



**Early Childhood
Supplemental Family Handbook
2018 – 2019**

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Section 1

Welcome

Welcome to CREC's Early Childhood Program. Our goal is to provide your child with a healthy, safe and developmentally appropriate learning environment. Each CREC school offers a unique theme that allows children to identify, refine and develop their talents and interests. Each school provides a diverse learning community that prepares children for living and learning as global citizens in a diverse environment. Our schools offer a personalized educational approach for each child in a curriculum designed to spark a lasting appreciation for knowledge. The focus of our early childhood curriculum is not just an accumulation of facts and skills but rather the strengthening of an ability to reason and think independently.

Mission of CREC Schools

The CREC Mission Statement is: Equity, excellence, and success for all, through high-quality educational services

Early Childhood Program Philosophy and Curriculum

We believe that children learn best in an environment where their interests and opinions are supported, their solutions to problems are encouraged, and active learning through play is valued. Our philosophy emphasizes respect for self, others and the classroom environment.

CREC's Early Childhood Program curriculum has its base in developmentally appropriate practice and uses the State of Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) as a guideline for curriculum development. The CT ELDS are learning and developmental outcomes to be intentionally addressed through planned experiences, materials and interactions. Learning outcomes are achieved through:

- a variety of hands-on discovery activities and materials on a daily basis that support learning goals
- responsive teaching staff who meet the individual needs of the children and families we serve
- reflective practices that create an environment of inclusion and honor diversity
- partnership with families that fosters strong reciprocal relationships and achieves mutually desired goals

Our curriculum is implemented using teacher observation and documentation to plan relevant, developmentally appropriate experiences where children can explore, experiment, play, and ask questions.

UHMS Curriculum Statement

The University of Hartford Magnet School, located on the University of Hartford Campus, is an inter-district magnet school operated and managed by the Capital Region Education Council (CREC). The school's philosophical foundation is based on Dr. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences which proposes that each child has the ability to develop a variety of intelligences.

Our school features an early childhood program for 3-5 year olds and an elementary school for children in kindergarten through grade 5. Our Early Childhood Program serves up to 80 children each year in four classrooms, all of which adhere to a developmentally appropriate teacher child ratio of 1:10. Children enrolled in the Early Childhood Program are guaranteed placement in the K-5

magnet school. The Early Childhood Program follows nationally recognized standards and best practices including NAEYC Accreditation Standards for Early Childhood programs. The faculty consists of highly qualified, early childhood certified teachers who design, develop and implement the curriculum with assistant teachers who are skilled and trained in early childhood education. Additionally, the program serves as a training site for the University of Hartford Early Childhood School of Education and has field work students and interns as well as undergraduate and graduate student teachers working under the supervision of the teachers. The Capital Region Education Council offers educational opportunities to its students regardless of race, color, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation or genetic information.

At the University of Hartford Magnet School, our goals are to help children practice and refine their interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, use language to communicate effectively, think critically, represent ideas and feelings through play, construction and the arts, and to develop confidence as learners. Classrooms are organized into a variety of centers, which are designed to address the multiple intelligences and promote self-discovery. Other unique features of the program include:

- Music, visual spatial, library and bodily kinesthetic classes
- Access to a nature trail and preserves on the school grounds

Section 2 –Classroom Routines and Procedures

We recognize that routine and structure are essential for a preschooler's sense of well-being. Therefore, at UHMS, each classroom has a predictable schedule from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

A Typical Day in our Program

Greetings/Attendance	Teachers greet families and children participate in table activities or read books with teachers and families.
Morning Meeting	This daily meeting brings the students and teachers together and is comprised of the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greeting and daily announcements• Morning message• Whole group activity• Songs• Social curriculum/community building
Snack Time	Snacks are served family style. Self-help skills will be emphasized.
Small Group Time	Teachers initiate an activity focusing on the CT ELDS.
Centers/Choice Time	Children carry out play plans, play in learning centers with purpose, solve problems and construct knowledge.
Essentials	The students participate in at least one Essential class (music, visual-spatial, bodily kinesthetic, or library) each day.
Story Time	Teachers read stories to the class and children participate in literacy related activities.
Lunch	Children may either bring lunch from home or buy at school. Self-help skills will be emphasized.
Recess	Children participate in energetic outdoor play and contact with nature.
Quiet/Naptime	Children rest/nap comfortably and listen to quiet music.
Closing Circle Time	The class reviews the day, shares a story or participates in movement games, or songs.

Safe Arrival and Departure

The Early Childhood Program is a full day, full week program. Children are expected to attend daily. It is important that each child begin and end the school day on time. When children arrive late to school they miss one of the most important components of the day, morning meeting. During morning meeting, the day's events are reviewed, children have the opportunity to greet one another and plan their day together. Thus, it is very important that children arrive on time for school.

You are required to escort your child into the classroom each morning. We find that this brief time to connect with families is helpful to ensure a smooth transition between home and school and allows us

to learn any individual need your child may have that day. All children will be accounted for with a procedure developed by the classroom teacher that includes signing in at arrival and signing out at departure.

School ends at 2:30 pm and all students must be picked up from the classroom at this time. If a child is not picked up from school by dismissal time, the parent will be asked to sign a late pick-up form. This form will be submitted to the principal. If this occurs 3 times within a four week period, the school will contact the family to develop a plan so that the child can be picked up punctually.

Using the Bathroom

As a preschool program, we do not have the essential equipment or staffing to meet optimal health standards for diapering children. Therefore, families are strongly encouraged to ensure that their children are toilet trained **before** starting in the Early Childhood Program at the beginning of the school year. The exception would be if this is identified in an IEP or 504 Plan. We understand the transition to school may result in some initial toileting accidents. We will work with the child's family to ensure consistency both at home and at school. Children should be as self-sufficient as possible. Children are more successful when they wear pants with no snaps, buttons or zippers. Pants with elastic waists and underwear (not pull-ups) support children's independence with toileting. Early Childhood teachers will provide reminders to guide and support children who have had a toileting accident.

Clothing

Children play daily with sand, water, paint and play dough. Smocks are provided for water play and painting but still sometimes, clothing gets wet or soiled. Children are encouraged to wear clothing that they do not mind getting dirty and that they can easily pull on and off by themselves as needed. Please provide your child with two sets of extra clothing at school at all times. This includes: easy to pull on/off pants, socks, underwear and shirts. **Please label all clothing with your child's name on them.**

Outdoor Play

We play outside every day, weather permitting. The school nurse informs the teaching staff if recommendations from health authorities or dangerous conditions prevent outdoor play. Please ensure your child comes to school with the appropriate outer wear. Please label all outerwear with your child's initials or name. Playground-safe shoes are important. Please ensure your child wears non-slip, closed toed shoes (sneakers are ideal).

Please apply UVA/UVB (SPF15 or higher) sunscreen protection on your child before school. Teachers do not apply sunscreen. Sunscreen is not allowed in children's cubbies. Please contact the school nurse if your child requires another application of sunscreen during the day.

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellent due to high risk of insect born disease, please apply this to your child prior to arriving at school. Teachers do not apply insect repellent. Insect repellent is not allowed in children's cubbies. Please contact the school nurse if your child requires another application of repellent during the day.

Snacks/Meals

Daily snacks are an important part of meeting the nutritional needs of young children. Snacks include:

- fruit/vegetable
- dairy (cheese, yogurt, milk)
- meat or protein (beans)
- bread (crackers)

If a child has food allergies, the school nurse will develop a care plan that will be shared with all relevant teaching staff.

We are not allowed to offer children high risk foods for choking such as whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, hard pretzels, raw carrots, raw peas, or hot dogs. This applies to foods served as well as foods brought from home.

At the University of Hartford Magnet School, daily snacks are served family style. Families sign up to bring in healthy snacks for the week for all children in the class. Families sign up to do this as they can, but typically a few times a year.

Lunches

PK Students eat at specific times each day. UHMS staff are with the students during their lunch time. You have the option to either purchase lunch or bring lunch from home.

It is not necessary to send in snacks from home if your child has purchased a school lunch.

We are not allowed to heat food brought from home.

Rest Time

Our daily schedule includes a balance of quiet and active activities. Rest Time is scheduled for one hour each day with a settling in period before hand. We provide mats for your child to sleep on. Please provide a **small** blanket that can be easily stored in your child's cubby. Please label this blanket with your child's name on it. This blanket should be taken home each Friday afternoon to be laundered and returned the following Monday.

Toys From Home

Please keep toys from home at home, as they can be lost or broken at school. A small stuffed animal is acceptable for rest time.

Celebrations (birthdays and holidays)

Classroom celebrations involving food are not allowed. Due to various food allergies, as well as medical conditions, treats must not be brought into school.

Party Invitations

Invitations can only be distributed at school if every student in the class is invited.

Section 3 – Health and Safety

Handwashing Practices

Young children are particularly susceptible to illness once they begin school, affecting health and causing missed educational opportunities. While illness is not always preventable, we take measures to reduce the risk of infection by practicing good handwashing and cleaning procedures. We will teach the proper handwashing procedure as part of our curriculum. We ask all children to wash hands upon arrival, before and after meals, after playing outdoors and after using the toilet. We will use hand sanitizers as an alternative when hands are not visibly soiled.

Section 4 – Home-School Communication

Communication between Family and Teacher

A strong family-school partnership is important to the success of our Early Childhood Program. In addition to the Family-Teacher Conferences held over the year, each teacher sends home regular newsletters and or emails keeping families apprised as to what is happening in the classroom. Drop-Off and Pick-Up times are an opportunity to share brief updates or ask quick questions of your child's teacher. You may also contact your child's teacher by phone or email.

Volunteering

If you would like to volunteer in your child's classroom, please arrange a time to do so with your child's classroom teacher. You might like to plan a special activity around the unit the children are concentrating on or you might want to do a cooking project with the children. You may want to read a story to the children or help them write their own! We hope you will consider volunteering in the classroom. It is an ideal way to see what the children are working on and how learning through play is valued. As a volunteer, you are expected to maintain confidentiality.

Conferences

Marking Periods	Family-Teacher Conferences
Parent Intake Conferences	September 12 th – 14 th 12:00 pm dismissal
First	December 5 th – 7 th 12:00 pm dismissal
Second	March 13 th – 15 th 12:00 pm dismissal
Third	Report Cards go home on LAST day of school

End of Year Transitions

At the University of Hartford Magnet School, the Early Childhood Program is a two year program. Children attending preschool for the second year generally stay in their present classroom with their current teacher for the second year. At the end of each school year, teachers will help prepare each child for the transition to summer and for kindergarten if eligible. Children moving on to kindergarten will visit the kindergarten classrooms to familiarize themselves with the new environment.

Program Surveys

We ask that all families please complete an annual survey to help us evaluate our programming. The Family Survey provides you with an opportunity to share with staff your thoughts about your child's care and education in our program. Your responses to the survey questions will inform our on-going strategy for maintaining high-quality standards in our program.