



Riverdale Neighborhood House  
5521 Mosholu Ave  
Bronx, NY 10471  
Parent Handbook  
Early Childhood Program



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## Philosophy

Going off to preschool, as one teacher has so aptly described, "Is more than just a play experience; it is an introduction to life." We, at Riverdale Neighborhood House (RNH) believe that as children take their first steps into the larger world outside their homes, we must work diligently to make this first group experience extremely nurturing and calming. We approach separation with understanding and believe that by allowing children to build trust with new adults in their lives-their teachers- we are helping to lay groundwork for future, positive, school experiences.

From the moment your child enters our program, he or she has access to a curriculum full of learning opportunities that promote and support the New York State and national learning standards.

We plan our curriculum with the "whole" child in mind and, therefore, incorporate age appropriate activities into our daily plans. These activities will promote the social, cognitive and physical development of each child at his or her own pace. We explore, experiment and problem solve.

### Goals Statement

Our primary goal is to provide a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment for your child. Within this environment we work as a team toward:

- ❖ Assisting each child in building a strong self-image and positive outlook toward school.
- ❖ Assisting each child in moving (in small, comfortable steps) from an egocentric to social worldview.
- ❖ Assisting each child in expanding his cognitive skills, at his own pace, through a well planned curriculum.
- ❖ Assisting each child in furthering his physical development through appropriate activities involving large and small motor skills.
- ❖ Assisting each child, and his/her family, in dealing with problems or difficult issues and, when necessary, assisting them to find the appropriate guidance to do so.

By following these goals in our long-and-short range planning, we believe that we can provide you and your child with a rewarding pre-school experience.

## History

**FULL-TIME:** Planning for our Full-Time Program was begun in February, 1972 by a group of parents who later became its first Board of Directors. It opened as an independent corporation in May 1973, using facilities at Christ Church in Riverdale. In the fall of 1975, the program moved to our main building and became part of Riverdale Neighborhood House under the direction of the RNH Board. In 1988, classes were moved to the newly opened Dodge Building.

Working parents who need full-time care but cannot afford our fees, may qualify for assistance.

**PART-TIME NURSERY PROGRAMS:** RNH first began its nursery programs in the form of "Drop-In-Art" classes during the mid-1970's. Within a few years, its popularity led to a more structured format, with families now enrolling for a semester at a time. The program served approximately 30 children each semester. With the opening of the Dodge Building in 1988, RNH was able to achieve its dream of offering parents several options of nursery care.

## Funding

**PRE-K for ALL (PKA):** All PKA programs are offered to NYC parents at no charge. Parents may opt to combine this free full day class with a **fee based** Early Childhood After School Program (ECASP) until 6 p.m.

**3-K for All (3K):** This year (2021), RNH was awarded the 3-K for All program! Similar to PKA, 3-K is offered to NYC families at no charge. 3-K families also have the opportunity to combine this free program with a **fee based** Early Childhood After School Program (ECASP) until 6 p.m.

Both PKA and 3K are free of charge for families for 6 hours and 20 minutes. At RNH, that means our school day begins at 8:00am and ends at 2:20pm. Early Childhood After School Program begins at 2:20-6pm.

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❖ All of RNH's early childhood programs are approved as a "school" by the New York State Education Department.

❖ All programs are licensed by the New York City Department of Health.

## Helpful Information: Beginning of School:

**ENTRANCE POLICY:** We always work together to make the transition from home to school as smooth and enjoyable as possible. Many young children experience some difficulty separating from their parents and adjusting to their new school atmosphere. Others, who have already been to school, need time to re-adjust to a new classroom, new teachers and new classmates. Therefore, all children will begin each September with an abbreviated schedule, which parents will receive prior to the opening of school.

**SEPARATION POLICY:** If there are any adjustment/ separation challenges on the first few days, we will ask you to work closely with us to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. This may mean continuation of an abbreviated schedule for a while to having a parent/ caretaker remain on the premises until your child feels comfortable.

In the event that a child has a particularly difficult school adjustment, requiring the parent, teacher and administration to work closely and frequently, an evaluation will be scheduled for approximately two months after the child's starting date. This will allow us to discuss the progress to date and set realistic goals.

**RIVERDALE NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE HAS AN "OPEN-DOOR POLICY" AT ALL TIMES. PARENTS ARE FREE TO VISIT AT ANY TIME.**



### Our Playdough Recipe:

Materials: 1 cup of flour, 1 tablespoon of cooking oil, 1 cup of water,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt, 2 teaspoons of cream of tartar, food coloring, a saucepan, a covered container and a spoon.

This must be carefully supervised. Mix all ingredients and heat carefully over low heat until ball forms. Knead. Be careful, it's very hot in the beginning, but when it's just warm to the touch, there's nothing better. Store in a covered container. It will last!

Helpful Information: Day to Day Issues

**Classroom Ratios:** NYC Dept of Health in partnership with NYC Dept of Education determine the following ratios by age:

Age	Ratio
2.9yrs-3.8yrs	15:2
3.9-5yrs	18:2 or 20:3

**Arrival and Departure:** All children, regardless of which program they attend, **MUST** be escorted into and out of their classroom at all times. All children must be signed in and out of the classroom daily.

**NEVER LEAVE YOUR CHILD ALONE IN AN EMPTY CLASSROOM.**

If your child attends class in the Dodge Building, you must ring the bell to enter the building. Please be sure that the door closes behind you. If your child attends class in the Main Building, you must press the button on the outside of the building and you will be "buzzed in". Both buzzers are equipped with a camera so that the person can see who is entering the building.

**3K and PKA Classes:** Your child must arrive at school between **8:00-8:45 a.m.** Your child will be considered late after 8:45. The Department of Education requires us to record children's lateness.

If your child's going to be late due to a doctor's appointment, a school visit or even "oversleeping", you must call Kathy Powers at (718) 549-8100 ext 133 before arriving at RNH.

**Dismissal**

All classrooms will dismiss students at 2:20pm from each classroom's exterior door. Please ring the bell and wait patiently while the teachers gather all of your child's belongings and meet you at the door. **Children MUST be signed out by their parent/caretaker.**

Children in our Early Childhood After School Program (ECASP) must be picked up by 6pm. It is important for you to be on time to pick up your child. In the event of an emergency, please call us at ext 133 so that we may reassure your child. Ongoing lateness will be addressed by the director and could result in cancellation of enrollment.

**If your child has not been picked up 30 minutes after this without prior notice of an emergency from the parents (and we cannot get in touch with any of the emergency contacts or parents) they may be brought to the local precinct to wait for you (50th precinct).**

PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE ANY CHILDREN UNATTENDED IN YOUR CAR WHILE YOU PICK UP AT RNH. RNH IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY PARKING TICKETS.

**Escort Policy:** If a person, other than a parent, is picking a child up, the parent must have listed this person on the emergency contact card or have written a note to the teacher in advance, noting the name of the person. **No child will be released to an unauthorized escort or taxi driver. Pick up person MUST show a photo ID. Please make sure the picture ID matches the information on the emergency card.**

Parents must inform us in writing when: 1) there is any change in phone numbers-home or work; 2) the emergency person has changed including his/her phone; and 3) there is a change in the escort accompanying your child to/from RNH.

PLEASE DO NOT ASK ANY STAFF MEMBER TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD WHEN HE/SHE FINISHES AT RNH. ALTHOUGH STAFF SOMETIMES MAKE PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS WITH PARENTS, THESE CANNOT BE AN EXTENSION OF THEIR WORK DAY. **RNH is not responsible for any arrangements made outside of the school day with your child.**

❖ All RNH staff are Fingerprinted by NYC Department of Education, have NYS clearance and have attended the mandated Child Abuse Reporting course. **All staff are mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect.**

### Safety and Security

Keeping our staff and children safe at RNH is our priority. These are the safety and security guidelines in place:

**Entering the building:** Upon arrival, all visitors, parents, etc must ring a bell at the front door. This bell is equipped with a camera so that the administration is able to see who is at the door. A staff member will then greet the individual at the front door.

**Visitors:** All visitors must show ID and sign in. They will be escorted to their destination and must sign out when they leave.

**Safety Drills:** Children and staff must participate in monthly fire drills. This is done in an appropriate manner so as to not frighten the children. All children and staff must exit the building in under 60 seconds!

**Lockdown and Shelter in Place drills:** We are mandated by NYC Dept of Health to conduct lockdown and shelter in place drills. Again, this is done in a developmentally appropriate way. For example, teachers will explain that these drills are done as practice just in case there is an emergency. **You will be notified by the director when lockdown/ shelter in place drills occur.**

### Limit Setting and Evaluation

Young children are learning many things about themselves and others. There are times when children test limits and break rules. Our goal is to promote positive social and emotional development in children and guide problem solving. The teachers work to help children learn appropriate behavior and manage their feelings/ actions in an age appropriate manner.

Teachers are PROHIBITED from ever using:

- ❖ Physical Punishment (hitting, etc)
- ❖ Mental or Emotional Punishment (threatening, humiliating, shaming)



- ❖ Confinement of a child in an isolated or enclosed area.

If, in our professional opinion, we do not see appropriate progress or feel that we need further support, we will meet with the family to discuss outside available resources. Together, we will set up an appropriate plan for supporting the child, which may include a plan for evaluation.

*We encourage parents to share with us any changes in the child's life, which may affect his/her behavior and feelings at school.*

### **Early Intervention Services**

**Beginning the Process:** All children are entitled to receive a free, comprehensive evaluation through the Department of Education. We assist all families in preparing the request and are here to answer any questions about the evaluation process.

**Support Services:** If children need support services in the classroom, the family, teacher, director and service provider(s) will work together to create a plan to support the child's needs and development (including when and where services will take place). Children's IEP's should be made available to RNH as soon as possible so that the teacher can become familiar with the child's goals and specific needs.

If the child is assigned a Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) RNH has the following procedure:

- ❖ An initial meeting with the SEIT, family and RNH staff to agree on common goals, techniques, etc.
- ❖ The SEIT and teacher will then set up a schedule to meet biweekly to discuss how they are working as a team and how the child's needs are being met.
- ❖ The family, SEIT and the staff will meet at least twice during the year to ensure that the child is receiving the maximum benefit of the early childhood classroom.

**Family Confidentiality:** Whenever it becomes necessary to share information about your child with another agency or school, we always request your written permission first.

## Health Policy

Before entering any class, each child must have a complete physical examination. *No child can begin until we have a medical form complete with immunization records on file.*

As of June 2019, public, private and parochial schools and child care programs in New York can no longer accept requests for religious exemptions from school immunization requirements. This law applies to students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and to all child care settings. If you need more information please contact the Early Childhood Office.

Children with any sign of illness (vomiting, sore throat, fresh cold, diarrhea, cough or fever) cannot attend school. If a child becomes ill during the day the parent/emergency person will be notified. In the meantime, the child will be made comfortable, resting on a cot. If we suspect that he/she is contagious, we will set up a resting place in the office. A sick child must be picked up within a two hour period. **Your child must be symptom free (fever, vomiting, etc) for 24 hours before returning to school.** This is to protect your child as well as the rest of the class from contagion. In case of illness such as lice, pinkeye, strep throat, chickenpox, etc. A doctor's note is always required for readmission. *Please keep in mind that the program cannot care for ill children. Please have a backup plan for care if you are not available.*

### **Riverdale Neighborhood House does not administer medication except for emergency life saving medication.**

In the event that a child needs emergency life saving medication such as an EPI Pen or asthma medication, RNH has a waiver from the Department of Health. **If your child is asthmatic or has severe allergies a complete discussion with the administration must take place before the child enters the program. In addition, the staff, the family and your pediatrician will need to work together to create and document a medical plan. If your child has any other allergies to food, animals, etc, you MUST let the staff know at registration.**

In order to ensure each child's well being to the best of our ability, RNH has a **NO NUT POLICY**. This policy is outlined in our statement on Nuts which you will receive and be asked to sign.

## Outdoor Play

At RNH, we are very lucky to have vast amounts of outdoor space for our use. This being said, children play outdoors at least twice a day for thirty minute intervals all year round.

During the winter months outdoor play may be shortened but not eliminated unless there are dangerous conditions outside. Please dress your child in warm clothing (hats, coat, gloves, scarf). On occasion, students may go play in the snow. Your classroom teacher will inform you of what items to bring for this fun activity!

In the warm weather when outdoor play is a good part of our day, parents should apply sunscreen at home and bring a bottle of sunscreen with your child's name, to be kept at school. Written permission must be provided for the teacher to re-apply it at school. During the warm weather months, we monitor outdoor play time according to the temperature and air quality. Most outdoor play is in the early hours of the day, with the children remaining in air conditioned rooms for the remainder.

<p>If a child requires immediate medical attention "911" is called as well as the parent. A staff member would always accompany the child to the hospital.</p>
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**Nap Time Policy:** Children enrolled in classes that meet for more than 6 hours must have a rest time (according to NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene) each day. Children do not have to sleep but they must rest quietly. Soft music is played at the beginning of nap time to help children relax. Children that do not sleep can look at books on their mats.

Each child must have a small blanket for rest time. Blankets will be sent home each Friday to be laundered and a fresh one should be returned on Monday. Large pillows are not allowed, but a soft, cuddly favorite resting toy is more than welcomed.

### **TOYS AND MONEY:**

Children should not bring toys, candy or money to school. Each teacher will let parents know when children may bring a favorite plaything from home. Books and pictures are always welcome and should be labeled with your child's name. "War" toys (guns, swords, soldiers, etc) are not appropriate for school play.

**Clothing:** Sturdy, comfortable clothes are best for school. Smocks are provided but a certain amount of staining is inevitable while children are busy at play. An extra set of seasonal clothing should be kept in school at all times.

Please try to dress children in clothing that does not have "tricky" fastenings. Also, please LABEL everything.

As we are fortunate to have our own playgrounds, children have the opportunity to play outdoors in the wintertime. Therefore, waterproof mittens and hats are a must, as are snow pants and boots. Our playgrounds stay snowy and wet long after the sidewalks are dry.

**ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT REPORTS:** When a child is involved in any accident, however minor, in addition to a phone call to the parent, a copy of the Accident Report, prepared by the Teacher/ Assistant Teacher, is placed in the child's file. This same procedure will apply when a child is involved in an "incident" -e.g. An altercation with another child, tantrum, etc. If an incident is of a serious nature- e.g. very aggressive behavior, the Director will ask to meet with the parents to determine a plan of action.

### **BATHROOMING:**

We understand that children are at different stages of potty training upon entering 3's and 4's early childhood programs. We know that any child may have an "accident". We at RNH understand that independently using the bathroom is a skill that children must learn and are prepared to support them (and you) on this journey. If your child is not fully toilet trained please call us so that we can devise a plan for you and your child. All of our classes have bathrooms attached, which are available for use throughout the day. In addition, all of our classes have scheduled bathroom times. During outdoor play, an adult always escorts children to the bathroom.

### **Food/ Snack**

**FOOD:** RNH provides all children with all meals (morning snack, lunch). Children attending our ECASP will also receive an afternoon snack.

If your child is bringing their own lunch, please make sure that lunch is in an insulated lunch box to ensure freshness. Small "freezer packs" are a great tool. All parents receive a helpful "lunch tips" flyer at the beginning of the school year.

**Please note: If your child will be bringing their own lunch, please note lunches will not be heated.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The following foods are not allowed to be served at RNH

as they can be choking foods. This direction comes from the New York City Department of Health. They include: hot dogs, whole grapes, any nuts, popcorn, hard candy. **THIS INCLUDES LUNCHESS BROUGHT FROM HOME.**

We do not serve or allow PEANUT BUTTER or any nut product in any classroom. This is due to the recent number of children who are allergic to this food not just by ingestion, but also by touch or inhalation. We know most children enjoy it immensely, but we want to take every precaution to avoid any emergency. We also do not serve popcorn as it can be a choking hazard for young children.

**Riverdale Neighborhood House is not responsible for loss of personal property.**

### RNH Early Childhood Birthday Policy



At RNH, each classroom will have a birthday celebration once per month. (ex. all of the children that have a birthday in October will celebrate on the same day). There will be one date for summer birthdays at the end of the year. Teachers determine this date and will let you know of the date in advance. On the monthly celebration day, teachers will bake cupcakes **IN CLASS** with the children. Family members are invited to come in and sing Happy Birthday with the class if they would like.

On each child's actual birthday, the teachers will give that child something (sticker, certificate, etc) to acknowledge their special day.

In order to keep our birthday celebrations as equal as possible for all of the children, we ask that balloons, decorations, goody bags and favors be reserved for "home" parties. **If you would like to pass out invitations for your home party, please be sure all children in the class are invited. Otherwise, please deliver the invitations outside of school.**

If you would like to donate something to the classroom for your child's birthday, you can donate **NUT FREE** cupcake mix/ frosting. No baked goods are allowed unless there is a label stating the ingredients. You are also welcome to donate a book to the class.

## **PAYMENT POLICIES:**

All billing is handled through our RNH's Fiscal department and they can be reached at (718) 549-8100 ext 118.

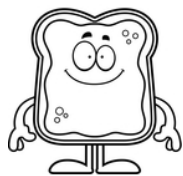
**Please note:** If for any reason, you decrease your child's hours or days at RNH this change will become effective the first of the following month. Mid-month adjustments cannot be made.

Failure to pay in a timely fashion will result in late fees and possible termination of services.

**All accounts must be current before our December break.**

**CLOSINGS:** RNH shall have no liability if the program is closed because of emergency repairs to the building, surrounding streets, labor disputes, heavy snow/rain storms or other special circumstances. In the event of such a closing, parents would be contacted through email or the Remind app which is established at the beginning of the school year. If the New York City public schools are closed due to inclement weather, RNH is automatically closed. However, there are times when the public school system remains open and we do close. No refunds or credits are available due to such unexpected closings.

**Friendly Reminder: re: Staff Training:** Our teachers are required to attend professional development training during the school year. If school must be shortened or canceled for that day, we will give ample time to arrange alternate childcare.



### **Cinnamon Toast Recipe:**

Looking for an easy "comfort" snack your child can make on a cold and rainy day? Try old-fashioned cinnamon toast! Lightly buttered toast, sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon is a great treat anytime of day!

## **PARENT TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

Before school begins each September, an orientation for parents is held. This meeting is mandatory. It's purpose is to acquaint "new" parents with our program

policies and to bring "old" parents up-to-date on any changes. It provides a great opportunity for everyone to meet and get the school year off to a great start!

Each fall, winter and spring parent-teacher meetings are held for all children at this time. The teacher will discuss your child's progress. The spring conference teachers will schedule meetings as needed or requested by the family. A narrative summary will be shared in all 3 conferences.

If you wish to speak with your child's teacher please request a meeting via email and your child's teacher will respond as soon as possible. **Email is our main form of communication** especially since the staff's focus is the students during the school day. Teachers will also use the Remind app as well to send pictures **weekly** and give you a glimpse of what is happening while your child is at school.

If you arrive at your child's class and the teacher is involved with children during an activity, please wait a moment until they are free. Occasional visits to observe the class are always welcome. We only ask that you wait to do this until your child's school adjustment is complete as we do not want your child to be stressed when you depart.

Any questions regarding your child's behavior must be directed to the Head Teacher not the Assistant or the after school staff.

We are fortunate to have the services of a child psychologist on a part-time basis as well as a full-time social worker. Parents may feel free to request a meeting by making arrangements through the early childhood office. If long-term counseling is necessary, parents will be directed to the proper resources. RNH may also enlist their assistance and work through any problems a child encounters in adjusting to school.

Please take the time to read your class' monthly newsletter to keep up with what's happening in your child's class.

Throughout the year, teachers offer several opportunities for parents to participate in a part of the school day. We encourage you to do this as it is very beneficial to your child. Besides, you will have a lot of fun!

## **FAMILY ISSUES**

RNH has a clear policy regarding custody orders of protection which is in compliance with legal regulations. **Your child's information will only be shared with the custodial guardian/parent(s)** or as defined in the legal document provided.

In order for RNH to enforce either of the legal procedures, we must have a copy of the official and current court order on file. We cannot forbid a parent from picking up his or her child without this document.

If you do have a situation like this and have submitted the proper documentation we will do our best to honor it by following legal procedures. We must also have cooperation from the parties involved to ensure the well-being of everyone- child staff and parents- involved.

We ask that you use your best judgment in these situations so as not to put your child or our staff in an awkward position.

### **Early Childhood Discipline Policy**

If on occasion a child becomes easily frustrated and displays inappropriate classroom behavior, the teaching staff will calmly talk to the child to see what is on their mind. They will be encouraged to verbalize their feelings and the teachers will support and model for the child how to handle situations appropriately. RNH does not believe in "time outs" or other punitive, isolating behavior modification strategies.

If, in our professional opinion, we do not see any progress, we will meet with the parent to discuss outside available resources. *We encourage parents to share with us any changes in the child's life, which may affect their behavior and feelings at school.* Together we will set up an appropriate plan of action. This plan may include a time frame to ensure clear communication and expectations between staff and family.



## Respectful Conduct Policy:

Diversity and Anti-Bias is stressed and covered in ALL areas of study. All children and their families are welcome.

**Discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated.**

RNH agrees that mutual respect between and among faculty, administrative staff, co-workers, supervisors, students and parents is integral to the efficient conduct of the school. Behaviors that contribute to a hostile, humiliating or intimidating work environment, including abusive language or behavior are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

**All staff are mandated reporters which means that we are required to report any suspected child abuse to the New York State Child Abuse Maltreatment registrar.**



A soothing activity for a day indoors squirt some shaving cream on a cookie sheet and finger paint together. The feel and movement of the cream is very relaxing and everyone and everything can easily be rinsed off when you're finished!

or



Cook up a batch of biscuits! The adult should preheat the oven to 450°. Then, together you should mix the following ingredients until it feels like soft playdough. 2 cups of flour, 3 teaspoons of baking powder, 1 teaspoon of salt, half a cup of shortening, 1 cup of milk. Add more flour if it's too sticky. Shape into about 16 balls. Line up balls on a cookie sheet. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Enjoy with butter and jam!

## Contact Information

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Visit our website: [www.riverdaleonline.org](http://www.riverdaleonline.org)



**Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form**

**I, the parent of (child's name) \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Riverdale Neighborhood House Parent Handbook for Early Childhood Programs.** While I understand that the Parent Handbook is neither a contract nor a legal document, I recognize that it is my responsibility to read and understand the policies, provisions, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook. In addition, I understand that the contents of the Parent Handbook are subject to change. I acknowledge that the Parent Handbook will be revised in accordance with the rules or regulations of state, federal, and accrediting entities, best practices for child care service providers, or at the discretion of the director. I further acknowledge that it is my responsibility to stay informed of policy and procedure revisions to the Parent Handbook, which will be posted or available in the Early Childhood office. Moreover, I recognize that it is my responsibility to contact the director for any questions I might have about the contents of the Parent Handbook now and in the future.

X \_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent signature** **Date**

**Please return to your child's teacher.**