children have choice activities in the classroom for Before Care. Most of the room is open for them and they play with anyone they like or they may choose to play alone. We strive to meet every child’s first hour needs. It is much easier for a child to walk in during our free play time, so that they can make their own decisions about where and with whom they want to play. Once they are settled in, they are better prepared to join in the day’s activities. Also, after 9:00 a.m., the children may go for a walk accompanied by a teacher. **Please call the Preschool by 8:30 a.m. if your child will not be attending for the day.**

### Family Participation

Quality Preschools are a team effort. Parent involvement is welcomed at the Center. In the past, family members have read to the children, participated in cooking activities, shared information about their occupations and hobbies and talked with children about special holidays or customs. If you would like to share something with the children, please let one of our teachers know and we will try to arrange an opportunity for you to visit.

### **Parent Advisory Board**

The Imagine Preschool Parent Advisory Board mission is to provide a nurturing and productive organizational structure in which parents and families can, individually and in concert with staff and Preschool administration, provide support for school activities that help fulfill the mission of the Preschool. The Board will meet four times throughout the school year and meetings are open to all interested parents/guardians.

There are a variety of other ways for families to be engaged at the Preschool. For example, we hold several family functions throughout the year which we encourage all families to attend. These events provide an excellent opportunity for children to have a special time with their families at their school as well as a chance for parents to meet other families.

In addition, we welcome families to:

- Speak informally with staff on a daily basis
- Request/attend parent/teacher conferences
- Volunteer in the classroom or for Center events
- Use/provide materials/ideas for our Family Resource Center
- Donate materials/resources for classrooms or food/supplies for family functions or Center events
- Attend/provide topic suggestions for Parent Workshops
- Provide valuable feedback to the Preschool through surveys, suggestions, etc.

We also provide families with a glimpse into their child's day through a daily journal note. Further, we send out a most informative monthly newsletter and we provide each family and staff member with a mailbox for privacy and additional ease of information exchange.

As you can see, Imagine Preschool functions best when reciprocal relationships are nurtured between the Center and the family and when families are encouraged to share their time, talents, feelings, suggestions and observations about their child and about the Preschool.

### **New Children to the Preschool**

We will work with you to assist your child in adjusting to the Preschool environment. The following are specific ways to help in the transition:

- Enjoy a first day visit to the Preschool with your child. Spend time with your child initially. This will help both of you become familiar with the staff and our daily activities.
- At home, talk to your child about the Preschool and the different things they will do each day.
- The first few at the Preschool may be difficult for you and your child as you transition to our program. It usually helps to keep the drop off time as short as you can. Reassure your child, give some hugs and have a special good-bye routine. The teachers will then help involve your child in an activity.
- You are welcome to call anytime after you have dropped off your child to see how she/he is doing.
- Try to pick up your child at the same time each day. If you know that you will be late, please let your child know so they will be prepared.

## **Curriculum, Teachers and Parents**

On a daily basis, children attending Imagine Preschool will participate in both teacher-directed and child-guided learning experiences. We balance instructional formats by offering ample play opportunities in rich environments as well as large and small groups and individual learning opportunities coordinated by the teaching staff. We recognize that children require different instructional strategies to gain the wide range of skills and broad knowledge base they need to understand their world and to succeed in kindergarten and elementary grades.

### **Developmentally, individually and culturally appropriate curriculum**

Each year we build on what we have learned through our curriculum experiences. We use a constructivist curriculum in which we provide learning experiences that promote cognitive, language, social-emotional and physical development. We build school-readiness skills and knowledge in reading, writing, math science and social studies, as well as art, and music appreciation and skills.

We create and capitalize on teachable moments as children discover their world through play. Water table, blocks, dramatic play materials, cooking, painting and drawing are some of the readily available activities in the classroom. Additionally creative lessons and units of study will be designed based on children's interests and questions about their world.

Some examples of how we build our curriculum are: posing questions to the children related to typically interesting or culturally relevant topics for preschoolers. Webbing of children's knowledge following a story book that stimulates conversation, exploring a child's experiences at home or in the community and

involving families in the classroom for further investigation and wondering. Together children can build knowledge of their world, guided by teachers, peers, and families.

### **Lead Teacher**

Within your child's class one of the teachers will be the Lead Teacher. She will be responsible for collaboratively planning, implementing and assessing the curriculum. The Lead Teacher will observe your child during activities, reflect on what s/he is doing, and adjust the learning experiences as needed to support your child's growth and development, based on those observations. The Lead Teacher is also interested in what you think about your child's experiences. Please feel free to share your ideas with the Lead Teacher in the morning or afternoon. Our staff is also always available to meet with you to discuss any thoughts you have related to the Preschool.

### **Individualized Planning/Parent Conferences**

Over the course of the school year, your child's Lead Teacher will be conducting ongoing, informal and periodic formal assessment of your child's developmental progress in our curriculum. This assessment system serves multiple purposes: it informs our curriculum so that we can capitalize on your child's wonderful learning moments; it provides us with a record of your child's developmental progress; it identifies children's needs and interests; it facilitates communication with families; it assists us in arranging developmental screening and referral for diagnostic testing when indicated and also assists us in program planning.

Each child's progress will be assessed on an on-going basis through a variety of means including observations, anecdotal records, skill checklists and developmental screenings. Teachers gather this

information, including samples of the child's work to create a portfolio for each individual child. In addition, we use authentic assessment tools which look at children's development in a number of domains including: physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language development, literacy, math, science, art, social studies and technology to evaluate your child's developmental progress three times a year – October/November, January/February and May/June. We will meet with you to summarize your child's progress in the fall and in the spring with additional meetings as needed. We will share the information with you and jointly plan how to best support your child's development and learning. The first meeting is an opportunity to get to know each other, to share information we each have about your child and to discuss in greater detail your goals for the year. During subsequent meetings teachers and families will exchange information in order to best support children and their families.

### **Parent Surveys**

We want to encourage you to be a part of our program.. We are eager to learn as much as we can about each child's family, culture, past experiences and current circumstances. With this knowledge we can work to create learning experiences that fit the children and families with whom we partner. You will see these surveys throughout the year. Please fill them out and return them to the appropriate teacher or administrator.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

You are welcome to send in special snacks for your child's birthday. An important component of the Imagine Preschool philosophy is to maintain the children's daily routine as much as possible so if you will be bringing in treats please give the teachers a few days notice so they can prepare a schedule to accommodate the celebration. Advanced notice is also helpful so that teachers and families can plan for children with food allergies.

Invitations to parties and events that are not Preschool-based should be mailed outside of school. Many families connect with each other at school functions or at pick-up, drop-off times to exchange information such as addresses and phone numbers. This is a great way to gather this information as the Preschool cannot divulge it due to our confidentiality policy.

## **Clothing, Personal Belongings, Care Policies**

### **Clothing**

All children will need an extra set of clothing (including socks and underwear) in the event of a major spill, wet weather or accident. These extra clothes should change as the seasons change and be replaced as needed. We ask that you label each item.

Please have your child dressed in the clothing that you would like her/him to wear for the day. Shorts can be worn under long pants and t-shirts can be worn under sweatshirts. Children are welcome to take off their outer layer of clothing as they get warmer.

Please remove all strings on coats and hoods. They can easily get caught on playground equipment.

Active learning can mean messes. We strongly recommend that you send your child to the Preschool each day in clothing that that can get muddy, painted, splattered (with various materials), gooey and wet. This includes their shoes. We support their self-help skills by taking them to the sink, so they can wash their hands and face. Yet, be prepared, they probably will not look as sparkling clean as they did when you left them in the morning! Usually, being messy means that your child learned something new, worked with a friend, solved a problem, created a work of art or just had a great time! As always, if you have any questions, suggestions or concerns please feel free to discuss this with your child's teachers.

If you will be taking your child from the Preschool to an appointment for which you would like your child to be "dirt/sand/paint" free, we suggest that you bring a clean set of clothing with you so you can change your child before you leave the Preschool. We ask this so that we can spend more time interacting with your child in the classroom or on the playground rather than in the bathroom. It helps us to maintain our child-to-teacher ratios. We appreciate your understanding of this matter.

### **Shoes**

Open-toed, sandals or slip-ons, can lead to injuries and therefore are not appropriate for your child's active day. We ask that you provide shoes or sneakers for daily wear. If an emergency were to happen, we would want your child to be prepared to meet whatever conditions are outside. When your child enters the Preschool, s/he should be wearing sneakers, closed-toed "explorer" sandals, or other rubber-soled shoes to stay safe.

### **Personal Belongings**

The equipment and play materials at Imagine Preschool are chosen carefully. With this in mind, we ask that you leave your child's toys and "special" belongings at home for the following reasons:

- They may create tension or feelings of jealousy.
- They may hurt or injure other children.
- They may be lost or broken.
- Staff cannot monitor toys or personal items in the atrium/cubby area.

We encourage your child to bring in a stuffed toy or blanket for rest time if they would like that. Please label all items. The Preschool is not responsible for lost, broken or stolen items.

**Toilet Learning**

If your child is not regularly using the toilet, please discuss this issue with your child's teachers ahead of time. We must be consistent between home and school. You will be required to supply all necessary items such as pull-ups, wipes and extra clothing. This is very important – so let's partner about what is happening and what is working!

**Outdoor Play**

The children go outside daily for at least 45 minutes. If it is very hot/humid or very wet/rainy or cold, we may limit the amount of time outdoors.

Please make sure however, that your child has the appropriate clothing to go outside in any weather. If there is snow outside we will likely play in it so boots, hats, gloves, scarves, etc. are a must! Many of our parents leave these items in their child's cubby and bring them home each weekend. The same policy applies during the spring rainy season so please be sure to pack raincoats, boots, and extra clothing.

**Please label all items!**

**Television**

We rarely watch television. If the children are very interested in a topic, and we have a video or DVD that would complement what they have been discussing, they may watch it, but not for long! Our curriculum is based in a belief that children learn through active exploration and interaction with their world and others in it.

**Nap/Rest Time**

Preschoolers will have a nap/rest time daily, usually 60 minutes or more. The Preschool provides a cot, and parents are to provide a blanket and/or pillow and a stuffed toy. Nap items should be taken home each Friday for laundering.

## Constructive Guidance and Discipline

At Imagine, we believe it is our role as teachers and parents to teach children what we expect from them, support them when they try, and to praise them when they succeed. Our curriculum focuses on building positive relationships and on providing a supportive environment for children to learn social skills and emotional regulation. Children ages 3 – 5 need to learn how to be a positive member of a larger community. We are here to teach them how to do just that!

We use a variety of positive guidance and discipline strategies and techniques to encourage emotional regulation and the development of self-control, self-esteem, friendship making and social problem solving skills. Some of the techniques are:

- Spending one-on-one time with each child every day
- Guiding children's interactions in play
- Providing specific cues, phrases, and consistent language when directing children's behavior
- Praising specifically when a child follows directions, listens to others, or demonstrates positive social skills
- Providing consistent daily routines and schedules
- Providing interesting and, engaging activities
- Individualizing how we communicate with children (concise and clear verbal language, physical cues, picture communication, gestures)
- Redirecting children to appropriate choices
- Role modeling positive social skills
- Supporting problem solving between children
- Learning about and practicing social skills during group times
- Providing children with a calming space when they need to regulate their emotions before returning to the group
- Acting as a "solid object" for all children when they are disregulated

At the Preschool, adults provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment. As previously outlined, staff employ a variety of techniques and strategies to encourage children to regulate their emotions. Violence towards children is **NEVER** allowed. In addition, food and outdoor play are never used as rewards or as a behavior consequence. Staff will never shout at, demean, embarrass or, physically touch a child in anger. Every measure possible will be taken to create an environment where children and families feel safe and understood.

We will be working hard to support all children in their social and emotional growth and development. We will always keep you informed as to what we are working on - and succeeding in or feeling challenged by. You will always hear of the great progress we are making - through brief conversations or daily notes! If over time we are not feeling successful in moving your child's social and emotional development forward, we will meet with you to come up with a plan to support your child's success. Our Mental Health Consultant may be present at these meetings. Her involvement provides us with information or expertise that may be necessary to reach our goal of success for your child. You may also request a meeting with us and/or the Mental Health Consultant when things may be challenging at home.

We know that it takes a partnership between the Preschool staff and family to support a child who is facing challenges for some reason. We will inform you along the way of what is working well and what we are working on. We ask you to do the same for us.

### **Procedure for Addressing Challenging Behavior**

The following process will be followed if your child displays challenging behaviors. Strategies for what to do next will be developed as a team.

1. The Education Coordinator, and/or Lead Teacher will inform you during Parent Conferences (2- 3 times a year) of our progress on supporting your child's social and emotional development. As a team, we will identify goals for your child in the following months.
2. Over time, the teachers will share with you what challenging behaviors we are working to eliminate, and what strategies that we are trying in order to replace the challenging behaviors with positive behaviors.
3. The Education Coordinator, Lead Teacher, Preschool Director or the Mental Health Consultant may conduct observations specifically of your child in order to identify what may be contributing to this challenging behavior (our routines, schedule, teacher interactions, environment, etc.) and will then share their findings with you and all involved teachers. Please be aware that part of teaching and creating curriculum is to conduct regular observations so doing so in these instances will not be viewed as different or unusual by the children.
4. The Mental Health Consultant may request we meet as a team of teachers and parents to conduct an analysis of the behaviors and determine next steps. On some occasions, other resources will be recommended in order to maintain your child in our program. Recommendations may include: your child receiving a full physical, having a developmental assessment completed, or seeing a mental health specialist for support. If you as a parent do not agree with the team recommendation(s) we can discuss alternative solutions. However, the team may recommend alternative schooling options and dismissal from Imagine Preschool if we cannot agree on a plan in order to maintain your child in our program.
5. Imagine Preschool has the ability to provide licensed clinicians through The Providence Center to work with families and children on social, emotional and behavioral concerns related to both home and school. For further information contact school Director.
6. It is not our intent to dismiss children from the Preschool. We fully recognize that it is our role in supporting and teaching children to act safely and appropriately in our Preschool. It is a major focus of our curriculum. However, when we believe that your child's well-being is at stake, we must advocate for action on your part and that of your supporting community.

### **Meeting Children's Developmental Needs**

Children who have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP) are able to receive services at the Center through their service provider. The Preschool does not have qualified service providers (speech pathologists, occupational therapists, etc.) on staff, but we work collaboratively with Early Intervention and \*local preschool assistance programs to be sure that your child's goal are met. Your child's teacher and the Director become part of the child's team, along with the service providers, and offer information, data, suggestions for writing of ISFP and IEP goals, and act as an advocate for the child.

Teachers at the Preschool are highly trained in the development of young children and complete informal assessments (see Assessment section below) on each child as part of our curriculum and program planning process. If we become concerned about a child's development, we will document our concerns and share these with the family. We will work with the family and connect them with the appropriate programs that

will complete formal assessments and observations to make a definitive determination. We will work collaboratively with such programs during this time and act as an advocate for the child.

**\*For Warwick Public School Families:**

The Warwick Public School Department, in conjunction with the Volunteers of Warwick Schools (VOWS), work in collaboration with Imagine Preschool in providing all children between the ages of 3 and 5 with a free developmental screening. (This screening will be repeated when the family registers their child for kindergarten). The screening includes basic areas of development, speech and language, hearing, vision and social/emotional development. Results of the screening are then forwarded to the Drum Rock Early Childhood Center for review.

Upon review, parents receive a letter indicating the results of the screening. Should screening results indicate a need for follow-up, a member of the Early Childhood Evaluation Team will contact the parent/guardian to discuss the results or to develop a plan of action. In some cases it might be suggested that the child be re-screened in one or more areas or the parents /guardians will be invited to the center for a team meeting to discuss the results.

The evaluation team generally consists of an Early Childhood Diagnostician, a School Social Worker, the School Psychologist, and a Speech and Language Pathologist.

Parents and or their child's teacher who have concerns regarding a child's learning, speech and language development, behavior and/or social-emotional development, may also make a referral to the Early Childhood Evaluation Team by calling: (401) 734.3490 or 734.3580.

**Supervision**

Children will be supervised by qualified staff members at all times.

## Children's Health Policies and Procedures

### Immunization Policy

Children will not be admitted to the Preschool without a physical and an up-to-date record of immunizations. The State of Rhode Island requires that all children be immunized for certain diseases. The only exceptions to this requirement are if family physicians recommends against immunizations on medical grounds or if the family requests an exemption on the basis of religious belief or other objections. In each case, a written statement must accompany the Health Assessment Form/Physical Form.

### Policies Regarding Illness

Children who attend our programs are expected to be able to participate comfortably in all components of each program both indoors and out. We try to take children outside every day unless there is severe weather. The general rule (as recommended by our state licensing bureau) is that if a child is well enough to come to the preschool, s/he is well enough to go outside. If your child is ill prior to arriving at the center (fever, earache, diarrhea, etc.) please keep her/him home.

If your child becomes ill while at the preschool, you will be contacted. If your child's temperature is 101 degrees or higher your child must be picked up. Your child will be kept in a quiet area of the classroom or our office until an adult family member or designee arrives to pick them up. S/he must be fever-free **without the use of fever-reducing medications** for at least 24 hours before returning to Imagine.

If your child develops any contagious conditions such as chicken pox, pink eye, strep throat, head lice, etc. please notify the Preschool as soon as possible. We will post the information (no names included) in order to inform other families of the illness and its symptoms.

If your child is absent with a communicable illness you must have a note from a physician's office stating the date your child is no longer contagious and is able to return to Imagine. If your child is sent home with the suspicion of a contagious illness (such as conjunctivitis, "pink eye"), you must have a doctor's note stating that either s/he is not contagious or stating the date your child may return from the illness.

If your child has asthma, please submit a care plan (Doctor's order) that includes a description of triggers, how to treat the symptoms when they arise, and the names, doses and methods of all treatments. All medication/equipment will be securely stored and readily available for staff to administer. Imagine Preschool has a nurse available to us. The nurse and/or child's family will provide the appropriate staff with all pertinent instructions/training to carry out treatment procedures. If necessary, staff may also receive training from additional health care professionals.

If your child has an allergy(ies) that requires the use of an epi-pen (epinephrine injection), for severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) please refer to the information on asthma.

If your child has any other type of allergy, please submit a care plan (Doctor's order) if necessary, that includes all pertinent information regarding description and treatments. Also, because we post allergy information in each classroom (first name, last initial used) and in food storage areas, we ask that you fill out the *Imagine Preschool Permission to Post Allergy Information* consent form so that we have your permission to post your child's first name and last initial and allergy information. If you prefer **not** to give your consent for posting this information, we will share this with staff by posting the information in the classroom via a color-coded \* on the classroom posting, yet maintain the information in the Administrative Office, the food storage/preparation area and through verbal reminder.

If your child requires other daily or on-going use of any type of specialized medical equipment or treatments, please submit a care plan and arrange to have a meeting with our school nurse. She and/or the child's family will provide the appropriate staff with all pertinent instructions/training to carry out treatment procedures. If necessary, staff may also receive training from additional health care professionals.

### **Criteria for Excluding Ill or Infected from an Early Childhood Program**

Children (and adults) who exhibit the following illnesses or symptoms: (This includes children who have been given over-the-counter medication for fever reduction, cold/flu symptoms, etc. *prior* to arriving at the preschool) can be excluded from our program. If a child is **visibly** sick, Imagine staff has full discretion to determine whether the child can fully participate in the program.

#### **A. Fever:**

- ✓ Oral temperature 101 degrees or greater, auxiliary (armpit) temperature 100 degrees or greater accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness

#### **B. Diarrhea:**

- ✓ Child has an increased number of stools compared with the child's normal pattern with increased stool water and/or decreased form that is not contained by toilet use

#### **C. Vomiting:**

- ✓ Child vomits while at the preschool or has vomited two or more times in the previous 24 hours

#### **D. Rash:**

Rashes can be symptoms of contagious illnesses such as chicken pox, impetigo, ringworm, etc.

- ✓ Rashes with an accompanying temperature of 101 degrees or higher or those that have been diagnosed by a physician as being contagious and require a 24 hour treatment period before returning to the preschool accompanied by a doctor's note stating the child may safely return (For chicken pox or measles, child may not return until **6 days after** rash /blisters appear)

#### **E. Congestion, Cough and Nasal Discharge:**

- ✓ Lung congestion, a continuous cough or purulent discharge from the nose
- ✓ Diagnosis, by physician, of pertussis (whooping cough). Child may return to preschool only after **5 days** of antibiotic treatment.

#### **F. Sore Throat:**

Occasionally, sore throats are caused by strep bacteria and one cannot determine this without a strep throat culture being taken and tested by a physician.

- ✓ A child who has tested positive for a strep culture who is on antibiotics must remain at home for **24 hours** before returning with a doctor's note stating that s/he may safely return to the preschool.

### **G. Conjunctivitis (“pink eye”)**

- ✓ Defined as pink eye or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, often with matted eyelids after sleep, and including with eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eye, until 24 hours after treatment has begun and/or a note from the child’s physician stating s/he may return to school

### **H. Head Lice**

- ✓ Presence of nits or lice in child’s hair and until 24 hours after treatment has begun

### **I. Other Illnesses/Conditions**

The protocol for illnesses or conditions not previously addressed will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with our school nurse and with recommendations/instructions from the child’s physician and/or the RI Department of Health.

*The decision to exclude or send a child home because of illness is not taken lightly at Imagine. Several of our staff members have children of their own and know first-hand of the inconvenience of having to leave or be late/unavailable for work if a child is ill. We ask that you understand that your child will be sent home only if we consider it absolutely necessary. We appreciate your cooperation on this matter.*

### **Recommended Readings from the American Academy of Pediatrics:**

Your Child’s Health, by Barton Schmitt, MD

Caring for Your Young Child; Birth to Age 5, by Steven Shevlov, MD

### **Medication**

We understand that there are certain circumstances when it becomes necessary for children to take medication during preschool hours. Because of this, Imagine must adopt the following specific procedures for dispensing medication to children during preschool hours. This is necessary for the protection of the child as well as the person giving the medication.

- The only medication that the preschool is obligated to dispense is medicine prescribed by a licensed physician who prescribed it *specifically* for the child for whom it is intended. “Over-the –counter” medicines will be given only if we receive a note from a physician. The physician’s office must fax a note to the preschool at: **401.825.1152 BEFORE** medication can be dispensed.
- A medication form will be used for all medication given at the preschool.
- All bottles or containers must be properly labeled (name of person, name of medication, dosage and time) and stored in their original pharmacy packing.
- Medicine is to be dispensed by the on-site administrator or her designee in the event of the administrator’s absence. All medication is taken in the presence of the designated staff member. In order to insure that everyone has received their medication for the day, a checklist will be made.
- In an effort to reduce problems when medication is changed or discontinued, No more than one-session supply of medication will be kept at the preschool. All medication must be in a container from the pharmacy and marked as the child’s prescription.

- It is the parent's duty to notify the preschool when medication has been discontinued. The parent will be expected to pick up any remaining medications or authorize the on-site administrator to dispose of it.
- It is also the parent's duty to notify the preschool when a child's medication has been changed.

You are welcome to come to the preschool and give medication to your child. Children may not have any medication in their possession without staff supervision, at any time in the preschool.

## **Nutrition**

### **Snacks and Lunch**

Imagine Preschool is a peanut/tree-nut free zone. This information is posted in our atrium and in the classrooms. In addition, our staff is always vigilant and do their very best to protect children with food allergies from contact with the problem. For example, example, teachers Our Center provides snacks such as yogurt, fresh fruit, vegetables, crackers, cereal and other nutritious foods with milk, juice or water for morning and afternoon snacks.

Children are offered second helpings. We encourage children to serve themselves. By allowing children to pour their own drink and scoop their own snack we are encouraging self-help skills and helping to develop math and fine motor skills. For lunch the Preschool provides milk or water. **Parents should send a lunch with their child each day.**

- Include nutritious items for lunch such as a sandwich, fruit, vegetables or crackers.
- Snack foods should be limited.
- Due to sanitation concerns and allergies, children may not share lunches with each other.
- If your child has something in their lunch that must be refrigerated, please inform your child's teacher. She will place it in one of our refrigerators.
- Children must come prepared with a lunch each day. Waiting for delivery of lunch from a parent is not fun and often causes children to eat alone.

### **NO FAST FOOD IS PERMITTED IN THE PRESCHOOL. TEACHERS WILL ABIDE BY THIS RULE AS WELL.**

We are expected to support children's healthy food choices in our Preschool. We are also expected to assist parents in making healthy food choices for their children as part of BrightStars.

A list of healthy choices has been generated for you:

Sandwiches: Turkey, ham bologna or roast beef	Rollups of turkey, ham, bologna or roast beef	Cheese sticks
Cheese chunks or slices	Whole grain crackers	Popcorn
Chicken salad	Tuna salad	Fresh veggies and dip
Pasta salad	Egg salad	Applesauce
Green salad	Fresh fruit	Pudding
Dried fruit	Fruit cups	Cereal bars
Jell-O (with fruit)	Pretzels	Yogurt

Please read, sign and return to Imagine Preschool

## **Imagine Preschool Permission to Post Allergy Information**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give / do not give permission to  
Parent Name

Imagine Preschool to post my \*child's name on the Allergy List located in my child's classroom as a visual reminder to all those who interact daily with my child, that s/he has an allergy(ies). A care plan (Doctor's order) is attached / not necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name (Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**\* First name, last initial is used in classroom posting.**

Please read, sign and return to Imagine Preschool

## **Imagine Preschool Permission for Use of Photographs**

On occasion, Imagine Preschool will use photographs of children engaged in activities to highlight our program in brochures, on our website, in press releases and other marketing material. We'd like to think that children and their families are excited to be included in photos and welcome the opportunity to visually share their experiences with others. No personal information is ever shared. If you would like/not like your child included in Imagine marketing material please fill out this Photo Inclusion/Exclusion form

I will allow photographs of my child to be used for Imagine Preschool marketing materials.

I will not allow photographs of my child to be used for Imagine Preschool marketing materials.

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Child's Name (please print)

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Parent's Signature

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Date

## **Family Handbook Acknowledgement Statement**

This statement acknowledges that I have received a copy of the Family Handbook of Policies and Procedures. I read the book and I understand its contents. I understand that it is my responsibility to be familiar and comply with these standards. I further understand that the policies and procedures stated herein are guidelines that can be modified by the Preschool if necessary.

\*This form along with other registration information must be returned to the Preschool prior to/on your child's first day of attendance.

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Parent/Guardian Name (please print)

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Parent/Guardian Name (please print)

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Parent/Guardian Signature

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Date

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Parent/Guardian Signature

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Date