



Rockville Community Nursery School

Parent Handbook 2009-2010

.....celebrating 45 years of excellence in early childhood education.....



Rockville Community Nursery School

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School and Teachers Approved by
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School Founded 1964

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School Incorporated 1966

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Handbook Revised 2009



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About Our School

Who We Are

Rockville Community Nursery School (RCNS) was founded in 1964 by Nancy Person and is incorporated in the State of Maryland as a non-profit educational institution. We are licensed in accordance with the state and local regulations for educational standards, teacher qualifications, fire and health regulations. The school and staff belong to various professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Parent Cooperative Preschools International (PCPI).

RCNS is a co-operative, parent-owned, and non-sectarian nursery school. We meet in Building 3 of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockville; however, we are not otherwise connected with the church. RCNS does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin.

What We Believe

RCNS is a cooperative preschool in which parents, teachers, and children participate together in an exciting and nurturing first-school experience.

The educational goal of the school is to provide each child with developmentally appropriate learning experiences through which he can grow at his own rate to a new maturity and sense of self-worth and self-direction.

Our purpose is to develop in each child an interest and joy in learning about herself, others, and the world around her.

We believe in the value, dignity and self-worth of each child. Each child is treated as an individual and his potential is developed emotionally and intellectually to the fullest extent while at the same time he learns the social skills of working and playing cooperatively with his classmates and teacher.

Our program is designed to meet the basic needs of the young child. A balance is maintained between freedom and guidance, group and individual activities, and active and passive experiences. Flexibility on the part of the teacher is essential, yet the child finds security when there is a daily plan which she comes to know and expect. When children play, they learn. During free-play time, toys for the development of small and large muscle coordination are available, as well as numerous art supplies for the creative mind. The imagination is stimulated with housekeeping equipment and dress-ups, blocks, and boards. Books, puzzles, and manipulative games are widely used. Group activities include singing and a variety of other musical experiences, creative movement and dramatics, scientific investigations and crafts. There is always time devoted to stories, books, and group discussions, where the skills of listening, speaking, and remembering are enhanced. Outdoor play and nature walks around the school's beautiful grounds, as well as stimulating field trips, make our program well-rounded. As the child becomes a part of the group, she learns self-control, and begins to gain a sense of responsibility and a feeling of success. She learns to listen and follow directions, to share and to plan, to give and to take. Creativity, imagination and intellectual inquiry are fostered and new skills are developed in a supportive and loving environment.

The goals of each major area of our curriculum include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Social and Emotional Development:** To participate in the school setting with respect for self and others; to learn to separate comfortably from parents and take responsibility for one's needs; to develop a positive self-image, self-control, and self-discipline.
- **Language Arts:** To develop listening, visual, auditory, speaking, and discrimination skills that will be a foundation for pre-literacy; to gain an appreciation for literature and dramatic interpretation.
- **Mathematics:** To gain an awareness of number concepts and the role of mathematical elements in the world; to develop problem solving skills.
- **Science:** To develop observation, exploration, and experimentation skills to learn about the world in which we live.
- **Social Studies:** To develop an awareness of one's role and the role of others in the global community.
- **Physical Development:** To develop spatial and body awareness; to develop coordination of large and small muscles.
- **Arts and Crafts:** To stimulate creativity and imagination using a variety of art media; to explore the creative arts through sensory activities; to take pride in the process of creating.
- **Music and Rhythms:** To foster the enjoyment and awareness of music and its various elements.
- **Health and Safety:** To develop an awareness of what is required to maintain individual health and safety; to develop self-help skills to aid in daily dressing and grooming activities.

How We Are Run

RCNS is run by its parents, all of whom serve either on the Executive Board or in other administrative positions, and by the Educational Director.

The Executive Board

The Executive Board is the governing body of RCNS. These positions are elected by the families and are as follows (with their major responsibilities):

- **Co-Presidents:** Prepare agenda and conduct board meetings; serve on key committees, including the Appeals Board; work closely with the Director to run the school; oversee other decision-making processes; update handbook and policy book.
- **Vice President:** Arrange parent education discussion groups; assist the Co-Presidents; arrange substitute teachers; Maintain proper insurance coverage; arrange babysitting swap list.
- **Co-Treasurer(Budget):** Pay bills; prepare the budget; report income and expenses; complete sales tax forms; serve on Appeals Board.

- **Co-Treasurer(Tuition/Payroll):** Collect, track and deposit tuition and other payments; manage payroll; serve on Scholarship Committee.
- **Membership Chair:** Provide roster information to parents and update parents via email; register students; conduct tours and provide information for prospective parents; manage paperwork and forms (in conjunction with membership assistant)
- **Secretary:** Record and distribute the minutes from the monthly board meetings. Document and maintain list of any policy/by-law changes.
- **Fundraising Chair:** Manage and direct all fundraising efforts; Oversee Yellow Balloon Fair
- **Administrative Jobs Coordinator:** Coordinate and manage all non-board administrative jobs and special repair activities.
- **Publicity Chair:** Arrange all RCNS advertising and marketing needs through various media venues, including advertising for the Yellow Balloon Fair and Silent Auction.
- **Class Representatives:** Prepare the class co-op schedule; coordinate class field trips; assist the teacher as needed; facilitate communication among the class parents and between the class parents, Teacher, Director and Board.

The duties of this Executive Board include:

- Formulate school policies and coordinate all school activities
- Approve all contracts entered into by the school
- Approve an annual budget (established at a separate budget meeting)
- Appoint all committees; prescribe and supervise their activities
- Appoint officers, if vacancy occurs during term
- Call General Membership meetings when necessary
- Work with Director as liaison between parents and teachers
- Make adjustments in special situations with feedback from all sources

The Executive Board also consists of the Director (voting), teachers (one voting representative for each age level), and any other parents who would like to attend (non-voting).

Director

The Director is responsible for the educational program at RCNS, including overseeing the curriculum and supervising the teaching staff. The Director is on site during school hours each day. The Director negotiates all teacher contracts, holds monthly teacher meetings, meets with parents upon request, attends professional meetings, ensures that RCNS adheres to all educational and legal standards, and operates the school on a daily basis. The Director acts as a liaison among the Board, the parents and the teachers. The Director also oversees extended day activities and summer camp.

Parent Responsibilities

To provide a quality nursery school program for our children, the parents have the following responsibilities to the school:

- Co-oping in the classroom
- An administrative job
- Yellow Balloon Fair Participation
- One Saturday housekeeping
- Attendance at Co-op Education Meeting and Back to School Night

Co-oping in the Classroom

On a rotating basis, a parent or a director-approved substitute assists the teacher in daily classroom activities and playground supervision and completes general housekeeping duties. Child care arrangements must be made for siblings on the day you co-op. (Some parents trade childcare on co-op days.) It is mandatory that the co-oping parent arrive on time and stay through the entire class program so an optimal classroom experience can be planned for our children each day. Co-oping parents should arrive in the classroom at **9:00am by the RCNS digital hall clock** to prepare for the day. Co-operators arriving after 9:15 a.m. and before 9:30 a.m. will be fined \$15. Co-operators arriving between 9:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. will be fined \$30. Co-operators arriving after 10 a.m. will be fined \$50. Co-operators leaving before all co-oping responsibilities are completed will be fined \$30. Co-operators failing to show at all will be fined \$50 and will also be responsible for a \$25 payment to a substitute co-oper. (see Fines, page 18)

Upon arrival at school, please sign in under the digital wall clock in the front hall, noting the time of arrival.

Before school

- review plans for the day with the teacher
- prepare snack for your class
- set up any equipment or activities that the teacher requests
- be prepared to greet and assist the children when they arrive at 9:30 a.m.

During the school day

- help with removal of coats and tote bags
- assist with all class activities, including art
- assist children with going to the bathroom (or diaper changing) and hand washing
- place children's art work in drying racks for drying
- participate in circle time activities
- help children dress for outdoor play

Snack time

- count the number of children in the class and set out a cup and napkin for each
- supervise hand washing
- assist with refills
- remind the children to dispose of their trash
- wipe tables and chairs

End of the day

- help children gather belongings
- sweep and mop floor, stack chairs, vacuum rug areas and tidy room
- clean easel, change newspaper, wash out brushes and clean sink area
- take home leftover snack
- empty and replace trash bags (Combine trash with another class when you can.)
- empty and sanitize sensory table
- mark off check list of co-op duties posted in each classroom before you leave

If you are unable to co-op on your designated day, you must find a replacement by either switching with someone in your class, or by "hiring" a parent as a substitute (\$25 payable to sub). Failure to arrange for a replacement on one's assigned day or arriving after 10:00 a.m. will result in a no-show penalty of \$50.

If schedule switching occurs, it is the original co-oper's responsibility to change the Teacher's master schedule and the replacement co-oper's responsibility to initial the change. The original co-oper must also confirm the switch with the replacement co-oper the day before the date in question. The name on the teacher's master schedule will be held responsible for the \$50.00 mandatory contribution and a \$25.00 payment to the substitute co-oper in the event of a no-show.

How to Work with Young Children

Remember our first priority is the children; classroom cleaning can be done at the end of the day. The teacher is the primary authority in the classroom, but general guidelines are as follows:

- Speak positively, i.e., "Please sit on the chairs." instead of "Don't stand on the chairs."
- Get on the child's eye level when speaking to children and go over to the child rather than talk across the room.
- Try to redirect inappropriate behaviors, i.e., child is throwing blocks; ask "Let's see how tall a tower you can build with the blocks."
- Let children's art or other projects be their own--there is not a right or wrong way to complete a project.
- When children share their art with you, ask them about it and show your interest. If you can not tell what it is, use questions such as, "What were you thinking about when you painted this?" or specific praise such as "I like how you put the red here and brown over there."
- Expand on their language. If they say, "red car" respond with "Yes, that is a red car in the garage."
- It is often difficult for your child to share you. Plan for this and try to help them feel special. But let them know you are the Teacher's helper on your co-op day.
- Limit demands when cleaning up. Instead of, "Clean the room" say, "Could you be in charge of putting all the fruit in the basket?"
- Keep praise specific. Comment on the exact deed, "I like how you came right to circle."
- Try to let the children work out their problems first. Be close by to offer suggestions, but give them a chance to solve differences themselves.

Above all, have fun! Co-oping is a wonderful experience. Join in the singing and listen to the story. This is a great opportunity to see your preschooler in action.

Administrative Jobs

Each family assists in the operation of RCNS by holding an administrative position. Job sign up begins in the Spring. A folder with more detailed information regarding each position is provided at Back to School Night and via email. It is critical that you understand and complete the responsibilities listed in your job description. Please see the Administrative Jobs Coordinator, with any questions not answered by your handout. Failure to fulfill your responsibility will result in a \$150 fine. Provided below is a listing of administrative jobs:

Non-Board Positions include:

- Membership Assistant(Forms)
- Newsletter Editor
- Director's Assistant/Librarian
- Snack Coordinator/Purchaser
- Housekeeping Coordinator
- Hospitality/Activities Coordinator
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Lunch Bunch Coordinator
- Head Aide
- School Aide
- Fundraising and Silent Auction Team

Board Positions:

- Co-Presidents
- Vice-President
- Co-Treasurers
- Membership Chair
- Secretary
- Fundraising Chair
- Administrative Jobs Coordinator
- Publicity Chair
- Class Representatives

Fundraising

Ideally, the school's operating expenses (salaries, rent, etc.) are paid by the income from tuition payments. All additional expenses, such as new carpets, toys, furniture, playground equipment, mulch and our scholarship fund are supplied through your fundraising efforts, including corporate grants, Sally Foster, RCNS merchandise sales, Monthly Dinners and other opportunities.

Our biggest fundraiser is the Yellow Balloon Fair and Silent Auction. The fair, which will be held April 17, 2010, requires 100% participation from all families. It is the only true "preschool fair" in the area. Each family is required to participate in this fundraiser. Failure to fulfill your Yellow Balloon Fair responsibility will result in a \$100 fine. If your family cannot attend on the date of the fair, there are some "pre-fair" jobs that can use your assistance. The success of the fair is due to the enthusiasm and hard work of all our families. It is a wonderful, community based, co-operative effort that we are sure no one will want to miss.

Although these fundraising efforts are time consuming, we are convinced that RCNS is one of the best-equipped nursery schools in large measure due to the success of our fundraising efforts. These fundraiser profits help to keep our tuition fees reasonable.

Saturday Housekeeping

In an effort to maintain high standards of cleanliness, one parent (or pre-approved substitute) is required to work one Saturday morning (9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - or until job is finished) once during the school year. A thorough cleaning of each classroom takes place each month. A sign-up sheet for Saturdays is posted in the Fall. A detailed letter of parent's responsibilities will be distributed prior to your scheduled day. Failure to appear on one's scheduled day or to find a substitute will result in a \$150 fine.

Monthly Tuition Payment

Tuition is due on the first of the month. Checks should be made payable to RCNS.

PLEASE PUT YOUR CHECK IN THE "TUITION" BOX LOCATED ON THE TABLE IN THE FRONT HALL. Note your child's first and last name and class on your check.

If you must mail a payment, please do not send checks to the school building. You may mail checks to: RCNS, Inc., P.O. Box 1473, Rockville, MD 20849-1473

A late fee of \$25 must be levied against families whose tuition checks are received after the 10th of the month. Tuition checks returned for insufficient funds will result in a \$25 fine (late fee) in addition to any charges incurred to cover bank fees. Please make arrangements with the Co-Treasurer(Tuition/Payroll) to work out a payment schedule instead of issuing a questionable check.

Tuition is due on the first of the month. If you are more than 30 days late with your tuition payment (or 15 days late with your April payment), your child ***may not attend school or extracurricular activities until the outstanding balance is paid.*** Fines and late fees are due upon notice. If all fines are not paid within 15 days of notice, your child will not be allowed to attend school or extracurricular activities until all fines are paid.

Back to School Night

This meeting is held in the Fall, prior to the opening of school (**Tuesday September 8, 2009 @7:00pm**). This event consists of a general presentation of operations followed by separate classroom presentations by individual teachers. At least one family member is **required** to attend, unless prior arrangements are made with one of the co-presidents.

[Note: This is a parent-only meeting, please make arrangements for child care.]

Mandatory Co-op Education Meeting

This meeting on **October 5, 2009 @ 7:00pm** provides an opportunity for co-ops to learn how to co-op in their child's classroom, ask questions, tour the school, and review supplies for each classroom. **Anyone planning to co-op during the 09-10 school year must attend this meeting and must have the notarized "release of information" and a "Medical Report for Childcare" on file with the school.**

Since participation in our school requires each family to co-op, after October 5 a child who does not have a currently trained co-op parent (or trained, director-approved substitute) *may not attend classes* until this meeting requirement has been satisfied. Parents must find a substitute for any missed co-oping days. Make-up policy requires meeting with both the child's teacher and the director, and doing an additional co-oping day alongside a trained co-oper. Please see the director for clarification and to schedule this make-up process.

[Note: This is a parent-only meeting, please make arrangements for child care.]

School/Home Communication

Because parents are an integral part of our school, frequent, open communication is critical for smooth functioning. Parents can stay up-to-date by checking their mailboxes, bulletin boards, calendar and teachers' activity charts while picking up or dropping off children. Also, parents should read the monthly newsletter and special announcements sent home with the child or via email. Additionally, your class representative to the board, the Co-Presidents and Director are available at any time for questions, concerns or comments. Please try to direct specific concerns about your child to the teacher before and after the school day.

Newsletter

The newsletter is distributed via email at the beginning of every month. A printed copy is posted on the bulletin board in the hall, and a limited number of printed copies may be available in the office. This covers the upcoming monthly events and reviews the previous month's accomplishments. Please read the newsletter cover to cover. Deadline for submission of articles is the Monday after each board meeting. Anyone may contribute an article to the newsletter.

Parent Mailboxes

Notices, memos, and reminders are often placed in the parent mailboxes (located outside of the 4-Year classroom). It is your responsibility to check your mailbox each school day.

Child's Cubby

Your child's art work and some reminders are placed in your child's cubby. Be sure to thoroughly check your child's cubby and bag at the end of each day.

Bulletin Boards

Pertinent information for parents is posted on the hall bulletin boards. The *RCNS information board* includes a school calendar with important dates, announcements, minutes of previous board meetings, and any other useful school information. The *community information board* includes information we feel may be useful about area activities and events. The *fundraising board* contains current fundraising information.

Curriculum Updates

Each classroom teacher posts a curriculum web that corresponds with the daily schedule on the class bulletin board.

Student Evaluation

A student evaluation for each child is kept in a confidential file at the school. This evaluation is used as a basis for the parent-teacher conference and is kept on file for two years after the child leaves RCNS. Individual conferences are held with the teacher twice during the school year. Conferences are held in November and March.

Board Meetings

Board meetings are usually held the 4th Tuesday of every month in the 4-Year classroom. We gather at 7:00pm and meetings commence promptly at 7:15 p.m. For the 09-10 school year the dates are: 9/1, 9/29, 10/27, 11/17, 12/15, 1/26, 2/23, 3/23, 4/27, 5/15. All parents are welcome to attend board meetings as non-voting participants. Board meetings are an excellent way to fully understand how the school operates. Because RCNS is a school run by the parents, all attendees (voting and non-voting) can discuss issues and help set policies.

In advance of the meeting, agendas are posted on the Bulletin Board and distributed via email to all board members, and by request to any other parents. Minutes are made available after each meeting to Board members, any other parents upon request and are posted on the Bulletin Board.

Parent Survey

In late winter, survey forms will be distributed to each family. This is your opportunity to comment on your experience at RCNS. The Co-Presidents and Director will compile the evaluations and distribute the results to the Board and membership.

Appeals Board

The Appeals Board exists to consider appeals brought by members regarding policy issues in the context of school philosophy and current policies. A case is brought to the Appeals Board if the member, or members, feel that their situation has unique, extenuating circumstances which merit exception from the applicable policy. The Appeals Board reaches its decision by taking into account the family's circumstances, the school's philosophy, and current policy. All meetings of the Appeals Board and decisions rendered are confidential and will be shared only with those directly involved.

The Appeals Board is composed of one Co-President, one Treasurer, and one At-Large member chosen from the membership. The Appeals Board meets as needed to consider all policy issues. Appeals should be made to the Board in writing. Decisions are made, confidentially, at the time of the meeting. The Co-president will notify only the member(s) who brought the appeal of the decision.

An appeal must be submitted in writing to the Appeals Board. Your letter should state the matter you are appealing and your reason for the appeal. In some situations it may be possible to perform a service in place of a fine. Any suggestions will be considered. Be sure to place your letter in the Co-president's mailbox outside the office.

Special Events and Activities

RCNS offers many special events and activities throughout the year. These are designed to enhance the curriculum and offer opportunities to participate in expressive and enriching programs. **Parent input for new programs is always welcome.**

Field Trips

All classes participate in an October trip to a pumpkin patch. Other trips are arranged by the teachers. Considerations in planning a field trip include value of activity, age-appropriateness, safety concerns, and interest level. The responsibility for transportation is shared by the class parents.

A permission slip will be sent home prior to each field trip and must be signed and returned prior to the field trip.

Field Trip Reminders

- When off site activities require transportation to and from RCNS and multiple children are being transported, 2 adults must be in the vehicle; one of which must be First Aid and CPR certified.
- Parents scheduled to go on the field trip should arrive 15 minutes early to get carpools organized.
- Each child must have a safety seat WITHOUT EXCEPTION.
- **Siblings may not accompany parents on field trips.**

Special Celebrations

Special festive days including Halloween, Winter Holidays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and birthdays are held throughout the school year. Usually a child's birthday is celebrated by the co-oping parent supplying a special treat on a day near the child's birthday. Your child's teacher may suggest some ideas about what is an appropriate treat to bring. RCNS is a tree-nut and peanut-free school. *No goodie bags or balloons please!*

Lunch Bunch

This program is held after the regular school day has ended, and runs from 12:30 until 2 p.m. This is an opportunity for children who are in the threes and fours classes to bring a lunch to school and share lunch time with their friends and teachers. (*Please remember that RCNS is a tree-nut and peanut-free school.*) After lunch, there is additional free play or themed activities, both inside and outside. Registration is handled by our Lunch Bunch Coordinator. There are a limited number of spaces available for this program. Registration is by the month. There are no refunds for sessions not attended. Use your Tuition Coupon, and itemize your payments accordingly.

Summer Camp

This program is usually offered for two weeks in June for two, three, or five days per week. It is centered on outdoor activities. Teachers are assisted by two co-oping parents each day. Camp is available to children completing a 2-Year, 3-Year, or 4-Year class.

Safety and Health Information

Hand Washing

At RCNS, we want to be sure that we are providing the safest most hygienic environment for our children. To ensure that we are doing all that we can to prevent the spread of illness, we ask that when you drop your child off in the morning you wash your child's hands before they engage in any activities in the classroom.

Illness

If your child is not well enough to participate in all school day activities including outdoor play, s/he should not attend school. Parents may not send their children to school with a fever, cough, sore throat, or other symptom of illness. In addition, children should be free from fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours before sending them back to school.

Should your child contract any communicable condition such as Pink Eye, Strep, German Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox, Impetigo, Lice, Pinworms, etc. parents are required to contact the Director and the child's teacher immediately. Any necessary warnings will be posted on the front door of the classrooms, and it is the responsibility of the parent to check regularly for such notices.

If your child is on ANY MEDICATION, the classroom teacher should be informed. Sedatives, antihistamines and cough medicines can cause behavior changes; the teacher should therefore be made aware of the situation.

Allergies

If your child is ALLERGIC to any foods, plants, animals, or anything else, please be certain that the teacher and the class representative are fully aware of this sensitivity, and indicate this on your child's health forms.

If a child previously prescribed an EpiPen is exposed to an allergen, without waiting for symptoms, the EpiPen is administered by the Director. The school calls 911; then the parents are called. The child is taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital. EpiPen must be provided by parent to be stored at the school if needed.

EpiPens and other prescription or non-prescription medication can only be administered on site if the parent and Child's Doctor have completed a Medication authorization form (available from the Director)

Cell Phone Policy

At RCNS we believe that involved, engaged parents can enrich a child's educational experience. Co-oping requires each person's full attention at all times. Adults are asked to refrain from using a cell phone, Blackberry, or any other means of electronic communication while they are co-oping at RCNS. We ask that you please turn off your phone while you are co-oping. We recommend leaving a message on your phone with the RCNS phone number in case you need to be reached in an emergency. In the event of such an emergency, please find the school aide or Director to cover for you in the classroom, and then exit the classroom to complete your call.

Emergency Policy

As educators and caregivers of your children during their school day, RCNS considers emergency-preparedness to be an important component of school planning. Below is an outline of procedures and policies regarding safety at school. All of the safety precautions were decided upon after reviewing MCPS guidelines, as well as current plans established by other area schools. Periodic drills are conducted to practice the routines outlined in the plan.

All emergency information and telephone numbers are posted on the wall above the office phone. All of the children's emergency cards with pertinent information and telephone numbers

are located in a notebook in the Director's office. **Please inform the Director and the Membership Chair of any change of address or phone number, and be sure to keep this information updated as necessary throughout the school year.**

To be compliant with suggestions put forth by Montgomery County Office of Child Care, the RCNS exterior door is kept locked from 9:45-12:15 every day. Those wishing to gain entry into the building should knock on the door.

Emergency backpacks are also utilized in conjunction with the emergency preparedness plan. The backpacks are a crucial component to our emergency plan and each classroom has their own bag to carry. They are be stocked with essential materials to keep your children safe in the event of an emergency at school.

Fire Drills: Each month, we have a fire drill in our school. The evacuation plan for each classroom is posted in each classroom.

Code Blue: *Caused by generalized emergency situation (such as MCPS lock down in Rockville)* This is an emergency that requires all students to be under supervision and accounted for. On-site Emergency Team (Director) will alert the teachers about the situation using a code word. Students are taken to a classroom immediately if they are on the playground. Teachers take roll and await further instructions from the Director. Exterior doors are secured and locked. The Director is on duty in the hallway to allow appropriate movement in and out of the school. Teachers are allowed to open windows to provide proper ventilation. Parents will be required to sign children out of the building. All regularly scheduled RCNS classes will end at 12:30. Lunch Bunch will be held.

Code Red: *Caused by specific local emergency situation (e.g. Perpetrator in the area, suspicious trespasser on the property, notification from NOAA alert system radio)* This code indicates that there is an emergency that requires all areas of the building be secured (lockdown). Staff remain in place with children. If children are on the playground, they are taken to the classroom quickly. Teachers take attendance. Exterior doors are locked. RCNS Emergency phone tree is activated. In addition, the Director e-mails all class representatives, who will in turn implement an e-mail tree. A piece of red paper will be placed in the classroom window to alert parents to our code-red situation. **Under Code Red, exterior doors are locked and no one is allowed in or out of the building. Parents must wait until the emergency status has been decreased to come in the building and sign out children.** The RCNS school day will end as soon as the emergency status has been decreased and all children have been picked up.

Notification by NOAA Alert System and Radio

The county has provided RCNS with a NOAA Alert Radio, located in the school office. This radio is kept on at all times. It is both AC and battery operated. It omits an audible as well as visible signal in the event of a weather-related emergency or local environmental catastrophe (and sometimes as a test signal). Further information is obtained by listening to the Emergency Alerting System (EAS) stations on the radio: WMAL 630AM, WTOP 103.5FM, WWRC 1260AM, or WKYS 93.9FM. We follow their directions.

Evacuation Plan:

In case of emergency evacuation, RCNS teachers follow the fire evacuation procedures. If it is necessary to leave school grounds, we walk along the trail, through the woods to Welsh Park and activate the phone tree.

Our school's Asbestos Management plan is available in the Director's office. If you have any questions about the protocol for emergencies and regular security, please contact the Director.

Snacks and Good Nutrition

Eating healthy food plays a vital role in physical and emotional development. RCNS is committed to providing healthy snacks in order to promote good eating habits and teach children to make better food choices in the future. Offering a variety of foods at school encourages children to try new and different flavors and textures. We all feel better when our bodies are filled with good nutrition. Children can focus better in class and better control their behavior. Good nutrition builds stronger immune systems against illnesses and prevents tooth decay, diabetes and obesity.

The school provides a snack along with water each day. It is the co-oping parent's responsibility to have the snack prepared before the start of the day. The Co-oping parent is responsible for bringing a fresh fruit or vegetable to share with the class.

- Any type of fresh fruit is appropriate. *Grapes must be sliced in half.*
- Raw vegetables such as carrots (*cut into thin strips*), cucumbers, celery, broccoli, red peppers and avocado are appropriate.

Please make sure you are aware of any food allergies or sensitivities that a child in your classroom may have. **RCNS is a tree-nut and peanut-free school.** Popcorn is not served because of choking hazards and allergies.

All of our staff is trained in pediatric CPR and First Aid.

Insurance

RCNS carries liability insurance that covers children as well as staff and volunteers. When driving on a field trip, you are responsible for carrying the proper automobile insurance that would cover your passengers.

How We Discipline

A great deal of planning takes place to ensure that we have a stimulating, safe and age appropriate environment in each of our classrooms. This alone alleviates many discipline problems. We see parents as partners at RCNS. We value how dedicated parents are in taking an active role in their child's first educational experience. Parents can help reinforce positive behavior.

At RCNS we feel that our goal is to help guide a young child toward self-control, while maintaining a safe environment for all. This takes a great deal of time and patience. We feel that much of a child's uncooperative behavior is due to the fact that the child has not matured to the point where he can fully understand or meet the demands we are placing upon him. Discipline at our school will be tailored to the child and the situation. Many techniques such as redirecting, prompting, planned ignoring, modeling and reinforcing appropriate behaviors are incorporated to encourage appropriate behaviors. Our goal is to set limits and still allow the children to feel positive about themselves and learn to self-regulate.

In some situations a child may need to take a break from the classroom environment, in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for herself and others. The teacher is the only person who should initiate this calming activity. This may include, for example, a few quiet moments in a location within the classroom, or a short story or walk with a staff member. It is important that co-ops follow the teacher's lead in the classroom.

Co-ops are encouraged to talk with the teacher before and after school to learn about the teacher's approach to classroom situations. Please remember that as a co-opping parent you are an employee of the school, therefore you should not discuss what you observe during a co-opping day with anyone other than the teacher or director. Confidentiality is imperative.

At times, teachers may have concerns about a child's behavior that need to be addressed in cooperation with the child's parents in order to set consistent behavioral goals for the child. The teacher and parent together may put in place strategies to help the child with classroom behavior. The Director may be brought into this conversation and may also assist by doing a formal observation in the classroom if the child's parents or teacher feel it would be helpful. In this case, the Director will coordinate a formal action plan for the student which will be discussed with the parents and teacher at a conference. With parental input, this action plan may be revised. If further strategies are needed, additional resources may include bringing in an outside consultant or referring the child to an outside agency for assessment.

If you have any questions about discipline please feel free to ask anyone on the staff. Specific discipline guidelines are printed in the RCNS Employee Handbook. A copy of this handbook is available in the Director's office.

Other Important Information

School Hours

School hours are 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It is important for your child to arrive on time and to be picked up promptly. Children who frequently arrive late may have trouble joining the group; those left at the end of the day may become anxious. If you are not co-oping and arrive early, please feel free to use the playground or plan a quiet story or game while you wait in the car. TEACHERS WILL NOT RELEASE A CHILD TO ANYONE OTHER THAN THE PARENT WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Teacher- Student Ratio

The maximum teacher-student ratios are as follows:

2's classes – 1 teacher to 6 or 8 children (plus 1 co-op parent)

3's classes – 1 teacher to 12 children (plus 1 co-op parent)

4's class – 1 teacher to 15 children (plus 1 co-op parent)

In addition, there are both staff and parent school aides that assist classes as needed each day.

Withdrawal Policy

One month's written notice to the Director is required to withdraw a child from RCNS. (e.g. you must notify the Director in writing by Nov. 1 if your child is withdrawing Dec. 1) All registration, tuition and activities fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. May tuition and other fees are not transferable or refundable, and may not be applied to a different month's tuition.

Scholarship Guidelines

RCNS is committed to making a cooperative education available to all people. Partial scholarships are available as well as funds for emergency short-term needs. A three-person committee made up of a Co-President, Membership Chair, and Co-Treasurer will consider applications. Our awards are based the State Median Income chart that MSDE uses to award grants to families. All information obtained during the application process is kept in strict confidence and is destroyed at the end of the school year.

If you have any questions or would like to apply for tuition assistance, please contact the Co-Treasurer(Tuition/Payroll).

Calendar

We follow the Montgomery County Public School schedule with some minor exceptions. The opening and closing dates differ, as well as a few of the Teacher Professional Days. Please see www.rcnscoop.org for the current calendar.

Inclement Weather (Please also see Emergency Policy, page 12)

RCNS inclement weather policy is as follows:

- No school when Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) are closed.

- When MCPS has a delayed opening, RCNS will open at 10:30 a.m. Lunch Bunch will run as usual.
- If MCPS closes early, after school programs are canceled.

MCPS closings are announced on local radio and television stations. It is the parent's responsibility to be aware of closings/cancellations. *In the event of a delayed RCNS opening, it is the co-oping parent's responsibility to be at school at 10:15 a.m., or find a substitute. A snow emergency substitute list will be passed out.*

Make-up of snow days will follow MCPS if it falls within RCNS' school year and hours.

Parking

Please park in the lot farthest away from the school. Another school uses the upper lot. Orange cones will block off the area children use during outdoor play. Do not leave purses or valuables in cars.

Clothing

- Child's name should be on each article of clothing, including jackets.
- Children should wear washable play clothes they can manage themselves.
- A seasonally appropriate change of clothes (shirt, pants, socks, shoes, undershirt/underwear) should be sent with the child on a daily basis. *Be sure to include diapers if your child is not potty trained.*
- We encourage the use of a tote bag rather than a backpack. An RCNS tote bag is available for purchase from the school.
- Smocks are provided for messy projects, though this does not prevent having clothes stained.
- Loops should be put on sweaters and coats so children can hang them in their cubbies unassisted.
- Children play outside daily (except in severe weather). Please have them dress appropriately. This includes snow pants, boots and mittens (not gloves) for snow; boots, and raincoat for rain.
- Co-oping parents should dress in comfortable clothing and also remember to dress appropriately for outdoor play. (This is the perfect opportunity to wear your RCNS T-shirt!)

School Library

Books and pamphlets on child development and child rearing may be checked out by signing the checkout book in the Director's Office. Loan time is two weeks.

School Pictures

Each spring a professional photographer takes individual and class pictures. Pictures are usually taken in April. Parents will be notified about the time and cost.

Rosters

The Membership Chair coordinates the school and class rosters. Rosters are sent to all families at the start of the year, and updates are sent periodically via email. Please notify the Membership Chair and the Director of any changes in address, email or phone.

Registration

Registration takes place in January. You may register for your family only. If you are unable to attend registration, you may send someone who is not already registering a child at RCNS in your place. Registration occurs on a first-come, first-served basis. A sign-up sheet will be posted at the listed times. Names will be called in the order in which they appear on the sign-in sheet. Returning families have priority over alumni families. Alumni families have priority over new families. Once registration begins, each family's name will be called and you will request the class of your choice. You need to be present at this time. We will collect the following from you to reserve a space at RCNS: Completed registration form, \$50 Registration Fee and May Tuition. **ALL FEES AND MAY TUITION ARE NON-REFUNDABLE!**

The RCNS registration process will allow gender to be taken into consideration with the goal of achieving more balance in the gender mix of a class when such mix exceeds a certain threshold (ideally no greater than 2/3 to 1/3 gender mix).

With regard to 3's and 4's classes, acceptance of children with birthdates that fall on and after September 1st but not after September 30th will be at the discretion of the teacher and RCNS Director.

Purchases

Purchases must be approved by the director or the board. Because RCNS does not pay sales tax, any purchases for the school should be made with a copy of our tax-exempt card.

Donations

RCNS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Any donations made to RCNS are tax-deductable. Please think of RCNS when making your end-of-year charitable donations. Please suggest RCNS to your employer if they are looking for a worthy recipient.

RCNS has a running "wish list" of items that are needed. Please think of RCNS when you have items that you no longer need at your home. Things like outdoor equipment (tricycles, cars, etc.) furniture and office supplies may be put to good use in the school. If you have items that you feel may be useful, please contact the Director. (Please don't bring things in without first speaking to the Director)

RCNS Fines

Fines have been mentioned several times throughout this handbook. A summary of these penalties follows. The goal of the fines contributions is to insure that each family takes their responsibilities to the school seriously. This will help RCNS operate efficiently and provide the best learning environment for each child. All fines may be appealed to the Appeals Board. (see page 9) Appeals should be made to the Board in writing. The Appeals Board will meet as necessary to consider all appeals and a Co-president will notify the members of the decision. All fines must be paid within 15 days of assessment.

Tuition Payments: \$25.00 if check is received/postmarked after the 10th of the month
\$25.00 plus any additional incurred bank fees for returned checks

*Tuition is due on the first of the month. **If you are more than 30 days late with your tuition payment (or 15 days late with your April payment), your child may not attend school or extracurricular activities until the balance is paid.***

*Fines and late fees are due upon notice. **If all fines are not paid within 15 days of notice, your child will not be allowed to attend school or extracurricular activities until all fines are paid.***

Administrative Job: \$150.00 if responsibility is not completed.
\$ 25.00 if parent school aide misses a shift, and shift must be made-up

Housekeeping Job: \$150.00 if responsibility is not completed.

Co-oping Job: \$15.00 if co-oper arrives after 9:15 a.m.
\$30.00 if co-oper arrives after 9:30 a.m.
\$50.00 if co-oper arrives after 10:00 a.m.
\$30.00 if co-oper leaves early
\$50.00 if co-oper is a "NO SHOW" + \$25.00 Substitute co-oper pay
Please note that the official school time is the Digital Hallway Clock.
\$50.00 failure to bring fresh snack on your assigned day

Fundraising: \$100.00 if Yellow Balloon Fair obligation is not met.

Parents may be able to perform a service for the school in place of a fine. Contact the Appeals Board in writing to see if an arrangement can be made. (see Appeals Process, page 9)

<h2>Directory</h2>

<i>For questions about:</i>	<i>See:</i>
Reimbursements for purchases ----- <i>requires Director's signature</i> -----	Treasurer(Budget)
Tuition and other payments -----	Treasurer(Tuition/Payroll)
Tuition assistance -----	Treasurer(Tuition/Payroll)
Board issues or policy -----	Co-Presidents
Appeals Board -----	Co-Presidents
Enrollment or registration -----	Membership Chair
Concerns about child and classroom program -----	Teacher/Director
Health Problems -----	Director
Administrative job -----	Administrative Jobs Coordinator
Co-oping dates -----	Class Representative
Co-op Substitutes -----	Class Rep <u>and</u> Teacher
Housekeeping -----	Housekeeping Coordinator
After School Programs -----	Lunch Bunch Coordinator
Change of address/email/phone number -----	Membership Chair <u>and</u> Director