

Employee Handbook



NONOTUCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL, INC.

221 Riverside Drive • Florence, MA 01062 • (413) 586-5996 • nonotuck.org
info@nonotuck.org



Creativity. Curiosity. Community.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Nonotuck Community School! We are pleased to have you as a member of the staff. The skills and commitment you bring to your job make an important contribution to our goal of providing ample opportunities for cognitive, artistic, social, emotional and physical development. We value a sense of belonging and community for our children as well as our staff. We are happy to have you as a member of our team.

Founded in 1977, Nonotuck Community School, Inc. is a nonprofit childcare and early education center serving children aged 15 months to 5 years. The program is dedicated to progressive, child-centered, play-based education, and relies on the active participation of families and teachers to maintain a working community. Nonotuck Community School values all of the members of our community: our children and families, teachers, and staff.

The goal of this handbook is to provide staff with general information regarding our program's policies and procedures. While the handbook is instructive, it is not comprehensive and cannot address every issue that arises.

This handbook is not a contract. Employees who are members of the bargaining unit are covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), and should refer to the CBA or speak to your union steward for detailed information regarding working conditions and benefits.

Nonotuck Community School adheres to state and federal law and the directives of the Department of Early Education and Care.

Any questions regarding the policies contained in this handbook should be addressed to the Executive Director.

Becoming Acquainted with the Preschool:

Be sure to read the Parent Handbook and acquaint yourself with our protocols, policies, and curriculum statement.

Be sure to read the Union Contract and understand your rights and responsibilities.

Be sure to look at our Health Policy and be able to advise parents on when their child may not be in school. (When in doubt, ask the director!)

We will be sure to give you a tour and explain the ins and outs of daily Nonotuck life. However, we'll never be able to tell you everything at once! Be sure you know about the location and use of the following items. Your colleagues will be happy to help you, as will the office staff.

Areas:

- Staff lounge
- Kitchen (dishwasher, cupboards, pantry)
- Adult bathroom
- Community Room & closets
- Basement
- Playgrounds
- Kids' bathrooms
- Front door alarm system
- Classroom keys
- Staff/Parent mailboxes
- Union Bulletin Board
- Bulletin board info including: EEC license, required posted forms
- Children's folders
- Your staff folder
- Office supplies, printer, laminator, etc.
- Tuition Box

Forms and templates:

- Accident / Incident reports
- Time Sheets
- Late pick-up
- Vacation request
- Progress Reports
- Daily menu form
- Sign out sheets

Other important items:

- First Aid boxes
- Allergy lists
- Class lists
- Staff work schedule
- Children's schedules
- Emergency procedures
- Daily log book
- Food guidelines
- Fire extinguishers
- Fire exit maps
- Emergency numbers
- Bleach and soap spray solutions

Supplies:

- Picture books
- Professional books & observation (GOLD) materials
- Manipulative toys
- Art Supplies
- Cleaning supplies, including mop, vacuum, bucket
- Remote Telephone
- Keys for shed
- Keys for classrooms and cleaning closets
- Key for trash
- Plastic storage bags
- Trash bags
- Extra clothes

GENERAL POLICIES

Family Friendly Policy – All children, parents, employees, and visitors should be treated with kindness, friendliness, patience, and respect. Staff should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

Safety – Every caution must be taken to guard against accidents to the children and other staff. It is the responsibility of every staff person to correct unsafe conditions such as, liquid, paper, extension cords, etc. on the floor or any other condition that could cause an accident. Report unsafe conditions and fire hazard immediately if you are unable to correct them. All accidents should be reported in writing immediately.

Fire Rules – It is the responsibility of all employees to understand their role in an emergency. This includes the understanding and familiarization of the location and operation of the fire extinguishers, reporting a fire to the fire department, and knowledge of all fire exits.

FIELD TRIPS and LOCAL WALKS

If you are taking children off-site (even a walk around the block) you must fill out the Field Trip log, which hangs in the hallway. For trips that involve walking far, going to the river, or other local walks that involve crossing streets or other hazards, you must have 3 people with you, regardless of ratio. Please discuss with the director.

Field trips at Nonotuck are done with parent drivers. We will collect drivers' licenses and other permission slips beforehand. Please plan your trips with the director with plenty of lead-time in which to organize.

PERSONAL BEHAVIOR

Conversations With Other Staff – Keep attention on the children at all times in the classrooms, on the playground and in the community room. Teachers must space themselves around the area and be available to children. Teachers at all times shall speak to other staff members in a respectful manner and avoid conversations inappropriate for the children to overhear.

Dress Code –Teachers are representing Nonotuck Community School as well as the early childhood profession. We strive to project a professional image to parents and others who come to the preschool. All program staff are expected to maintain an appearance that reflects positively on the program and is appropriate for working with young children. Although we want you to be relaxed and comfortable, and certainly don't want you to ruin any special clothes with paint or glue, it is important for you to dress in a professional manner while working at the preschool. Casual clothing such as t-shirts and jeans are generally appropriate if they are neat and clean. Employees shall dress in an appropriate manner for walking with and being around children. Attire concerning obscene or offensive language or pictures may not be worn in the work place. Shoes must be suitable for moving quickly and quietly through the school. We *highly* suggest that you change into 'indoor' shoes, just as we ask the children to do.

Mailboxes: Each staff member and all parents have a mailbox at the preschool. It is your responsibility to check for notices upon arriving and departing. We also ask you to help remind parents to check their mailboxes.

Email: You will be given a Nonotuck email address. This should be checked often, but at least twice a week. It is the only email address to be used when contacting parents.

Daily emails: Every day each class sends an email to all the parents in the class, with a few photos attached. Emails should be long enough to be capture the excitement and energy in your classroom and short enough to get them done during nap time! Your email should follow this template:

- **GREETING:** an introductory sentence such as, “It was a busy day today in our classroom” or “What a special day we had!”
- **TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS:** Tell about the special activities or events, and highlight some things children did. You can name children, but be sure to cover everyone equally over time. For example: “We took a walk to the river and the children were very interested in the different animals we saw. Sue found a dragonfly and Diego noticed a hawk circling overhead.”
- **AM SNACK WAS:**
- **PM SNACK WAS:**
- **WHO NAPPED:**
- **REMINDERS:**

Nonotuck Web Site: You will be asked to create a short biography for our website (without your last name). Please do not link our website to any other without permission from the Director.

Facebook & Social Media: Teachers are discouraged from ‘friending’ current Nonotuck parents. Teachers must not post photos of children in their class on any website.

Blogs: Staff members may not create or share a blog or webpage which personally identifies any current Nonotuck children. Blogs or webpages which appropriate the likeness of Nonotuck, or which may be reasonably be confused with being associated with Nonotuck, are prohibited.

Photos: Daily photos are sent to classroom parents via email. Shared photos should be chosen with care, making sure that there is nothing in the picture (check the background!) that might be misinterpreted. Please be sure to include all children equally, over time.

You may use your own camera, but these photos are not your possession. You may not use them for ANY purpose other than Nonotuck projects. Teachers must not post photos of children in their class on any website.

Bulletin Boards: There is a parent bulletin board and a Union bulletin board (kitchen). Please be sure to read all notices so that you are an informed member of the teaching team. Keeping informed is part of your job responsibility.

Class Bulletin Boards: Hallway bulletin boards should be used to share information about the learning that’s going on in your class. Please use these as Documentation Panels, a mixture of product samples (ie: an example of child’s art work), photos of the project happening, and a statement about what the children learned. We don’t use purchased boarders...the focus should be on the work.

Cell Phones: We ask that at least one teacher per group have a cell phone with them when leaving the classroom, including going to the playground. Personal calls and texts that are not of an emergency nature should not be taken during time when one is responsible for children; nap time is acceptable. Under NO circumstances may a cell phone be used while walking on the street with children.

Daily Count Sheets: Are updated daily; please refer to the chart for coverage questions.

Daily Log Book – Check every morning, as this is where parents let you know about important issues. Be aware of who is out sick, coming in late, changes in pick-ups, etc. Inform the director or administrative assistant as to any issues you think we need to know about.

Personal Belongings – Coats, backpacks, purses, etc. must be safely put on hooks or on top of cubbies, Do not leave anything in the classroom or kitchen area. Purses and bags must never be accessible to children, under EEC regulations.

Bathrooms – Our only adult bathroom is attached to the kitchen. In the event of an emergency or if the adult bathroom is out of order, adults may use ONLY the largest stall in the preschool bathroom. When in use by an adult, no children may be in the bathroom, and the door to the hallway must be closed. If this stall is going to be used by children, the seat must be sprayed with bleach. Otherwise, an 'adult only' sign must be posted on the stall door and no children may use the stall until the issue is resolved.

Hot Beverage Policy – Please use a cup with a lid, and keep away from the children.

Snacks and Lunchtime – These are times for eating and socializing. Staff must sit at the tables with the children and engage in conversation with them. We serve all food in the lunch box at the same time (children are not told to eat anything before anything else). Snacks should be served 'family style' according to the abilities of the group.

Familiarize yourself with our printed list of foods we do not serve as well as the requirements for cutting food into safe sizes.

All teachers are responsible for making sure they instruct substitutes and interns about the location of the allergy list. It is your responsibility to make sure no inappropriate foods are distributed.

Smoking

Smoking or the use of any tobacco products on school grounds is prohibited. Staff clothing should be free of the smell of smoke, as this is a health hazard to young children.

Drug & Alcohol-Free Workplace

Employees are prohibited from engaging in the unlawful use, distribution or possession of any controlled substance or alcohol while on school grounds or performing a school related activity. Alcohol may not be consumed at lunch; coming to work after having consumed alcohol is grounds for dismissal.

STAFF ETHICS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Please see the Union Contract for details.

Mandated Reporter

As a teacher you are required to make a report to DCF if you have any reasonable suspicion that a child is suffering from abuse or neglect. You should report your concerns to the Director of the school or designee who then becomes responsible for filing. Should the person in charge advise against filing, the staff member retains the right to contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) directly. Similarly, contacting the Department of Early Education & Care (EEC) should first be discussed with the Director or Nonotuck's designee.

Employment outside of Nonotuck

Please speak with the director before agreeing to jobs involving current Nonotuck families.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Staff are required to be familiar with and follow all EEC health & safety stipulations. Please see the EEC Regulations online or in the office.

- Teachers are responsible for being sure children wash hands before entering the classroom, even though parents are asked to be sure of it. Staff are encouraged to do the same.
- Children and staff wash hands after using the toilet, blowing their nose, handling soiled tissues and after using cleaning supplies such as bleach.
- Teachers are responsible for making sure that substitutes and interns in their class follow health and safety regulations.

At Nonotuck children change shoes when coming indoors. This is not optional and teachers must work out a system to make this work. Teachers are highly encouraged to change their own shoes, and may keep a pair of shoes at work for this purpose

EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS

All employees are expected to demonstrate a professional, cooperative, knowledgeable and courteous demeanor in all interactions with children, parents, colleagues and members of the community.

The use of profane language is prohibited.

Employees are expected to have regular attendance, arrive to work on time and adhere to designated starting and ending times for work, breaks, lunch, etc.

Excessive personal calls, or use of office supplies, services or equipment for personal reasons are not allowed.

Misuse of equipment, supplies or services, including electronic access is prohibited.

LABOR ORGANIZATION

Familiarize yourself with the union contract between Nonotuck Community School and the United Auto Workers. The union steward will give you a copy and an orientation about the union upon hire.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

As a school, we will work to encourage positive experiences in human values for children and youth and adults, all of whom have differing personal and family characteristics and who come from various socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups. The school's belief in nondiscrimination extends to students, staff, the general public..

We affirm our policy of equal opportunity and we do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran in our program and activities, in accordance with applicable federal and state statutes and regulations



CURRICULUM CONTINUITY

At Nonotuck, we believe in Emergent Curriculum, where observation of children at play leads to planning new curriculum themes and topics of exploration. Our real curriculum is what happens *behind* this! Children are the Curriculum. Children will have long stretches of free play in a rich classroom environment that you are responsible for maintaining. They will learn social skills and emotional self-knowledge; they will be on the road to literacy in language, reading, math, and science. They will explore music and movement. But how they get all these things, what the vehicle is, will change from classroom to classroom. Planning will take place with co-teachers in a team, and sometimes across teams. Time will be spent with the director at Planning Time. Planning Time may not take place off-site without permission from the director.

At the same time we want our curriculum to emerge from the children's interests (and yours!) we want to be sure we maintain and nurture a Nonotuck culture. As with most work environments, the culture of the school is not easy to capture and many of the 'rules' or 'expectations' are

undocumented. As we move forward, we hope to become more conscious of the things we *all* do (or might do) that will help define who Nonotuck is.

ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL POLICY INFORMATION

Personnel issues such as the criteria for hiring, promotion, probationary periods, discipline, suspension, dismissal of staff, the procedure of handling staff complaints, and salary range for positions is located within the collective bargaining agreement.

A Job description is available in the main office, as are the procedures for handling allegations of child abuse or neglect against a staff member, including the requirements of 606 CMR 7.11(4)(e&f).