



## Family Handbook

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Where every child can reach for the stars!

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## Introduction

Dear Parent,

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Welcome to The Shooting Stars Program and thank you for choosing our school for your child. Shooting Stars is a private self-supporting preschool located at 152 US Route One in Scarborough since October 2005. We offer unique programming for children from 3-5 years of age. Our objective is to provide an individually appropriate curriculum that will assist in meeting the academic, social, physical and emotional needs of you and your child.

The Shooting Stars program consists of three classrooms. All three, utilize a multi-age approach where curriculum focuses on the individual. Shooting Stars is unique, where it offers classrooms for both children with and without identified special educational needs. Children from all three classrooms participate in mainstreamed activities and have the opportunity to learn and play together. By doing so, all children are able to benefit from the expertise of visiting therapists who specialize in speech/language, physical and occupational development. With such a wide range of developmental abilities, our teachers are required to have a high level of training and qualifications. All lead teachers have either a Masters or Bachelors degree in education and all supporting staff are licensed with the Maine Department of Education. This includes background checks and finger printing through the Department of Education.

We use several published curriculums, including “The Letter People”, “Social Thinking”, “Handwriting without Tears”, and “Ready S.E.T. Go!”. Curriculum is designed around developmental bench marks identified by the Maine State Department for Early Childhood Education. Our philosophy is

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considered “Activity Based Instruction (ABI)”. This method is a child-directed, transactional approach that weaves individual developmental goals within the classroom routine, planned activities and child-initiated interactions.

At Shooting Stars, we feel it is essential to develop a pre-academic curriculum that will better prepare children for kindergarten; however, we have a strong emphasis on social-emotional development. Teaching appropriate peer interactions and conflict resolution strategies through play will strengthen and enhance each child’s personal development.

The Shooting Stars Program’s daily routine is very similar to what you see in any preschool classroom. Our goal is not only to learn but to have FUN! We begin our day with a morning circle time which offers music, stories, movement and can choose activities such as block play, dramatic play, arts/crafts as well as games and puzzles to stimulate growth and development. The children gather together for a mid-morning snack. Each classroom will have whole group instruction on a specific theme chosen for that week. Activities to promote growth in all developmental areas are designed around this theme. We will also go outside each day to enjoy the playground or have more indoor fun during bad weather. Music and yoga play a large role in our program with much dancing, singing and movement.

### **Arrival and Dismissal**

During the regular school year between September and June, our school day begins at 9:15 and ends at 1:15. For children who do not stay for lunch, dismissal is at 12:15. Please enter through a door that is connected directly to your child’s room. The Blue Star classroom enters through the front of the building and the Orange and Green Star classrooms enter through the rear doors across from the playground. Sign your child “in” each day with your classroom teacher. Please do the

same when checking your child out at the end of the day. Make sure that you have verbally spoken with your child's teacher when dropping off and picking up. This will ensure the safety of your child. If someone other than yourself will be picking up your child, we ask you put this in writing and give to your classroom teacher. We will need a form of identification to verify their name at pick-up.

### **Backpacks**

We ask that you send in one backpack, large enough for a lunch box and one change of clothes. Some children will be sharing cubbies, there is not enough space for children to leave clothing at school. One back pack also allows children to easily carry all their belongings outside to the playground for pick-up. Please label all belongings!

### **Hours/Vacation Schedule**

The Shooting Stars Program follows a public school calendar that was determined by Child Development Services of Maine. Because we service children with special education needs, the state requires our program to adhere to their calendar. A schedule of these days will be handed out separately.

The Shooting Stars Program is open Monday-Friday 9:15-1:15. For children with identified special needs, the number of days and hours that your child will be enrolled is determined by the hours indicated on your Child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) from Child Development Services.

A six-week summer program is also offered two-three days a week for 3 hours each day.

### **Fees**

For parents enrolled in the typical preschool program, rates are \$28.00 per day for 4 hours. Payments can be made on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Depending on your preference, monthly invoices will either be e-mailed or placed in your child's cubby. Payments need to be paid by the first day of each

month. It is expected that children are to be picked up promptly from school each and it is understandable that there will times that parents are late; however, it is the directors' discretion to apply late fees to families who are often late.

### **Snow Days**

If Scarborough Public Schools is closed due to hazardous weather, the Shooting Stars Program will be closed. We will not have a separate announcement on the TV or radio. To be notified of cancellations, listen and watch for a cancellation of Scarborough Schools. If there is a delayed opening for Scarborough Schools, Shooting Stars will close. Snow days will be made up at the end of the school year.

### **Emergency Closings**

If children are unable to attend The Shooting Stars Program due to building or town emergencies; such as broken water pipes, power outages, severe weather (hurricanes/flooding) etc, parents will receive a phone call from the director of Shooting Stars to notify you of any cancellations. If any such emergencies arise while children are at school, parents will be called and asked to pick-up their children and bring them home.

### **Evacuation Policies**

The Shooting Stars classrooms are required by the state to include lighted exit signs, sprinkler systems, strobe lights, fire alarms and sufficient exits out of the building. The class conducts monthly fire drills and is visited by the town fire department on a monthly basis to ensure that safety systems are in working order.

During fire drills children are escorted to either the playground and if needed to exit the front of the building, we will stand at the mail box areas in the front parking lot. In the event that there is a building emergency such as a bomb threat or gas leak,

where children need to be several miles away from the facility. All teachers will drive children to my home at 27 High Point Rd. Scarborough which is 2.7 miles away. The State of Maine Child Care licensing department has given facilities permission to transport children without car seats for building emergencies. If this was to occur, all parents will be notified and ask to pick up your children at my home.

### **Mandated Reporter**

The Shooting Stars Program is a licensed child care program with the State of Maine which means that all staff are mandated reporters of child abuse and/or neglect. If staff suspect child abuse or neglect with any of the children at the Shooting Stars Program, staff will report directly to the Department of Health and Human Services. If staff ever suspect child abuse or neglect from a staff member at Shooting Stars, that is reported directly to the Department of Education Licensing Department.

### **Parking**

The entrance to The Shooting Stars Classroom is either to the front or rear of the building. If your child attends the typical preschool program (Blue Stars) please park at the front parking lot and enter through the front door. If your child attends a CDS specialized program enter through either the Green Stars or Orange Stars classroom which is located at the back of the building. For the Green and Orange star classrooms, please drive behind the Scarborough Market Place and park in front of the playground. You may enter through the door marked Shooting Stars with the appropriate color star for your child's classroom.

### **Clothing/Supplies**

Your child will need the following: a change of clothes (including underwear and socks) that can remain at the classroom and outside clothing appropriate for the weather. We will try to get outside everyday even in the winter. The only time we remain inside is when it is raining heavily or the temperature/wind chill falls below 20 degrees. We ask you to



label everything with your child's name. We cannot be responsible for lost or missing clothing, but we will maintain a lost and found area. Diapers and wipes need to be provided if your child is not yet potty trained. Because we do go outside daily, weather permitting, we ask that you dress your child accordingly. Please no sandals, flip flops or crocs. These types of shoes make it difficult for children to maneuver safely on the playground equipment. Shoes must be worn in school at all times. No slippers please. For safety reasons, in the event of a fire drill, there would be no time to change into shoes.

### **Snacks / Lunch**

Shooting Stars is a PEANUT FREE SCHOOL. We do not provide meals, please send your child to school everyday with a lunch box with enough food for a morning snack and lunch if they remain for the full 4 hours each day. We do offer the children water during each meal but feel free to pack a drink for your child if water is not preferred. Please notify us of any allergies to food.

### **Birthdays**

Celebrating birthdays is such a special time for your child and we love celebrating with them; however, due to the increasing incident of food allergies in children, we ask that you DO NOT send in birthday treats to school. It is very difficult for young children to understand why they cannot have a special treat that has been brought to school. Instead your child can bring in a special toy or item that they can share with the class. This will be a show and tell day for just the birthday girl or boy!

### **Mail Boxes**

Each child has an individual parent mailbox where art work, notices and reports are placed. These boxes are located in each classroom above the cubby area with your child's name. Please check boxes daily.

### **Pesticides and Animals**

The use of pesticides and/or herbicides are not used at The Shooting Stars Program either in the building or outside on the playground. If a problem ever arises where such substances need to be used. Parents will be notified, and children will not be allowed to participate in those areas until the space is safe and free from chemicals.

### **Administration of Medication**

The Shooting Stars Program shall administer prescription medication only upon written order from a physician and according to the labeled instructions on the original medicine container. A written, signed and dated request from the parent must be submitted before any medication can be administered by staff. We shall

record the administration of all prescription medicine. We shall not administer any non-prescription medications to a child without written, signed and dated parental permission naming the medication and the dosage. We also require that we have a written and signed parental request for any non-prescription lotions that need to be applied to the skin.

### **Illness Policy**

Under no circumstances should you send your child to Shooting Stars if he/she has any contagious illness or is running a temperature over 100 degrees F. A sick child cannot do well in a group setting and it is difficult for the staff to give a sick child the extra attention he/she needs. We assume that any child who is sent to Shooting Stars is well enough to participate in our regular program including outdoor play. If a parent feels that his/her child is not well enough to participate in all activities, he/she must keep that child at home. Children must be free from fever (100 or higher), vomiting, diarrhea and without medication for 24 hours.

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Criteria for illness is as follows:

1. An elevated temperature of 100 degrees F. or higher
2. Vomiting
3. Uncontrollable diarrhea or two or more loose stools
4. Unexplained rash
5. Discharge from eyes or ears
6. Highly contagious illness such as but not limited to strep throat, scarlet fever, chicken pox, impetigo, conjunctivitis, measles, mumps, viral infections etc.
7. Lice

Please keep in mind that these are only guidelines. If we feel that your child cannot fully participate in the program, you will be notified to pick up your child. We ask that you do so within an hour of our request. If your child is going to be absent from school, please call before 9:00 am to notify classroom teachers.

### **Immunizations**

The Department of Health and Human Services requires that all Nursery School licensed facilities maintain copies of immunization records of each child. If you choose not to have your child immunized, please be aware that your child will have to remain at home in the event that there is a break out of a serious contagious disease. In the event that an outbreak of a contagious disease occurs at The Shooting Stars Program, the state of Maine's Center for Disease Control will be notified, and an outbreak plan will be developed on how to proceed.

### **Discipline Policy**

The teachers in The Shooting Stars Program use praise and positive reinforcement methods to manage behavior in the classroom. This reinforcement is social verbal praise with natural rewards (stickers, toys). We will often design reward systems with charts and posters to motivate children toward success. These strategies will increase self-esteem, problem solving abilities and self-discipline. When

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needed we will use a “break” or “cool down” period if a child is overly agitated. There is an area in each classroom that is a designated place for children to have quiet space when needed. When appropriate we will work closely with families to develop a behavior plan that can be effective both in school and at home. We do not use physical restraints with children unless they are posing a threat to cause bodily harm to themselves or others. If a physical restraint is required, a meeting will be held with that child’s family to write a behavior action plan and discuss how to safely restrain a child. An incident form will also be completed in accordance with the State of Maine’s chapter 33 law on restraint and seclusion practices in school settings.

### **Communication/Parent Involvement**

Communication with families and parent involvement is critical to the success of The Shooting Stars Program. You are the expert on your child and know their needs best. Continuous dialogue between parents and teachers about your child’s progress and needs is essential for a successful learning environment. Two conference times will be set up at the beginning and end of school to discuss your child’s personal development and specific achievements.

Shooting Stars also has a parent group that meets once a month to brainstorm ways to make Shooting Stars a better place and to plan family gatherings such as a December holiday party, winter sledding and a spring family picnic.

### **Assessment**

All children will be evaluated by an individual developmental assessment which will be conducted through out the year. This information along with work samples collected in individual portfolios will be shared during your child’s conference. Portfolio’s follow the Maine State Learning Guidelines for early childhood education.

Assessments used for children in the Blue Star classroom are formalized, developmental check lists developed by The Letter People preschool curriculum. Children in the Orange and Green star classrooms are evaluated with formalized standardized testing in accordance with Child Development Services.

All assessment information is kept strictly confidential and only classroom staff at Shooting Stars will have access to this information. Data collected from assessments will be used to design curriculum and meet the individual developmental needs of your child. Assessment information will be reviewed with parents at least once a year, during private conferences with classroom teachers or during annual review meetings if your child receives services from CDS.

### **Student Records**

All records of each child, including Individual Education plans, assessments and reports from therapists are kept strictly confidential and placed in a locked fire proof filing cabinet within The Shooting Stars classroom. Additional copies of any records pertaining to the IEP are kept at Child Development Services. Only Shooting Stars Staff have access to these records. In order for students to begin school, we need all parents to turn in registration form, medical information and a copy of you child's immunization records.

Registration forms must include emergency contact information, pediatrician and health insurance name/number. There is also a section on registration forms that allow you to provide permission for your child to be photographed with the purpose of classroom bulletin boards, art projects and on-line sharing of photos on our web site and Facebook page. Names of children are never used on the web.

### **Parent Observations and Conferences**

Families may visit/observe any area of the facility at any time during the program's regular hours of operation but please do call ahead and schedule an appointment with the director, Ruth

**Hughes. We have many visited to Shooting Stars and this will ensure that we do not have too many unfamiliar adults in the building at one time.**

**Children in the Blue Star classroom will have a private parent/teacher conference with the lead classroom teacher. During this time, lead teachers will discuss assessment results, developmental progress as well as strengths and any concerns.**

**For children in the Green and Orange Star classrooms, Child Development Services will schedule a yearly meeting to discuss progress toward identified goals and qualification for continuation of services. Written quarterly progress notes will also be written to outline progress toward identified IEP objectives.**

**All families are welcome to request a meeting with classroom teachers to discuss their child at any time. Teachers will do their best speak directly with families at drop off and pick up times but if you were unable to touch base with your teacher, feel free to call or e-mail at any time.**

#### **Grievances and Complaints**

**If ever there is a grievance or complaint about Shooting Stars, please feel free to contact me directly by phone or email so that we can schedule a face to face meeting to discuss the situation. I put communication with parents as a priority and always want to resolve any issues promptly.**

**If you have any questions that are not answered in this handbook or have any suggestions for us to consider, please feel free to speak with us about them. We know that your child will have a successful and enjoyable learning experience here at The Shooting Stars Program. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work with you and your child.**

**Sincerely,**

**Ruth C. Hughes, M.Ed.**

**Director/Special Education Teacher**

**The Shooting Stars Program**



