

The Clifton School Parent Handbook



We know the field of early childhood education and development, but you know your child best. Let us share our knowledge with you as you share yours with those of us who surround your child daily. As partners, we can provide quality care as we nurture and facilitate social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. We are here for the sole purpose of serving the best interests of children. With open lines of communication we will be a strong team!

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Welcome

Welcome to The Clifton School. We are excited to have the opportunity to be a part of your family's childcare experience. Please know that we recognize the considerable trust you demonstrate by placing your child in our hands. We take this responsibility seriously and strive to provide the highest quality early learning experience for your child and family.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. Our doors are always open and we will make ourselves available. Your satisfaction is important to our success as a team.

We look forward to many happy years with you and your family.

The Story of The Clifton School

Nestled in the heart of Atlanta, the conception of The Clifton School began as a conversation in the 70's about the emerging need of child care for the employees of Emory University, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (then Eggleston Children's Hospital) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention until finally our doors opened in 1988 as the Clifton Child Care Center.

In the beginning, our school's approach was guided by Creative Curriculum but later evolved and was inspired by the Reggio philosophy. This transformation began in the mid 1990's with school wide enthusiasm. There was genuine interest and conversation about characteristics of schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy that many of the staff had visited. The possibilities of collaboration, relationships, research, documentation and environment as the "third teacher" seemed endless. We continue to draw our inspirations from the educators of Reggio and we are equally inspired by the voices of the children, families and teachers of The Clifton School.

As the Clifton Community continued to grow, in the mid 90's a conversation emerged about the possibility and need to expand the school. This dialogue included many thoughts about the Reggio philosophy and our values. Teachers, children, staff, families and members of the community were partners in this process. Our values were incorporated into the architectural design of the new buildings with spaces that foster relationships, exhibit transparency and promote investigations.

After many years of planning and with great anticipation, the Clairmont site opened in July 2002. The following April the Clifton site opened.

Our evolution is not complete. As long as there are new families, staff and children entering our doors, we will forever be changing to reflect the thoughts, lives and learning of our evolving community.

Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education

The educational philosophy of the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy is recognized around the world as the pre-eminent approach to early childhood education. The Clifton School participates in a series of professional development programs to understand this philosophy and implement it in the classroom. Parents, teachers and children are involved in shaping the program to adapt the strengths of these concepts to our North American context. Working together we can enjoy the excitement of exploration and collaboration that characterize the Reggio Emilia schools.

These are some of the fundamental principles of the Reggio philosophy that inspires us:

- Each child has a strong personal identity and possesses a great learning potential which is recognized and nurtured by educators.
- Teachers are considered researchers in this learning process. They observe, question and interact with the children as they learn and this interaction informs their practice.
- Parents are an integral part of this educational process. The collaboration of parents, children and teachers creates this learning community.
- As children's work progresses, teachers document it and reflect upon it. They share this documentation with the parents, children and community to help enrich and extend the study.
- Children use many "languages" to express their ideas and to explore their world. These languages include symbolic and artistic means, such as drawing, sculpting, painting, dramatizing and making music.
- Creativity is emphasized in the program and incorporated in all aspects of learning.
- The learning environment contributes to the child's experience by providing a rich visual backdrop, along with invitations to explore and communicate discoveries.
- The Clifton School welcomes children and their families to our homelike environment – one that is comfortable, naturally lighted and stimulating. We appreciate this opportunity to be a part of your child's lifelong learning process.

Operational Information

The Clifton School serves the employees of Emory University (including Emory Hospital), Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and full time Emory students. The purpose of the school is to provide state of the art growth and development opportunities and to foster a sense of community among the families we serve. The school is licensed for operation by the State of Georgia and can accommodate 240 children at each of the two sites.

The Clifton School is a non-profit corporation managed by a Board of Directors composed of representatives from Emory, CHOA and the CDC. The Executive Director works directly with the Board of Directors and manages the overall operation of both schools. Each school has a Site Director who is responsible for daily function.

The Clifton School operates from two physical sites – the Clairmont site and the Clifton site. Each site has a Director and an Assistant Director. The Executive Director answers to the Board of Directors and serves as the primary liaison between parents and board members. The Director at Clifton and the Director at Clairmont are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the schools. The Administrative Director, Assistant Directors, Office Manager and Administrative Assistants serve as support staff for both schools. Among other administrative duties, the Directors act as points of contact for the parents, Board of Directors, and school staff members.

The classes for children are organized into four villages at each site – an Infant, Toddler I, Toddler II and Preschool village. The Infant Village has four classrooms that share a common piazza. The Toddler I Village has five classrooms that share a common piazza. The Toddler II Village has four classrooms that share a common piazza. The Preschool Village has six classrooms that share a common piazza. Each classroom is staffed with two full-time teachers and an afternoon assistant. Each site has floating teachers and part-time teachers to provide coverage when teachers are out on leave, lunch breaks, planning time, or staff development. Substitute teachers are called to provide coverage for classrooms when regular staff members are not available.

To maintain our commitment to the continuity of the relationships that develop between children and caregivers, we make every effort to move teachers up with their children. Care is taken to keep groups together from year to year whenever possible.

The Clifton School chain of command is:

- Executive Director
- Site Director
- Assistant Director
- Administrative Director
- Business Manager
- Curriculum Coordinator
- Administrative Assistant
- Senior Classroom Teacher

Philosophy

We believe that learning is a natural process and begins at birth. Young children learn best through play. Play is children's work. Through play experiences, children have the opportunity to gain meaning from their environment and to construct and refine stories about their world. Play as a vehicle for learning becomes even more powerful as children interact with concrete, three-dimensional objects and as they engage in pretend and imaginative play.

We follow the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These principles address the pattern and organization of the child's development and characteristic behaviors displayed by children at the various ages/levels of their growth. Further, these principles are based on the concept that the child's development unfolds in a more or less sequential fashion. Skills and concepts build upon one another to produce new and more refined skills and concepts. Offering children experiences that are appropriate for their particular developmental level gives them practice with their current skills and abilities and gently challenges them to perform at a higher level.

We believe that all children deserve the opportunity to be WELL-ROUNDED. Attention to ALL the developmental areas is key to a happy early childhood. Accordingly, we recognize the importance of providing experiences that facilitate social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical development. As educators we consider the whole child when designing learning environments and constructing curricula. The best way to prepare children for kindergarten and future school careers is to help them feel confident, well-rounded and well-grounded.

Our Goals and Objectives

The Clifton School's overall goal is to foster children's growth in all developmental areas: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language and literacy. Our goals are created with developmental processes in mind, rather than with an emphasis on the accomplishment of specific objectives. We understand that cognitive development cannot be separated from the physical and social learning that occurs in relationship to others.

The development of a competent self-image is our most important goal. We want children to feel as capable as possible in all areas of development and to be motivated to use and strengthen all of their abilities.

Our goal is to enhance children's ability to learn and to construct their understanding of the world rather than to stress specific content areas. When children learn how to learn, they can approach any new situation with confidence and curiosity.

Another goal is the development of a sense of autonomy and independence. We want children to have the confidence to make choices and take risks but also be able to accept help.

Our final goal is to strengthen each child's ability to relate to others and to the environment. This goal includes the development of social relatedness – caring about others, forming friendships and appreciating diversity.

To achieve our goals, our objectives are to:

- Provide an enriched environment with many opportunities for physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development.
- Foster active engagement with natural materials in the social world around us, rather than focusing on isolated “learning lessons.”
- Promote creativity, with the focus on the process rather than the product. This involves providing a range of opportunities (100 Languages) to express feelings, ideas and learning.
- Incorporate the ideas and cultural practices of families in the learning process within the classroom.

These specific stated goals guide our educational program and are made concrete in objectives that relate to the Georgia Early Learning Development Standards (GELDS) for each child’s developmental stage and/or cultural background.

Attendance at the Center

The center is open Monday – Friday from 7:00 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. For your child’s well being and in accordance with state licensing guidelines we ask that you arrange your schedule so he/she is not in the center more than 10-hours per day or 50 hours per week. Breakfast is served from 8:30 to 9:00. Children arriving after 9:00 should have breakfast prior to their arrival. In an effort to maintain and encourage good health practices, please wash your child’s hands thoroughly upon entering the classroom. The Clifton School closes at building at 6:30. All children should be pick up by 6:30. Clifton staff are not scheduled to work past 6:30 in an effort to maintain a safe and secure environment we appreciate your timely exiting of the building.

Holidays and Operating Hours

The Clifton School is open year round except for New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, and two days for Christmas. When a holiday occurs on a Saturday, we observe it on Friday. Likewise, a holiday occurring on Sunday will be celebrated the following Monday. Two additional days will be reserved for Teacher Work Days – one in Spring and one in Fall. We also close for the four days following Memorial Day weekend. This week gives us time to prepare for the beginning of the new school year, which is the first full week of June.

Inclement Weather Policy

During times of inclement weather, the school will be open. It will be staffed by as many employees as possible, depending on the number of employees who can safely travel to the school. However, in the event that BOTH Emory and CDC close, announce a later opening time or an early closing time, we will do so as well. In the event that the weather should turn icy during the day, we request that parents pick up their children as soon as possible, so that our teachers are able to travel home safely. This information will be relayed through our calling post, email listserve, posted on our website and when possible via local news channels.

Process for Notification of Emergencies

In the case of any emergency situation or school closing, you will receive a message from the calling post or you may call the school offices. (Clairmont Site 404-315-6340; Clifton Site 404-636-4073)

Your Child's Schedule

Young children rely on the routines of their day to provide stability and predictability in their lives. One very important routine is their arrival and departure time at the school. As your work permits, it is preferable to have approximately the same arrival and departure time each day. If changes occur for any reason, such as a change in work schedule, visits from grandparents, or illness in the family, please talk about the changes with your child and your child's teacher. If your child is going to be absent, please call the school to let your child's teacher know.

Transition Behavior

Changes are often unsettling for young children...and adults as well. When a child first comes to the school, he/she may be uncomfortable with the new surroundings. Your child may cry or display other signs of unhappiness when being brought to the school. Many parents find separating from their children difficult as well.

Take heart! This transitional behavior is a way of coping with change, and usually disappears in a couple of weeks. Once the child settles into the classroom and gets to know the teachers and the other children, smiles and laughter take the place of tears.

Another point to remember is that displays of unhappiness are usually confined to the time of separation from the parent. Typically, several minutes after the parent leaves, the child cheers up and gets down to the business of playing and having fun. Hopefully, parents will realize that their child's unhappiness is temporary. Monitors are available in the Director's office to allow you to observe your child's classroom and see how he/she is doing. Call or email us if you are worried about your child's adjustment. We will connect you with the classroom or check on your child and provide you with and update.

Trust us to recognize and deal with separation anxieties and accompanying behaviors. We provide extra "TLC" to help children settle into the classroom routine as soon as possible. We will use all the techniques at our disposal, and invite your suggestions for helping your child adjust to school.

Child Assessment and Screening

Child assessment is a complex process of observing, recording, and documenting the experiences of individual children – what they do and how they do it over a period of time. "Authentic assessment" means evaluating children's growth through their daily activities; instead of relying on something that is not a part of their regular routine, such as standardized tests.

Assessment at The Clifton School is based on observation and aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). Teachers observe children throughout the day, including during morning meeting, small group work, routines, as well as outdoors. These observations of children's behavior and interactions with others help teachers identify children's

learning interests, skills and strengths, as well as skill sets in need of further development.

Teachers collect and record ongoing observations of children's behavior and conversations and compile them into individual portfolios for each child. These portfolios contain photographic and written documentation that communicates the unique identity of each child and when viewed over time, provides insights into the child's growth across the domains of language, physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.

Portfolios are available for parents to review at any time throughout the year. Parent conferences are held twice a year to provide an opportunity for families to meet one-on-one with their child's teachers and to exchange information about the child's progress. Families participate in the assessment process by sharing their observations of their children's conversations and behavior at home. These observations help inform the teacher about the child's accomplishments, likes and dislikes and interpretation of the world.

In addition to informing parents about the child's learning and development, assessment information is used by teachers to guide planning. As teachers observe and document children's conversations and types of play, they gather evidence about skill levels, interests and theory construction. This evidence is incorporated into weekly planning in the form of provocations, project work, and daily meetings. Through collaborative meetings between teachers and program support personnel, these observations also serve to plan program improvements.

Child Screening

The Clifton School utilizes the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages & Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE) tools for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment when indicated. Children are screened within the first 45 days of enrolling in our program and/or transitioning into a newly assigned classroom. Screenings are done in collaboration with families and results are shared with families during designated conference times and as needed throughout the school year.

What is ASQ?

Professionals rely on ASQ for the best developmental and social-emotional screening for children from one month to 5 ½ years. Highly reliable and valid, ASQ looks at strengths and trouble spots, educates parents about developmental milestones, and incorporates parents' expert knowledge about their children.

What is the Ages and Stages SE?

The Ages & Stages Questionnaires-Social Emotional (ASQ: SE) were developed to monitor a child's development in the behavioral areas of self-regulation, compliance, communication, adaptive, autonomy, affect and interaction with people. ASQ: SE questionnaire intervals correspond with the ASQ system, screening children from 3 months to 5 and 1/2 years of age. Questionnaire intervals are as follows: 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36, 48 and 60 months.

Screening Defined

"Screening" is a quickly administered assessment used to identify children who may benefit from more in-depth assessment. "Diagnostic assessment" is a method used by a trained professional,

such as a physician or therapist, for determining the cause of a condition such as a medical issue or developmental delay.

The Clifton School screens children to achieve the following goals:

- Identifying children's interests and needs
- Describing the developmental progress and learning of children
- Improving curriculum and adapting teaching practices and the environment
- Planning program improvement
- Communicating with families

Classroom Conversations and Confidentiality

Conversations between parents and teachers at drop-off and pick up times are encouraged. These can be wonderful moments for brief exchanges related to family activities and customs.

To honor confidentiality, we do not have conversations with adults about other families or children. We include children in conversations when appropriate. We do not talk about developmental and/or behavioral concerns in their presence and strive to keep all conversations in the presence of children positive. Meetings should be scheduled for extensive and detailed conversations.

To respect confidentiality, we do not share family's personal or private information without prior consent. This includes e-mails, phone numbers and addresses for play dates or parties. Email addresses for parents in your child's room may be obtained from your child's room representative.

In the event that a child is injured by another child, state licensing prohibits our giving the name of the child who caused the injury to the parents of the victim.

Children's enrollment files are kept confidential. Occasionally, for assessment and screening purposes, it may be necessary for some school personnel to have access to children's files. This information is never shared with school personnel not involved in the assessment process, or other families.

Parent and Center Information

We encourage you to let us know what is on your mind. The Director and Assistant Director are available to you to discuss any matter. Of course, your child's teacher will usually be able to answer questions about classroom activities and interactions. You may also be able to obtain information from the Parent Council Representative in your child's classroom. The important point is that your input is valued.

Your phone calls to the school are welcome. However, we try to limit classroom disruptions, so if your call is not time-sensitive, please leave a message with the receptionist and a teacher will return your call between activities or at naptime. If the phone call is an emergency, please tell the receptionist and you will be connected with the classroom immediately. If you are worried about your child's well-being, don't hesitate to call; we will route your call directly to the classroom.

Problems may arise because of miscommunication and can be resolved by talking to the teacher. We strive to build a positive parent teacher partnership for the benefit of your child.

Formal parent conferences are held two times a year. We are happy to accommodate additional conferences if needed. Please pre-schedule a meeting time if you need to have an extended conversation with a teacher. Stopping a teacher in the parking lot may prevent him or her from arriving at work on time. Engaging in a lengthy classroom discussion may distract the teacher's attention from the children. We appreciate your respecting the teacher's time and responsibilities as you maintain that important communication necessary for us to have an effective partnership.

Grievance Procedures

Classroom Concerns:

Discuss the concern with your classroom teacher.

If you are not satisfied after talking to your child's teacher, contact the Director or Assistant Director at your site.

Administrative Concerns:

Financial or enrollment questions or concerns are addressed by the Business Manager at the Clifton site or Administrative Director at the Clairmont site.

Program operation concerns are addressed by the Director or Assistant Director. This can be done by email, written requests (forms are available outside their offices) or in person by appointment.

If your concerns are not satisfied, contact the Executive Director.

If your concerns are not satisfactorily resolved, submit your complaint in writing (within 10 working days) to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors. The decision of the Board will be final.

Tuition

Please see the tuition schedule for the breakdown of fees and subsidy information. Tuition will be charged each week during the entire period of a child's enrollment including holidays, teacher workdays and school closings. Because our staff and operational expenses continue, we cannot refund tuition for days your child misses because of illness or family vacations. Tuition covers the provision of childcare and learning experiences as set forth in the curriculum of the school, as well as two meals and a snack.

Tuition Payments

As stated in the tuition schedule, the fees for childcare at The Clifton School are paid through payroll deduction (Emory and CHOA), or Credit Union (CDC). Payments for CHOA and CDC employees will occur on a biweekly basis. Emory employee payments correlate with the employee's payment schedule – biweekly for an hourly employee and monthly for a salary employee. Biweekly and monthly deductions are payment for the previous weeks' tuition charges. Monthly deductions are an average of the annual tuition. Monthly payments result in a rolling balance from month-to-month, but will "zero-out" at the end of a school year (June-May). Averaging the monthly payments allows us to deduct a consistent amount from your pay

regardless of the number of weeks in any given month.

Withdrawal from the School

Program activities at The Clifton School are designed to meet the needs of children for educational experiences within a group setting. If, after a reasonable period of time, a child is unable to adjust to a group setting, or the school is unable to meet a child's or family's special needs, the family may be asked to withdraw the child. If such a situation arises, the school will assist the family in finding more appropriate child care arrangements.

A written full four-week notice (with tuition) is required of parents wishing to withdraw children from the program. There are no exceptions to this policy. This gives us an opportunity to offer the space to a child on the waiting list. The two-week deposit paid at the time of enrollment will be applied towards your child's last two weeks of enrollment.

Families affected by a reduction in workforce of any of The Clifton School entities will be allowed to stay until the end of the semester unless: A) space is needed by another qualified family b) payment is in arrears two weeks or more.

The Teaching Staff

Each class has two full-time Teachers. Many of them have a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field, while others have substantial work toward such a degree. They also have previous teaching experience in a childcare setting. All have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or are working toward that credential.

Part-time Assistant Teachers round out the teaching staff. All teachers participate in extensive training in all areas of child development and family involvement.

The school regularly hires substitute teachers from a contracted agency that specializes in early childcare providers. A photo of the substitute teacher labeled with her/his name will be posted outside the room in which she will be working. Most of our substitute teachers have a long-standing relationship with the school and are familiar with our program and philosophy.

The school may use volunteers from time to time to enrich the experience of the children or help in the school office. A member of the school teaching staff always supervises volunteers.

All staff members, substitute teachers and all volunteers working with the children must have a criminal records check. The Director and Assistant must also have a fingerprint check through the FBI. Additionally, all employees must receive positive recommendations from persons listed as their professional references. All staff receive training in child abuse awareness, First Aid and CPR.

To keep the staff updated on all relevant information related to caring for young children, the school offers many in-service training workshops. Attendance at these workshops is mandatory. The administration also makes frequent classroom observations and evaluates the staff in writing on a regular basis.

Classroom Organization

The Clifton School provides childcare for children six weeks to five years of age, including children who are five years old after the September 1 cut off for public school.

NAEYC Teacher/Child ratios are maintained at all periods of the day except for naptime, breaks, and teacher planning. They are as follows:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Teacher/Child Ratio</u>	<u>Maximum Class Size</u>
Infants	1/4	8
Toddler Ones	1/5	10
Toddler Twos	1/6	12
Two/Threes	1/7	14
Threes - Fives (Preschool)	1/8-10	16-20

Move-up

The Clifton School is closed the last week of May (the week of Memorial Day) each year. (Tuition is still charged the week the center is closed.) We have termed this week, “moveup”, because this is the time when the children in the Infant through Toddler II Villages move up to the next village.

In late January, parents are given an Intent Form to complete. This form provides the parent an opportunity to share any teacher and/or friend(s) requests for classroom placement in the next village. We recognize and value the important friendships among children and the strong bonds that children, teachers, and parents form amongst each other, so it is our practice to keep as many close relationships together as possible. Due to enrollment limitations and other restrictions, it is not possible to accommodate all requests.

Infant and Toddler Transitions

The children in classrooms moving up from the Infant Village to Toddler I and those moving up from the Toddler I Village to Toddler II move up together as a group.

Continuity of care -- as the children move up through Toddler II, we strive to move at least one of the classroom’s teachers up with the children. When a class moves up to a room of new teachers, a period of transition takes place a few weeks prior to moveup. For more information on the transition to new teachers, please read the transition section for Toddler II to Preschool.

Toddler to Preschool Transition

The Toddler II to Preschool Transition involves a big change Entire classrooms are not always able to remain together; however, we will work to keep close friends together as much as possible.

Transition to New Teachers: Children and teachers form strong bonds, so it can sometimes be difficult to move on to a new set of teachers. We want to be sensitive to the child’s need for time to adjust to this change, so the transition begins when the teachers receive the list of children who will be joining their classrooms in June. The teachers will initially visit the group of children in the children’s current classroom, a familiar environment. These brief visits will progress for about 1 ½ weeks until the teachers invite the children to visit the new classroom (in small groups

or individually). This ritual includes the children who are already in the preschool rooms, as they assist in introducing the new environment to the rising preschoolers. These visits will continue through the end of the school year, the last Friday in May.

Pre-Kindergarten:

Pre-K at The Clifton School is not a Georgia Lottery funded Pre-K program, but a Private Pre-K program focusing on constructivist based practices in conjunction with Georgia's Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS).

Our Pre-k program provides quality early education and constructivist based practices focusing on the developmental needs of children. We focus on language, literacy, discoveries/ investigations, analytical thinking, problem solving, social/emotional development, kindergarten readiness and most importantly play.

What will The Clifton School do to prepare children for kindergarten?

Plan activities to strengthen the relationships between Pre-K and kindergarten by visiting a kindergarten class and having a kindergarten teacher come and talk to the children about kindergarten.

Enhance language and literacy development by helping children develop an understanding of new vocabulary introduced in conversations, activities, stories or books.

Assist children in developing age-appropriate strategies that will assist in reading.

Enhance mathematical development by helping children learn how to use a variety of non-standard and standard means of measurement.

Read aloud children's books that are about kindergarten.

Allow children to explore and use a variety of materials to develop artistic expression.

Assist children in using the process of science to actively explore and increase understanding of the environment.

Assist children in building friendships through the sharing of ideas and experiences.

Encourage children to have fun playing to learn and learning through play.

Home Visits

Home visits are a wonderful way to build relationships with new families entering into the school. Not only are relationships built during this interaction but also personalities, beliefs, values, culture, and more are being shared. The home visit will give families a greater insight into our school and our classrooms.

Infant teachers will make every attempt to provide home visits to all the children entering into their classroom. Teachers will provide families with information regarding the culture of the classroom, classroom routines, and provide families with an opportunity to ask questions. Teachers will also learn about the family. This will be a time to talk about the family's culture, routines, and the child's interests. Teachers may bring their classroom camera with them to document this experience.

Waiting List Policy for Siblings

As our families at Clifton grow, the need to find space for a sibling often becomes a reality. Clifton attempts to keep families together. Therefore, siblings of children currently enrolled are

given priority for enrollment, when an appropriate space becomes available. We keep a separate Priority Waiting List for siblings, which means that siblings are listed ahead of new applicants. We add students to this list as applications are submitted and the application fees are received.

Most often, the sibling is an infant. A quality environment for children is one in which care is consistent. We attempt at Clifton to maintain as consistent an environment as possible. We normally move children to a new room once a year during the first week of June. This means that most spaces in the infant room will be available at that time. If your need for infant care falls after June 1, there is the option to enroll and pay tuition beginning the first week of June to hold a space until you are ready. Otherwise, it may be a matter of finding temporary care until a space becomes available. Historically, we have very few infant spaces open up during the year, but a few do occur. It is the parents' responsibility to check with the Clifton office regarding the likelihood of upcoming available spaces. If you have any further questions, please come by the office or call.

Clothing

Children are to wear comfortable, washable clothes in which they can play freely. During various play and learning activities, children will get dirty. Children should not be afraid to participate for fear of getting their clothes dirty. Each child needs to bring an extra set of clothing, including underwear, to be used as needed. Check to make sure your child's extra clothing is seasonally appropriate. All children's clothing must be labeled. Use a laundry or permanent marker for labeling.

All children, except infants, must wear shoes at school. Rubber-sole shoes that close over the top of the foot with ties, buckles, or Velcro straps are the best for play at the school. Slip on shoes such as flip-flops, clogs or Crocs without straps are not appropriate for outdoor play. If your child insists on wearing slip-on shoes, please bring a pair of sturdy shoes (tennis shoes or other closed toed shoes) and socks to keep in the cubby for outside play.

In cold weather, children must have suitable outer garments to ensure their comfort and safety when playing outdoors. A coat or jacket, hat and gloves are recommended. It is also a good idea to layer clothes so that children can take layers off as the day goes on and temperatures rise.

Parents provide diapers for children not yet toilet-trained. If cloth diapers are used, parents must provide enough covers and liners for each diaper change and provide a covered pail for diaper disposal. During toilet training, 5 pairs of training pants and 3 changes of clothes must be sent each day. After the child is toilet-trained, one or two extra pairs of underwear should be kept at the school for occasional "accidents".

Personal Items at the Center

You must bring the following items:

For toddlers and preschoolers, a sheet, blanket and naptime cuddle toy for rest-time. These items help provide security and the familiarity of home. Sheets and blankets should be taken home every Friday to be washed.

- Extra clothing - how much will depend on the age and developmental level of the child.

Please discuss the amount of extra clothing with your child's teacher.

- Water bottle
- Toothbrush

You may bring:

- Objects from nature that the child has found while at home (for instance, fall leaves, flowers or pine cones). Such items may be shared with the class and used to provide rich connections between home and school experiences
- Books from home. Give the books to the teacher upon arrival and the teacher will find a time to read them during the day.

Please do not bring:

- Toys from home. Children feel very possessive of their own toys, so it is most difficult to share them in a classroom. Toys brought from home often bring about great unpleasantness in the classroom. The center is not responsible for any lost or broken toy. The only exception to this would be a teacher planned "show and share" activity for a few children at a time.
- Special costumes or outfits (unless requested by the teacher). These garments restrict the child's ability to play and engage in the usual classroom activities.
- Candy, chewing gum, sweets of any kind.
- Nuts or nut products.
- Money (unless designated for a specific purpose, such as a special class project or field trip).
- Jewelry. Jewelry is easily lost, broken, or the focus of arguments among children. It can also be dangerous. Children are not permitted to wear necklaces, scarves, pacifiers or other items around their necks (pacifiers may not be attached to clothing).
- Videos, DVD's or CD's not related to class studies and investigations.

Nutrition

The Clifton School participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for which we receive partial reimbursement for our food expenses.

Notify the school Administration and your child's teacher of any food allergies and/or dietary restrictions when you enroll.

All children are provided with planned nutritional meals and afternoon snacks. Breakfast is served from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. or 12:00 p.m. (depending on the child's age). If you will arrive after 9:00, please feed your child before you arrive. The afternoon snack is available when naptime is over.

Meals contain a nutritionally balanced variety of foods. Children are encouraged, but not forced to try various kinds of fruits, vegetables, breads and protein sources. We try to serve healthy foods that appeal to children. We also recognize that some children may be unable to eat certain foods due to allergies and/or dietary restrictions. Vegetarian menus are available. We will work with families to meet special dietary needs whenever possible. However, we cannot accommodate requests for organic milk, soy milk, and other items not listed on the menus. Parents are welcome to bring in food or beverages to meet their child's unique nutritional needs, if necessary. We ask that families strive to ensure that foods brought from home also meet the USDA's CACFP food guidelines (see appendix). Staff make sure that food requiring refrigeration stays cold until served. Food celebrations may occur in connection with classroom projects or birthdays. In keeping with healthy nutritional practices, we ask that children be offered health food choices (cheese, veggies, fruit, etc).

We provide one brand of ready to feed formula for infants. Parents who require another formula must provide their own mixed, labeled, dated and ready to serve. The school provides water and whole milk when the child is able to make the change from formula. Infants are served baby food and then strained or mashed food. Infants unable to sit are held for bottle-feeding and do not eat from propped bottles at any time. Infants and toddlers able to sit and hold bottles themselves do not carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups with them while crawling or walking. Teachers offer children fluids from a cup as soon as the families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready to use a cup. Staff do not offer solid foods and fruit juices to infants younger than six months unless recommended by the child's health care provider and approved by families. Sweetened beverages are avoided. If juice is served, the amount is limited to no more than four ounces per child daily.

Children are encouraged to feed and serve themselves as soon as possible. This brings particular delight to their mealtime experiences and strengthens their self-help skills. This may mean that mealtime is very messy, but certainly worth the trouble from a developmental standpoint.

Menus for meals and snacks are posted each month in the classroom, lobby and online. Regularly reading these menus will provide you with a clear idea of what your child is eating - or at least what he/she is being offered! Menu changes are posted on the entrance to the school as needed.

Feel free to discuss the menu or the nutritional value of the foods served with the Director. In response to serious allergies, we maintain a nut-free environment. Nuts and nut products are not allowed in the building or on the playground.

Nut Policy and Allergies

In order to protect both your child's health and confidentiality, a signed consent form must be on file allowing us to post your child's allergy information in prominent locations in the classroom.

The Clifton School strives to maintain a nut-free environment. If you are bringing food into the classroom for special celebrations or projects, PLEASE make sure you carefully read the label to check for any ingredients that may contain nuts.

Our nut policy includes not only peanuts but also ALL tree nuts (such as walnuts, almonds,

cashews, and pecans). However, we do not exclude products with labels that say the product may have been processed in a plant with nuts and therefore may contain traces of peanuts.

If you serve nut products to your children prior to arriving at school, please check to make sure your children have washed their hands and that they do not have trace pieces of nuts on their clothes or body.

Many severe allergic reactions occur in children who were previously undiagnosed with an allergy. Therefore, it is imperative that we avoid nuts and nut products altogether at the school.

If you would like more information, we there are several informative websites that you can visit:

www.foodallergy.org

www.healthy-kids.info

www.nih.gov

If you have a child with allergies, your responsibilities are to:

- Notify the school of the child's allergies.
- Provide written medical documentation, instructions, and medications as directed by a physician. (Food Allergy Action Plan must be completed.)
- Provide properly labeled medications and replace medications after use or upon expiration.
- Educate the classroom teachers about your child's food allergies including safe and unsafe foods; symptoms of allergic reactions; procedures to take after a reaction has occurred.
- Work out an agreement with the teachers about whether your child can have any outside food.
- Provide updated emergency contact information to classroom teachers and administration.

The Clifton School responsibilities include:

- All permanent staff (full-time and part-time) will watch "The Food Allergy and Anaphylactic Network DVD" and practice using the EpiPen during their orientation.
- All permanent staff will review and be familiar with the school's nut policy, the best ways to prevent and deal with allergies, and the school's emergency response protocol for allergic reactions.
- The classroom teachers will post your child's picture with allergies on the classroom parent board, lunch tray, and food prep area.
- The classroom teachers will post allergy signs on the classroom door.
- The teachers will keep the EpiPens in a secure and readily available designated spot—most likely the red evacuation bag and will make sure that the EpiPen is always in reach during classroom outings.
- The classroom teachers will share any pertinent allergy information including each child's "Food Allergy Action Plan" with all substitutes and part-time staff in their classroom.
- The administrative assistant will inform substitutes and temporary part-time staff about our allergy policies and procedures.
- In the event that a nut product is accidentally brought to the school, the item will be immediately taken to the outside dumpster and the area of exposure will be immediately washed with soap, water, and bleach. The administration will send out periodic reminders

to parents and teachers that we are a “nut-free” school.

Health Policies

Exposure to many contagious illnesses is a normal part of childhood. The most common illnesses are associated with the upper respiratory system and the gastrointestinal system. Infants and toddlers are particularly vulnerable to some diseases, because certain components of their general immune system are not fully developed.

In an effort to manage and prevent the spread of disease, the state requires us to keep on file children’s current Certificate of Immunization (GA Form 3231). This is the State of Georgia’s immunization form and is required within 30 days of a child’s enrollment. The form must be completed by a GA-licensed physician’s staff, who will provide an expiration date on the form. It is the parent’s responsibility to maintain the validity of their child’s form. Reminders will be provided to parents by school administration. Parents are expected to stay current with their child’s immunizations and to observe strictly the Health Policies. The parents should report instances of exposure or illness to the school administrative staff and take appropriate action when symptoms of illness have been identified.

The school administrators must report some communicable diseases to the DeKalb County Health Department. Parents in the ill child’s class must also be notified.

Children must have a note from their pediatrician to return to the school when they have had any type of reportable communicable disease.

Sick Children

We are a facility that cares for well children. While we know how inconvenient it can be for a parent to have to miss work or school to stay home with a sick child, we have a responsibility to maintain a healthy environment for all of our children, families, and staff.

Often a child will become ill while at school. While it is possible to give some guidelines as to when to call a parent, teachers must use their own judgment and knowledge about the child and family. If a child is showing contagious symptoms, such as vomiting or diarrhea, the child must be sent home. Often we will find a child who has a low grade fever, but other symptoms such as lethargy, paleness or complaints of feeling ill. In these cases the staff must exercise their own judgment about whether to contact the family. A space in the front office will be made available for children who are waiting to be picked up and are too ill to remain in the classroom.

A child will not be admitted and parents/guardian or emergency contact will be notified immediately when a child has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from the school if:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities.
- The illness results in more care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children or;

The child’s condition is suspected to be contagious or has any of the following

conditions:

- A temperature of 101 degrees accompanied by a behavior change; child may return 24 hours after fever has broken or a physician has determined that there are no other signs of illness.
- Signs and symptoms of illness such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing or loss of appetite.
- Uncontrolled diarrhea or change in bowel movement pattern; child may return 24 hours after diarrhea has ceased or physician has determined illness is not contagious.
- Vomiting; child may return 24 hours after vomiting has ceased or physician has determined that the illness is not contagious.
- Mouth sores with drooling; child may return when a physician determines the condition is non-infectious.
- Rash with fever or behavior changes; rash with weepy blistering; and or rash with change in breathing pattern. Child may return when physician has determined that the symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease.
- Any kind of earache or ear pain.
- A stiff neck or severe headache.
- Scabies, child may return 24 hours after treatment has started.
- Impetigo; child may return 24 hours after treatment has started.
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infection; child may return 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and fever has broken.
- Chicken pox; child may return after all sores have dried and crusted (between 6-10 days). Pertussis; child may return 5 days after antibiotic treatment.
- Mumps; child may return 9 days after onset of swelling.
- Measles or Rubella; child may return 6 days after onset of rash.
- Ringworm infection of the skin. No need for exclusion, the area will be covered once discovered and until the end of the day. Treatment is expected to begin once a child is in the families care. Once treatment begins the area no longer needs to be covered.
- Ringworm infection of the scalp. Once the area is discovered it can be covered until the end of the day, however ringworm of the scalp must be treated by a physician. The child may return to school once treatment begins.

Guidelines for Keeping Child at Home

- Children exhibiting signs of sore throat should be kept at home and checked by a physician.
- Children should remain at home for at least 24 hours once an antibiotic has been prescribed and administered.

If your child is not well enough to be outdoors, he/she is not well enough to be at The Clifton School.

Our exclusion policy for maintaining a lice free environment is as follows:

We require that parents notify us immediately if they have observed the symptoms of lice on their currently enrolled children, school age children, or anyone in their home. The first time we observe

symptoms of lice on your child they will be excluded and you will be asked to provide treatment to your child and then provide the center of confirmation that your child has been treated (the product box or receipt will meet this requirement). Your child will be allowed to return to school based on the current best practice of the American Academy of Pediatrics which states that children do not have to be excluded unless they have active lice bugs present.

Our policy for children who have presented with lice more than once (a reoccurrence within 15 days) is exclusion outside the center until they are nit free and provide additional information on treatment to the family as well as refer them to their physician for further information. We base this not only on best practice within the field of early care and education but also as recommended by the state of Georgia in the Georgia Head Lice Manual, which states that a plan should be in place for enforcement around reoccurring infection.

Procedure for medication & Special Medical Needs

The staff person working at the front desk administers medicine. Staff cannot administer medication unless the Medication Authorization Form is filled out completely. EpiPens will be kept in the classroom. All other medication should be given to the front desk attendant. ALL medicine-prescriptions and over-the-counter medications must be:

In original container and labeled with the following information:

- Child's first and last name clearly marked
- Name of the health professional that prescribed the medication, or a note from the health care provider recommending the over-the-counter medicine
- Date prescription was filled and prescription number (if prescription)
- Expiration date
- Specific instructions for giving, storing and disposing of medication from the health professional (instructions for over-the-counter may be faxed in)

Authorization for medicine can be for no longer than two weeks. Medication will be administered at 11:00 a.m. and/or 3:00 p.m.

In case of adverse medical reactions, parents will be notified immediately. If parents cannot be reached, staff will call the emergency numbers listed on the enrollment application. If the situation is critical, we will call 911

If you have an "as needed" medication there is a special form that must be completed. "As needed" medications also require a doctor's note.

No medicines should be kept in the classrooms with the exception of diapering ointments, sunscreen, and medications indicated in emergency allergy plans. All topical ointments allowed in the classroom should be out of children's reach. Persons responsible for administering medicines should wash their hands before and after.

NOTE: We encourage parents to ask their doctor to prescribe medicines that can be given in 12 hour cycles, if possible, so that medicine can be administered at home and not at the center. Medicine that is to be given only twice a day will not be dispensed twice at the center. Therefore,

please choose a time at home to dispense the medicine and another time (11:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m.) for the center.

If your child requires special medical procedures, you or the prescribing health care provider will demonstrate the procedure to ensure accurate implementation by staff.

Emergency Procedures

When emergencies occur, the teacher immediately notifies an administrator or the designated “Person in Charge” at the school. This individual will carry out any needed triage activities and will coordinate and oversee all related activities. In the case of a “life threatening” emergency the administrator or designee will call 911 for emergency transportation to Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. Parents will be contacted, informed of the actions being taken, and asked to contact the child’s pediatrician, in the event that the pediatrician wants to meet the child at the hospital. The Clifton School carries sufficient liability insurance to cover such incidents as a secondary policy. In the event of any other emergency, parents will be contacted.

Upon enrollment, parents are required to sign a form giving the school permission to follow the above medical procedures. It is important to maintain a current list of work and cell phone numbers as well as at least two contacts outside the immediate family should parents be unavailable by phone. Please provide this information on your child’s emergency card.

For general emergencies the school does have lockdown procedures and evacuation procedures (see appendix). Children and teachers practice fire drills monthly and storm drills every six months so that they become very familiar with evacuation procedures and are less likely to panic or be alarmed if an emergency occurs.

Evacuation routes and shelter-in locations are posted in all classrooms. The school is equipped with sprinklers, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors.

Communication of Medical Information

We collect the following health and safety information from families:

- Health Record Check
- Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231)
- Allergy Emergency Plan form (for children with allergies)
- Emergency card (provides list of authorized alternate pick-ups in case of emergency)
- Classroom emergency information sheet

It is required that this information be routinely updated. This information is confidential and kept in a secure location. It is used only by administrators and teachers as needed to access pertinent information. It is available to parents/legal guardians and regulatory authorities (upon request).

Staff and parents should communicate with each other daily regarding any symptoms that may suggest a medical problem. Staff and parents should communicate with each other regarding injuries sustained at home or at school. Staff will contact the parent in the case of illness (as defined by the school’s health policies) or injury that may require medical evaluation. Parents will need to pick up these children as soon as possible.

Any instance of suspected child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) must be reported to the

appropriate state agency as prescribed by Georgia law. A copy of this law is displayed in our lobby.

Health Precautions Taken by the Center:

- Staff members are required to have health examinations to verify that they have the good health and vitality to work with young children.
- Staff members must wash their hands before and after changing diapers, assisting children in the bathroom, handling food and feeding a child.
- Parents are asked to wash their hands and assist their children in washing their hands upon arrival and departure.
- Children routinely wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. They also wash their hands after handling pets or any materials such as sand, dirt or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals.
- Each infant has his/her own crib with cleaned and sanitized sheets and linens. Crib mattresses are sanitized daily.
- Each child older than 12 months needs to bring a sheet and blanket for his/her sleeping mat. These linens should be sent home each Friday for washing.
- Toys in the infant and toddler classrooms are sanitized daily. Toys in the preschool are sanitized weekly. Eating surfaces are sanitized before and after meals and snacks.
- Staff members are trained in First Aid, CPR and recognition and reporting of child abuse. There is a primary first aid kit in the copy room and additional supplies in each classroom. First aid kits are also on each playground.
- Emergency telephone numbers are available in the school office and are posted on each telephone.
- The parent must escort children into the school and out of the school. Staff members will make sure parents wash children's hands upon arrival each morning. Parents must update enrollment information as changes occur.

Injury Prevention and Reporting

Keeping your child safe is our most important responsibility. We attempt to prevent injuries by creating a safe environment with careful adult supervision. However, because young children are active learners and risk takers, there will be bumps, falls, scratches, scrapes and bruises. We make every attempt to document those injuries on our child incident report forms. The witness to the accident completes the form, which is signed by the administrator and the parent. One copy is given to you, another goes into your child's folder and the 3rd is filed in an injury log at the front desk. If the injury requires professional medical attention, a copy is sent to state licensing. If the injury involves more than a minor scratch or bruise, teachers are encouraged to call you to give a firsthand report of the accident.

There may be times when a child is injured and a teacher is unaware of the accident. A child running outside may fall down, hop up and keep going without the incident being noted. That evening at bath time you may discover a bruised knee. If you have questions about an unreported injury, bring this to the attention of the classroom teachers. At times, teachers may notice a scratch or bruise on a child, but not have seen the incident. If the child is not able to describe the accident we make every attempt to determine what happened. We have video monitors in the classrooms, which we look at to see if we can spot the incident. You are always welcome to view our classroom monitors.

Biting

Infants, toddlers and preschoolers are often unable to communicate effectively with words and may sometimes bite another child. Periodically, in even the best childcare program, outbreaks of biting occur. When this happens, it can be frightening, frustrating, and very stressful for children, parents and teachers alike. But, however unfortunate, biting is a natural phenomenon, not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers. It is a disturbing stage some children go through. It has virtually no lasting developmental significance. A child who bites is not on a path toward being a discipline problem. Unfortunately, there are no quick and easy solutions.

Children bite for a variety of reasons: the simple sensory exploration of babies, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, or the intense desire for a toy or the attention of the teacher. Children often bite because they lack the language skills to communicate what they need. Some children become “stuck” in a biting stage and it is frustrating for the parents of victims that we are unable to “fix” the child quickly or have them removed from their child’s classroom.

We accept responsibility for biting and other hurtful acts and for protecting all children. We recognize our responsibility to provide a safe setting where no child needs to hurt another to achieve his or her ends. We make every attempt to prevent a child from being bitten. Once teachers become aware that a child is in a biting stage, they try to stay close to that child to prevent continual biting. It may not always be possible for us to prevent an injury. At some point your child may be bitten or may bite another child. We treat the wound and notify you on our incident report. Biting incidents are confidential. We cannot inform you of the child who bit your child. If a child is frequently a biting victim we encourage that child to say “No, Stop, Leave me alone” in order to help prevent injury.

Repeated Acts of Aggression

At The Clifton School a situation where a child is repeatedly engaging in acts of aggression must be dealt with carefully and quickly. In a calm voice, the teacher will identify the child’s behavior, “Jo, you are hitting Fred?” The teacher will then ask the child to stop. If the child does not stop, the teacher will inform him or her that they are going to move him or her, “Jo, I’m moving you because you are hitting Fred.” The teacher will then tend or have someone else tend to the needs of the child who has been hurt.

Once the child who initiated the aggression is removed from the situation, the teacher will sit down with the child to talk about the situation. If the child will not talk, she may tell the child, “Jo, I can’t let you go back to playing with the other children until we can talk and you can tell me that you are not going to hurt them.” The teacher may provide the child with something to do until he

or she is ready to talk. “Jo, you can play with the puzzles until you are ready to talk.”

When the child is willing to talk, she will re-identify the situation, “You were hitting Fred.” With an older child, you can ask what was going on when the child was hitting. She will tell the child that hitting hurts and is not allowed in the classroom and talk about the emotions of both children, and brainstorm solutions.

With a younger child, the teacher will reflect his/her emotions; “You were mad” and reiterate that hitting hurts and is not allowed in the classroom; “You hit Fred. Hitting hurts. We don’t hit,” and offer solutions; “If you are mad you can say stop and stamp your foot like this.” If the child cannot calm down or talk or continues in the aggressive behavior, it may be appropriate to remove him or her from the classroom and take them to a soothing area to give the child a break.

If the behavior persists we will work to find an effective way to reduce or eliminate this form of aggression including:

1. Require a parent/teacher conference with the parent(s) of the aggressor
2. Recommend parent/teacher conferences with the parent(s) of the victim
3. Consider the environment’s impact on the situation
4. Consider alternative responses to problematic behavior
5. Consider recommending some form of outside consultation

The Clifton School will only consider involuntary disenrollment of a child for aggression if one or more of the following conditions are present:

1. At the discretion of the Executive Director, to be considered when the child is consistently causing harm to themselves or others without remediation.
2. On the recommendation of two mental health professionals and/or consultants of our choosing
3. If parents/legal guardians consistently fail to attend scheduled conferences and/or are resistant to implementing suggestions that have been made by professionals

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

All staff are required to inform the director immediately if there are any signs that suggest a child may have been abused or neglected. This includes any concerns regarding unexplained bruises or marks on a child, observations of neglect, physical or verbal mistreatment of a child.

Once a report of suspected child abuse is made, the Director will begin an investigation of the situation. If a teacher or other staff member is being investigated, the director will notify parents of the child(ren) involved that an investigation is underway. All investigations of suspected Child Abuse and Neglect will be handled in a confidential manner to protect the rights of both the child and the adults involved.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

The Clifton School is committed to meeting the needs of all children, regardless of special health care needs or disabilities. Children with special needs will be accepted into our program under the

guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

All families will be treated with dignity and with respect for their individual needs and/or differences. The Clifton School will ensure the confidentiality regarding special needs is maintained for all families and staff in our program.

Children with special needs will be given the opportunity to participate in the program to the fullest extent possible. To accomplish this, The Clifton School may consult with agencies/organizations as needed, provided parental permission is granted. Inclusion of program staff on IFSP and IEP case conferences is desired to ensure that we are able to provide the most supportive environment possible.

All staff will receive general training on the benefits of inclusion of children with special needs and training on specific accommodations that any child in their classrooms may need. The knowledge of parents and health care professionals involved in the care of the child with special needs will be consulted to determine accommodations and or therapy requirements.

The Early Intervention Teacher

The Early Intervention Teacher will work with families and teachers to model a variety of techniques to use with all children; from those who may be exhibiting behaviors because of developmental concerns to children who would benefit from a greater challenge in the classroom. The Early Intervention Teacher is responsible for the observation, planning and implementation of all early intervention programming for children and families keeping in line with best practices and developmental milestones.

Smoke Drug and Weapon Free Environment

We provide a smoke, drug and weapon free environment for the health and safety of our children and staff. No one is permitted to smoke or use tobacco products on the premises. Having or using illegal drugs or alcohol is not permitted. Weapons of any kind (including toy weapons) are also prohibited.

Water Makes You Smarter

Research demonstrates that water enhances brain alertness. Please bring a small plastic drinking bottle with a cap daily, labeled with your child's name, so that children will have access to water outside. This will allow your child to have water available at all times.

Insurance

The Clifton School carries secondary insurance to pay for expenses should your child be involved in an accident while attending school. A secondary policy means that you must first file with your personal insurance carrier. If you have a claim, contact our Administrative Director.

Outdoor Play Policy

Health experts are unanimous on the importance of fresh air, and the negative health consequences of children spending too much time in closed, indoor settings. If a child is well enough to be in the school, the child is generally assumed to be well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather,

children play outside every day. Please be sure to send appropriate clothing (layers are recommended) so your child will be comfortable. Exposure to the cold, when appropriately dressed, does not cause illness; it actually kills germs that cause illness. Extreme weather is defined as below 30 degrees or above 100 degrees. On days when temperatures are approaching the limits set above, outdoor time may be shortened.

What if a parent asks that their child stay indoors? We usually have to say no. While we would like to individualize, staff-child ratios rarely allow us to stay with one or two children while the group goes outside. It is difficult for the staff to try to find another classroom for the child and going into another room makes some children uncomfortable.

We monitor outdoor play based on recommendation from the Clean Air Campaign. In “code orange” we go outside for a short period of time, but do NOT engage in strenuous play. In “code red” we will not go outside.

Sunscreen and insect repellent (provided by the parents) is used during months when public health authorities recommend it due to sun exposure and high risk of insect-borne disease. On hot summer days children are invited to play in shaded areas and teachers ensure they remain hydrated by regularly offering water and using spray misters.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) lists sunscreen as one of the best ways to protect your child from the sun. Sunscreen should be used year round, as sunburn may occur even on cloudy days. Parents are required to provide sunscreen for their child. The AAP recommends sunscreen with “broad-spectrum” on the label and an SPF of at least 15. Label the sunscreen with your child’s first and last name and complete the Authorization to Dispense External Preparations Form. (This form gives The Clifton School staff permission to apply topical ointments to your child.) Sunscreen should be applied 15-30 minutes before exposure to the sun and reapplied if the children are outside for more than 2 hours. Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen to their child prior to releasing the child to the center’s care. Clifton School staff will reapply sunscreen as needed, such as prior to afternoon outdoor activities.

If your child has an allergy to sunscreen, please provide a doctor’s note as documentation.

Sunscreen for Infants:

According to the AAP, infants younger than 6 months may have sunscreen applied to small areas of the body: the face and backs of hands, if protective clothing and shade are not available.

For more information on ways to protect your child from the sun, please visit the AAP’s website for parents, <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/pages/Sun-Safety.aspx>.

Security

Because of the world we live in, we must be very security conscious at The Clifton School. Our primary point of security is the front door. There is a camera monitoring the school entrance. Parents must walk their children in each morning and pick them up in the classroom each evening. Please do not “race” in the hallways. We discourage children from running and need your cooperation to keep our children safe. Your child should always be with you during drop-off and departure. If you have more than one child, it is often best to take the older child to class first, so

that you do not have to supervise them while you are getting the younger child settled. Be sure that a teacher is aware of your child's arrival and departure. When the children are in the piazza or outside during the early morning and late evening, it is very important that you connect with the teachers who are responsible for your child before you leave.

Parents are issued fobs to unlock the front door. If you do not use your fob to unlock the front door, please be prepared to show identification to the receptionist. Please do not hold the front door open for other people's children. Children must be escorted into and out of the building by their own parents. Do not hold the door open for any person you do not know.

Children are released only to persons authorized on the parent emergency information form.. Parents must fill out our emergency form annually to authorize individuals other than the contracting parents to pick up their child. This will alleviate miscommunications and expedite the safe transportation of the child. Any authorized person picking-up a child must be at least 18 years old. Written permission must be given to the program staff if anyone other than those listed on the emergency form is to pick up a child. In case of emergency, a phone call will be accepted before the other adult arrives. All visitors must stop in the front desk before going to the child's room. The adult must present a picture ID. Staff WILL NOT release a child to someone who has not been authorized to pick him or her up. The emergency contact list on a child's emergency form gives us permission to call someone other than the contracting person if we cannot find them in an urgent situation. If you are planning to have your child picked up by someone the teacher has not met, please inform the teacher when you drop your child off or call the school before evening pick up. Changes to the authorized pick up list must be made in writing.

Staff members wear name badges so they are easily recognizable. We photograph substitutes and tape their pictures to the doors of the assigned classrooms. Let us know if you have any concerns about security.

Parent Partnerships

Because the school acts as a family support system and because it is located in close proximity to parents' places of employment, there are numerous opportunities for parents to be involved with the school. Parents are welcome at the school at any time, and their participation is always appreciated.

The children's experience at the school is best when the school staff and the parents are a team which communicates well and often. Beyond regular communication with the teacher and other school staff, there are many ways for parents to participate in school activities:

Membership on the PTA (Joint Council for Both Sites)

The PTA is a committee of parents who are interested in contributing their time to the school. Any parent can join the PTA. Each classroom is represented on this Council by a volunteer parent rep. The purpose of the PTA is to provide a vehicle for parents' input on issues relating to the school and to coordinate parent participation in school projects and activities. The proposed calendar of Parent Council sponsored events is available on the parent council website.

Visitation at the School

Parents are invited to visit the school at any time. Parents may choose to have lunch with their child. Parents may want to visit the classroom and read a book to the children or help facilitate a learning activity.

Making or gathering materials for the classroom

Many classroom activities require materials that are made by the teachers. Help from parents in this area is greatly needed and appreciated! For instance, a math readiness game using the flannel board may require 20 leaves cut from felt. A parent who volunteers to prepare these leaves is helping the teacher a great deal.

Parents with knowledge of other languages are particularly needed as classroom volunteers to interact with children and families who are still developing English language skills. Volunteers are needed to help make language picture cards to help teachers better communicate with children.

Working on a PTA project team

These teams implement school activities such as: the Octooboo Festival or the Annual Spring Auction. Find out more about these teams from your PTA representative.

Nursing Mothers

Nursing mothers may come to the school to feed their infants. We hope that nursing mothers will take advantage of the school's close proximity to their work place. Mothers may choose to nurse their infants in the privacy of one of the "quiet rooms" or remain in the classroom.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special events in the life of each child. We certainly want to share in the celebration if it is the wish of the family. However, we believe that the celebration should be as simple as possible. Please let the teacher know if you want to celebrate your child's birthday at the school and whether you will be able to attend. The class will recognize the birthday by giving the child special attention. If you want to provide refreshments, please bring enough to serve all the children. We prefer that refreshments be low in sugar. Refreshments should be store bought and unopened. This allows for us to easily check the ingredients listed on the packaging. Please check the ingredients to make sure the refreshments are nut-free. Please respect the wishes of other parents who want to limit their child's sugar intake. Latex balloons are known choking hazards and a major cause of eye injuries. We cannot allow them at school.

The Clifton School Special Birthday Tradition

Because birthdays are a special time of celebration and giving, we have a special birthday tradition at the school. On the occasion of your child's birthday, you may want to have your child give a book to his/her class. The book should be inscribed with the child's name and birth date. By giving this book, your child will be sharing the birthday celebration with the class in a way that can be enjoyed by everyone. Your child will feel special each time the book is read or shown to the class.

Special Family Times

Please let us know about special times in your family, such as the birth of a sibling, a visit from

grandparents, a move to a new house, a holiday that you celebrate, or a special trip. By knowing about these times of excitement, change and wonder, we will be able to incorporate family experiences into the child's life at the school.

Pictures of Family and Friends

We want to have a strong tie between home and school so your child will have a better sense of continuity and security. One way to facilitate this is to have an area with pictures of family and friends in each classroom.

Children may bring any pictures they would like to share. The pictures are displayed in full view of the children so they may look at their own pictures and the pictures brought by their classmates. Teachers refer to these important pictures several times during the day.

We welcome you to The Clifton School Family. Our goal is to create a mutual support system with a loving and nurturing atmosphere. We look forward to having you in the Clifton family.

Rest Time

Young children who are growing and playing vigorously need to rest each day.

Infants sleep in their cribs according to their individual schedules. To prevent SIDS, infants are placed on their backs to sleep. Blankets when needed are tucked into the mattress to prevent tangling or smothering. We must have a note signed by the child's physician in order to place an infant on his or her stomach to sleep.

Children over the age of 12 months will have a rest time immediately following their lunch. Children rest on mats. Each child has a sheet and blanket brought from home, and any naptime "loveys" that help provide security. The duration of the rest period depends on the age level of the children. Younger children typically need a longer rest time than the older ones.

Preschoolers are beginning to read their internal cues of sleepiness and are learning to self-regulate their timing for sleep. Teachers should not be asked to keep a child awake or make them sleep at naptime. According to the National Sleep Foundation, restricting naps will not help a child sleep better at night. Quite the opposite – it can lead to overtiredness and more sleep problems. However, a child who has learned to fall asleep on his or her own will experience less sleep difficulties and will learn how to return to sleep at night without help from adults. Therefore, teachers will provide a consistent, calming naptime where children are encouraged to sleep or rest quietly on their mats. Music of various types will be played, as well as recorded stories. Children are provided with quiet, interesting activities for once they wake up from nap.

Tooth Brushing

Children one year and older are provided an opportunity for tooth brushing and gum cleaning to remove food and plaque. Toothbrushes and toothpaste (not required) are provided by parents and should be changed every six months.

Gums of infants under the age of one year are cleaned using a cloth unless an infant brush is provided by the parent.

Toilet Learning

Your child will let you know in many ways when he/she is ready to begin using the toilet. We are glad to help your child make this important leap toward independence. You will need to bring 5 pairs of training pants and 3 changes of clothes each day during this learning process. Training pants are extra thick and absorbent. We discourage the use of pull-ups as they typically prolong the toilet learning process.

The procedure for toilet learning at the school typically takes place in the two-year-old classrooms. Children are introduced to the small toilets by watching their classmates in the bathroom. Classmates are praised for using the toilet, and the “learner” is then invited to use it. Encouragement and praise from the teachers, coupled with sharing the experience with a classmate, usually make the process easier.

The child’s inability or unwillingness to use the toilet for elimination is referred to as an “accident” and treated in a matter-of-fact sort of way. Children are never humiliated or punished for having an “accident.” We recognize that toilet learning takes time and we do not rush the process. Clothes soiled during any accident are not washed at school. They are bagged and sent home.

We know that children learn about their bodies and sexual differences in the same way they learn other information – in a simple, gradual and natural way. Therefore, children use the bathroom together regardless of sex. If or when a child begins to request privacy, it will be honored.

Toilet learning can be a time of concern for parents. A partnership approach usually makes the whole process easier and shorter in duration. (See appendix for the potty training readiness literature).

Healthy Sexual Development

Staff uses correct names for body parts and bodily functions with children of all ages: penis, vagina, breast, bowel movement.

We answer children’s questions about their bodies and about reproduction as simply and clearly as possible. We do not volunteer additional information on sexual development.

As much as possible we try to complement and support what parents say to their children at home to help them develop healthy attitudes about their bodies that promote positive adult sexuality.

We gently and clearly redirect typical sexual behavior (playing “doctor”, removing clothing, masturbation) and involve the children in more appropriate activities. We never use shame, guilt, or punishment to stop children from exploring sexual behaviors or language.

We teach children the differences between appropriate and inappropriate touch as appropriate. We empower them to stop or get a teacher to stop anyone from touching them in a way that they do not like, or that is in a place a bathing suit would cover.

Positive Guidance Policy

We want to look at the positive side of the children’s behavior. We want to build our relationships with them through nurturing and positive attention. To this end, we organize the children’s day to promote appropriate behavior. We set up the classroom equipment and materials to facilitate

positive play and social experiences. The activities offered to the children are appropriate for their developmental level. We use our knowledge of developmental principles to give us reasonable and appropriate expectations for each child's behavior.

One of the most important ways to guide children's behavior is to give them the skills to manage their own behavior. Primarily, we teach children to use WORDS to express themselves rather than inappropriate actions or gestures. Helping children learn to use language as the primary tool for handling conflict is one of the greatest gifts we can offer our children.

Of course, there will be times when children behave inappropriately. In these instances, the teachers will use substitution, redirection and discussion to manage the situation. There may be times when a child needs a short time away from the current activity to calm down, but this is not viewed as a punishment or "time-out"... just a time we all sometimes need to regroup and reframe our responses.

Children are NEVER hit, humiliated or frightened as a form of punishment. Food is never withheld as a form of punishment.

Please feel free to discuss our behavior management policy with your child's teacher, the Director or the Assistant Director. This is your child's place, and we want to make all his/her experiences as positive and meaningful as possible.

Babysitting Policy

Arrangements made for private sitting are between the individual and the family and are outside the responsibility of The Clifton School. We do not endorse or recommend individuals beyond their work in our supervised setting. In keeping with our confidentiality policy please refrain from asking teachers who baby-sit for you about other children, families, or other teachers in our community.

Pets and Animal Visitors

Pets and animal visitors are not permitted on the CDC campus. Pets and other animals enhance the learning process in the classroom. Teachers, parents or children may request to bring in a pet or other animal for a visit. Classroom and family pets are welcome as long as teachers plan in advance and follow these health and safety guidelines:

1. Before bringing a pet visitor into the classroom, teachers should communicate with each family to find out if any child has an allergy to that type of animal or an unusual fear of animals. If any child has an allergy or a fear of animals, please plan for that child to observe the animal from a safe distance with a supportive adult (parent or teaching staff).
2. Pet visitors may be brought in by a family member for a brief visit but should not be left at school all day except for small animals in a cage or fish bowl.
3. All visiting animals should be on a leash or in a cage while in the school except during teacher or parent guided activities.
4. All animals should be properly vaccinated and a copy of the vaccination record should be submitted to the director at the time of the pet's visit.

5. Licensing and NAEYC guidelines state that certain animals are not allowed on school premises. This includes reptiles (turtles, snakes and lizards) because of the risk of salmonella infection as well as certain other animals “which may have a vicious propensity,” such as pit bulls, ferrets, and other aggressive animals.
6. All classroom pets must be kept in a secure cage to prevent escape. Cages must be kept clean and odor free.

Field Trips

Because opportunities extend beyond the classroom into the community, the older children occasionally go on field trips. These field trips offer the children a chance to visit places and participate in events that interest them and expand their knowledge. Often, children take field trips in conjunction with a particular classroom project or to explore nature.

Teachers accompany children on field trips, and parents are invited to join when they can arrange to do so. For the protection and safety of the children, they will wear badges showing school’s name and telephone number.

Teachers schedule the field trips with the Director. Specific permission slips are sent home, along with all the information concerning the field trip. You are encouraged to contact your child’s teacher if you have questions about any aspect of a field trip. The school’s field trips are generally limited to walks in the area, such as to the Fire Station or Lullwater Park.

Nondiscrimination Policy

This program will not discriminate in any of its policies or practices dealing with children and/or families on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, color, national origin, disability or economic status.

APPENDIX

CACFP GUIDELINES

Infant Meal Pattern Breakfast		
Birth through 3 Months	4 through 7 Months	8 through 11 Months
4-6 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breastmilk ^{2,3}	4-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breastmilk ^{2,3} ; 0-3 tablespoons of infant cereal ^{1,4}	6-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breastmilk ^{2,3} ; and 2-4 tablespoons of infant cereal ¹ ; and 1-4 tablespoons of fruit or vegetable or both
¹ Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified. ² Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, may be served; however, it is recommended that breastmilk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months. ³ For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breastmilk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breastmilk may be offered, with additional breastmilk offered if the infant is still hungry. ⁴ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.		

Infant Meal Pattern Lunch or Supper		
Birth through 3 Months	4 through 7 Months	8 through 11 Months
4-6 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3}	4-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3} ; 0-3 tablespoons of infant cereal ^{1,4} ; and 0-3 tablespoons of fruit or vegetable or both ⁴	6-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3} ; 2-4 tablespoons of infant cereal ¹ ; and/or 1-4 tablespoons of meat, fish, poultry, egg yolk, cooked dry beans or peas; or ½-2 ounces of cheese; or 1-4 ounces (volume) of cottage cheese; or 1-4 ounces (weight) of cheese food or cheese spread; and 1-4 tablespoons of fruit or vegetable or both
¹ Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified. ² Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, may be served; however, it is recommended that breast milk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months. ³ For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breast milk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breast milk may be offered, with additional breast milk offered if the infant is still hungry. ⁴ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.		

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Infant Meal Pattern Snack

Birth through 3 Months	4 through 7 Months	8 through 11 Months
4-6 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3}	4-6 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3}	2-4 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3} , or fruit juice ⁵ ; and 0-½ bread ^{4,6} or 0-2 crackers ^{4,6}

- ¹ Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.
- ² Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, may be served; however, it is recommended that breast milk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months.
- ³ For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breast milk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breast milk may be offered, with additional breast milk offered if the infant is still hungry.
- ⁴ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.
- ⁵ Fruit juice must be full-strength.
- ⁶ A serving of this component must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour.

Child Meal Pattern Breakfast

Select All Three Components for a Reimbursable Meal

Food Components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12¹
1 milk fluid milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
1 fruit/vegetable juice, ² fruit and/or vegetable	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
1 grains/bread³ bread or	1/2 slice	1/2 slice	1 slice
cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or	1/2 serving	1/2 serving	1 serving
cold dry cereal or	1/4 cup	1/3 cup	3/4 cup
hot cooked cereal or	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
pasta or noodles or grains	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup

¹ Children age 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs.
They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column.

² Fruit or vegetable juice must be full-strength.

³ Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.

Child Meal Pattern Lunch or Supper

Food Components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12¹
1 milk fluid milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
2 fruits/vegetables juice, ² fruit and/or vegetable	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
1 grains/bread³ bread or cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or cold dry cereal or hot cooked cereal or pasta or noodles or grains	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/4 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/3 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1 slice 1 serving 3/4 cup 1/2 cup 1/2 cup
1 meat/meat alternate meat or poultry or fish ⁴ or alternate protein product or cheese or egg or cooked dry beans or peas or peanut or other nut or seed butters or nuts and/or seeds ⁵ or yogurt ⁶	1 ounce 1 ounce 1 ounce 1/2 egg 1/4 cup 2 Tbsp. 1/2 ounce 4 ounces	1 1/2 ounces 1 1/2 ounces 1 1/2 ounces 3/4 egg 3/8 cup 3 Tbsp. 3/4 ounce 6 ounces	2 ounces 2 ounces 2 ounces 1 egg 1/2 cup 4 Tbsp. 1 ounce 8 ounces

¹ Children age 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs. They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column.

² Fruit or vegetable juice must be full-strength.

³ Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.

⁴ A serving consists of the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.

⁵ Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch or supper requirement.

⁶ Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

Child Meal Pattern Snack

Select Two of the Four Components for a Reimbursable Snack

Food Components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12¹
1 milk fluid milk	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1 cup
1 fruit/vegetable juice, ² fruit and/or vegetable	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
1 grains/bread³ bread or cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or cold dry cereal or hot cooked cereal or pasta or noodles or grains	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/4 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/3 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1 slice 1 serving 3/4 cup 1/2 cup 1/2 cup
1 meat/meat alternate meat or poultry or fish ⁴ or alternate protein product or cheese or egg ⁵ or cooked dry beans or peas or peanut or other nut or seed butters or nuts and/or seeds or yogurt ⁶	1/2 ounce 1/2 ounce 1/2 ounce 1/2 egg 1/8 cup 1 Tbsp. 1/2 ounce 2 ounces	1/2 ounce 1/2 ounce 1/2 ounce 1/2 egg 1/8 cup 1 Tbsp. 1/2 ounce 2 ounces	1 ounce 1 ounce 1 ounce 1/2 egg 1/4 cup 2 Tbsp. 1 ounce 4 ounces

¹ Children age 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs.

They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column.

² Fruit or vegetable juice must be full-strength. Juice cannot be served when milk is the only other snack component.

³ Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.

⁴ A serving consists of the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.

⁵ One-half egg meets the required minimum amount (one ounce or less) of meat alternate.

⁶ Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

Potty Training Readiness Checklist

It probably seems like just yesterday that you changed your toddler's first diaper, and now you're wondering if it's time to start potty training. There's no magic age at which children are ready to start learning how to use the potty, but some develop the necessary physical and cognitive skills between 18 and 24 months of age. Many parents do not start potty training until their children are 2 1/2 to 3 years old, when daytime bladder control has become more reliable. And some children are not interested in potty training until they are closer to 3, or even 4.

Use the checklist below to measure your toddler's progress toward readiness, and keep in mind that starting before your child is truly ready doesn't mean you'll finish sooner — it is more likely that the process will just end up taking longer.

You do not have to wait until you have checked off every item to start training. Just look for a general trend toward independence and an understanding of what it means to go to the bathroom like a grown-up.

Physical signs

Is coordinated enough to walk, and even run, steadily.

Urinate a fair amount at one time.

Has regular, well-formed bowel movements at relatively predictable times.

Has "dry" periods of at least three or four hours, which shows that his bladder muscles are developed enough to hold urine.

Behavioral signs

Can sit down quietly in one position for two to five minutes.

Can pull his pants up and down.

Dislikes the feeling of wearing a wet or dirty diaper.

Shows interest in others' bathroom habits (wants to watch you go to the bathroom or wear underwear).

Gives a physical or verbal sign when he's having a bowel movement such as grunting, squatting, or telling you.

Demonstrates a desire for independence.

Takes pride in his accomplishments.

Isn't resistant to learning to use the toilet.

Is in a generally cooperative stage, not a negative or contrary one.

Cognitive signs

Can follow simple instructions, such as "go get the toy."

Understands the value of putting things where they belong.

Has words for urine and stool.

Understands the physical signals that mean he has to go and can tell you before it happens or even hold it until he has time to get to the potty.

What Does Not Work

To make potty training as smooth a process as possible for you and your toddler, take a moment to learn about not only what works, but what doesn't:

Starting too soon

Starting potty training before your toddler is ready will only make it more difficult and prolong the process. There's no magic time when it's right to begin. Most toddlers have the necessary physical and mental skills between 18 and 24 months, while some aren't ready until they're closer to age 3 or even 4. Keep an eye out for physical, cognitive, and behavioral signs that your toddler is set to give it a try.

It may take up to three months to potty-train your child, and it's important to be patient and supportive throughout. If you've been trying for three months without success, your toddler may not be ready — wait a few weeks and try again.

Starting at the wrong time

It's not a good idea to begin training a week before the new baby is due, when you're changing caregivers, or during any other disruptive time in your child's life. Toddlers are creatures of routine, and any changes to the usual program are likely to cause setbacks. So wait until things have settled down before you start.

Putting on the pressure

If your toddler has started to show an interest in potty training, that is great. But do not push her to get through it faster than she can handle. If she gets nervous, she could start holding in her stool, which can lead to constipation and other problems.

Let her take her time and get used to this new, multipart process step by step. She'll move from one stage to the next at her own speed. It's fine to try to motivate with gentle reminders and encouragement, but if she balks, don't push it.

Following your mother-in-law's timetable

It will get harder with each week, but no matter how many times you hear your parents, your in-laws, or someone else from an earlier generation tell you that you should hurry up and start training, let it roll off your back.

Potty training methods have changed a lot in the last 40 years, and what was standard practice when you were a child is no longer the norm. These days it is typical to wait for signals your child is ready rather than impose a schedule of your own. And research suggests children can't voluntarily control the muscles for their bladder and rectum until they're at least 18 months old.

So if you hear any more stories about Cousin Jim's son who was trained by his first birthday, smile, nod, and say, "We have a plan. We're not worried about it." For support and advice from other parents, visit our [potty training community forum](#).

Punishing your child

It will not accomplish a thing to get angry or penalize your toddler if she's not interested in training, won't sit on the potty, has an accident, or has any of the other [common problems](#) kids have while potty training. Setbacks are natural, and scolding will only make her less interested in training — she'll be afraid any mistakes will upset you. If you can, respond to messes and other challenges calmly — and if you can't, bite your tongue and count to ten, then try again.

What Works

To make potty training as smooth a process as possible for you and your toddler, take a moment to learn what tends to work — and [what doesn't](#). What works:

Waiting till your child is ready

There's no magic age for being ready to start learning to use the potty. Most toddlers develop the necessary physical and mental skills between 18 and 24 months, while some kids aren't there until closer to age 3 or even 4. Keep an eye out for physical, cognitive, and behavioral signs that your toddler might be ready to give it a try.

If your toddler is facing changes such as a new school, a new sibling, or travel, you may want to wait till the seas are calmer before taking the plunge.

Once you do start, if you've been trying for three months without success, that's a sign your toddler's not ready. Wait a few weeks — or until you see [signs that the time is right](#) — and try again.

Making a plan

Before you even buy your toddler a potty seat, it's important to have a plan for the training process itself. Decide when and [how](#) you want to start, how to [handle accidents](#), when to back off, and so on.

At the same time, prepare to be flexible. There's no way to know how your child will respond to potty training attempts or what techniques will work best. Keep in mind that as with most developmental milestones, success doesn't necessarily happen in a linear fashion — your toddler may make initial progress only to regress at one or more points along the way.

Discuss your plan with your child's pediatrician and sitter or daycare provider. They'll probably have plenty of experience and advice to share. Once you've decided on a strategy, be sure you and everyone else who takes care of your child sticks to it — barring unexpected setbacks and other

potty training challenges, of course.

Taking it slow

Mastering the various steps of potty training can take a long time. Yes, some children will have it nailed in just a few days, but most need weeks or even months, especially when they're working on staying dry at night.

Don't push your toddler (or let others push him) to get through potty training faster than he's ready to. Let him take his time and get used to this new, multipart process. He'll move from one stage to the next at his own speed. Of course, it's perfectly all right to try to motivate with gentle reminders and encouragement. If he balks, though, ease up.

Praising your child

Throughout potty training, your toddler will respond to positive reinforcement. Whenever he moves on to a new step or tries to use his potty (even when he doesn't quite succeed), tell him he's doing well and that you're proud of him. Compliment him now and then on his dry underpants or diaper. But be careful not to go overboard: Too much praise might make him nervous and afraid to fail, which can lead to more accidents and setbacks.

Accepting that there will be accidents

It's likely your toddler will have numerous accidents before being completely potty-trained. Do not get angry or punish him. After all, it's only recently that his nervous system has matured enough for him to perceive the sensation of a full bladder or rectum and that his muscles have developed sufficiently to allow him to hold in his urine and stool — and that's if he's on the early end of the developmental spectrum. He'll get the hang of the process in due time. When your toddler has an accident, calmly clean it up and suggest (sweetly) that next time he try using his potty instead.