



**QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS
FOR THREE TO FIVE YEAR OLDS**

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Stepping Stone Preschool
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I. AN INTRODUCTION TO & HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL

Welcome to Stepping Stone Preschool, a licensed, play-based, multi-disciplinary preschool program for children ages 3 to 5. Since our first days in September of 1975, when a group of parents banded together to establish a high-quality non-profit school, we have been proud to offer an enriching program that balances fun and learning to prepare you and your child for the coming years of education. We currently offer programs in the morning, available in 2-, 3- and 5-day options. The entrance to Stepping Stone Preschool is located on the East side of St. Faith's Church at 7284 Cypress Street (across from Choices Food Market).

Our Teachers are familiar with a wide base of knowledge concerning Child Development, including the philosophies of Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and the theories of a variety of Child Psychologists and Educators. Our multi-disciplinary approach allows our Teachers to tailor every class and activity to the needs, interests and abilities of the children in that particular group. They are also continually developing to ensure that we are offering the most current ideologies and activities available for children.

Our Teachers strive to provide a safe, trusting environment in which children can develop on all levels. Children in our program learn to express themselves verbally and learn about their own limits and boundaries, as well as those of others. The program is designed to provide challenges appropriate for each child, recognizing and respecting their unique and individual needs as well as their own pace of progress.

The Curriculum is based on Play, as play is a child's 'work'. Through play, children develop positive self esteem, express feelings and ideas, explore, discover, store impressions, classify and organize their world. Play provides a basis for children to learn about collaboration through interactions with the Teachers and their peers as well as providing limitless opportunities for "teaching in the moment" – a philosophy that allows Teachers to use spontaneous events in the day to highlight or demonstrate educational concepts to an already engaged and interested student.

As a non-profit organization, we are managed by a volunteer Parent Board of Directors and we rely heavily upon the enthusiastic participation of parent volunteers to help in other ways. Please take a moment to scan the list of jobs at the end of this handbook in order to select a position that is best suited to your level of interest and ability to commit. While we are not an official Parent Participation School (there is no mandatory classroom involvement), we do require parents to volunteer in some capacity to help minimize our costs and to create a sense of community and family within our school.

Our School's Philosophy

We believe that:

Children are entitled to discover themselves socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively in a stimulating and positive environment. They are able, responsible beings who benefit themselves and others by developing an interdependent community. Children are inspired to learn when topics are relevant to them and when they are communicated with in a reciprocal manner. Children who learn stages of cooperation and negotiation have the confidence to be critical thinkers and problem solvers; desirable qualities and skills in our democratic society.

Families are entitled to be involved with the school, creating a partnership with Teachers for the benefit of their child, communicating with the Board for the ongoing growth of the school and developing friendships with other families to add to their communities. We strive to uphold the values of cultural diversity by welcoming families to share their customs, stories, language and traditions.

Teachers are entitled to a working environment that recognizes their training and skills and respects their commitment to the well-being of children, families, the school and the community. They are the backbone of our program and deserve to be included in the decision-making processes that involve our school. As role models of continued educational growth and development our Teachers have 4-6 professional development days a year to enhance the program of the school for both the children and the Teachers alike.

Educational Goals

The Goals of Stepping Stone Preschool are:

- To use fun, exciting, developmentally appropriate and personally relevant interests and projects as a foundation for the education of, among other things, Math, Science, Music, Art, Geography, History, Language, Reading, Writing, Culture, Life Skills, Bodily Health, Critical Thinking and Social Well Being;
- To provide a safe and enriching learning environment that enhances a child's desire and ability to successfully integrate into Kindergarten;
- To utilize the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* as described by: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/pdfs/early_learning_framework.pdf
- To positively model and reinforce appropriate, respectful behaviour in order to build our students' social skills such as self-esteem, self-control, empathy, respect, honesty, enjoyment and sense of fairness;

- To support families in our community by maintaining a close relationship that keeps parents informed of their child's progress and increases their overall knowledge of child development and health;
- To effectively liaise and work with community agencies, individuals and organizations that are essential to the well being of each child and family; and,
- To communicate with families whenever extra support needs are suspected and to assist in enhancing the awareness and utilization of community resources available for meeting those needs.

Guidance Policy

Everything children do is logical to them. By understanding child development and discovery, Teachers are able to assist children to communicate their feelings and needs in a cooperative way. By assessing behaviour and determining the root of it, Teachers can discover the child's reasoning and then respond appropriately. The Teachers use the following skills to guide the children:

Encouragement

Children are encouraged in their activities through honest appreciation of them. Positive statements by Teachers set a comfortable tone in the classroom. Children learn cooperation rather than obedience and this requires negotiating and respecting the rights of others.

Negotiation

The Teachers model ways for children to talk through conflicts and find reasonable solutions. Children are encouraged to state their needs and feelings and to make "I" statements. For example, "I want a turn", rather than "He won't share".

Responsibility

Children are responsible for themselves and their actions. They are taught to care for themselves, each other, the Teachers, and the objects in the room. Natural consequences are used as a means of highlighting this expectation.

Communicating

Teachers assist children who are arguing to verbalize their difficulties appropriately. They help to define the problem and may suggest alternatives. When a resolution is reached, the Teachers monitor from a distance, acknowledging and encouraging positive results.

Anticipation and Redirection

Teachers work to anticipate problems and redirect children with potential conflicts to other activities. For long-term results, Teachers give the children the support they need to learn to communicate boundaries and needs effectively.

Break Table

The Teachers will encourage the child to take a break where the child can choose a quiet activity (i.e. puzzle, drawing, playdough, looking at a book) until they are ready to join group play. The child determines when he/she is ready to re-join the group.

Communication with Parents

Several different communication tools are used to ensure that parents are well informed of special events and important dates throughout the school year.

Stepping Stone Preschool Website

This website is regularly updated throughout the year. It includes information about the school as well as all important dates and events.

Parent Bulletin Board

This bulletin board is located on the north wall of the classroom, and will contain information on upcoming events, as well as useful reference information for families.

Sandwich Board

This is located as you walk into the greeting area and will have reminders about the next significant event at school.

Emails

Email updates will be sent throughout the year. Please make sure that the school has an up-to-date email address for your family.

Children's Cubbies

Each child has a cubby with their name on it. Each child's art and creations will be put in their cubby when it is ready to be taken home.

Parent Volunteering

A vital aspect of Stepping Stone Preschool's continued existence is the community's ongoing support. As a non-profit organization, we are **required** to have a volunteer Board of Directors made of members from the school. This means that parents of attending children are required to administer the school through various volunteer **Board positions**. These positions **must** be filled in order for our school to be permitted to remain in operation.

In order to minimize our costs and to allow our Teachers to maximize their time with the children, various other parent volunteer jobs have also been created. It is our policy that every family choose **at least one** position from the list at the end of this handbook. You will also find a form in your Registration Package for filling out to indicate your preference. Fill out your top 4 picks and get ready to be involved as an active agent in your child's academic life! Parents will be advised as to where their help is needed in the first few weeks of school. Many families find that they are glad to have been involved with their child's school as it builds a strong sense of community and friendship among our families and shows our children that we are interested in the important aspects of their life.

Parents are also asked to attend the Annual General Meeting held at the end of the school year. This is when the Board reports to the community and new Board members are nominated and voted into position.

If you have any questions regarding this aspect of our school, please do not hesitate to discuss them with a Board Member or the teachers.

Fundraising

Most of Stepping Stone Preschool's equipment has been acquired through grants from the Provincial Government and through community donations. The remainder of necessary supplies and expenses are covered through fundraising.

We appreciate the support of all parents who participate in our fund-raising events. The items selected for fundraising are often highly prized and much enjoyed toys, games and other items such as a microscope and insect slides. Typical events that have been held in the past include: Purdy's Chocolates, Winter Raffle, and ShopFunds. The Fundraiser Board member will be notifying parents of all events and we thank you in advance for your participation.

If you prefer to donate directly to the school, please contact a Board Member or the Teachers about specific items that could be purchased for direct donation to the school. Although tax receipts cannot be offered (because as a non-profit society we are not registered as a charitable organization), cash donations are also accepted.

II. SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Enrollment

Stepping Stone Preschool is licensed to provide care for up to 20 children per class. We have a strong commitment to quality programming, and it is a priority of our teachers to direct individualized attention to each student.

Registration for the next school year begins in January or February, following our annual open-house. Priority registration for September of the next school year will be given to currently enrolled families and siblings of Stepping Stone students. Following our annual open house, registration will open to the general public. When a class is filled and a place is not immediately available, Stepping Stone will accept names on a waiting list, a non-refundable fee of \$25 will hold a place. The \$25 non-refundable waitlist fee can be transferred to the registration fee if and when there is a spot.

Children who will be 3 years of age by December 31st of the year they are enrolling are eligible for our programs. If your child will not be three until after December 31st, you may request to be placed on the waiting list for January intake. For January enrolment, students must turn 3 by March 31st. Only families who pay their Non-Refundable Waiting-list Fee of \$25 will be given priority for January intake, but this is NOT a guarantee of a space in the program. Families on the January intake waitlist will be notified in order beginning on December 1st. Post-dated cheques and registration packet must be returned by December 15th. ***However, parents who wish to secure a spot for January intake must pay tuition for September through January, even though their child will not begin attending classes until January.***

Upon enrollment, children should be able to communicate their need to use the toilet. Teachers will remind children throughout the day and can change a child with an occasional accident. However, children who regularly need diaper changes during class cannot be accommodated.

Although we will accept registrations throughout the year, these are extremely limited and, outside of our regular intake months (September and January), are subject to a strict schedule. No more than 1 child shall be allowed into the program at a time and the entrance will be staggered at the teachers' discretion. This schedule is designed to limit the amount of upheaval experienced by the currently enrolled children to their regular routine and to facilitate adequate integration time for the new students.

Due to the fact that our 2-day and 3-day programs are designed for our youngest children, rapid growth of that class is undesirable. In the event that there is space available in January, our 2-day class would not experience growth of more than 50%. Teachers, current families and the Board will discuss growth of more than 5 children and any classroom changes that may result.

Fees and Subsidy Information

In order to reserve a space at Stepping Stone Preschool for the upcoming school year, your Registration Application needs to be completed and returned with a **non-refundable** registration fee. The registration fee is calculated as **\$100 plus one month's (June) tuition**, depending on the class the child is enrolled in. If a place is not immediately available, and Stepping Stone is accepting names on a waiting list, a non-refundable fee of \$25 will hold a place. The \$25 non-refundable waitlist fee can be transferred to the registration fee if and when there is a spot.

Fees for the remaining tuition are **due in May** prior to starting school in September, and may be paid in one of three ways: 1) one payment for the full year; 2) two biannual payments for September and January; or 3) monthly post-dated cheques. The Registrar manages the collection of tuition fees. Cash payments are accepted, but both a family member and a teacher or Registrar must both be present to count the cash together and sign paperwork to indicate the correct amount has been paid. If a tuition payment is past due and not received by the 15th of the month, a written notice will be issued. If neither payment is received by the 30th of the same month, nor alternate arrangements made with the school, the child may be considered to be withdrawn from the school program and the space may be offered to another child from the wait list.

If tuition cheques are returned because of insufficient funds, the family must provide alternate payment immediately, and cover the bank charges that we incur due to the NSF cheque.

The BC Provincial government does provide Child Care Subsidies for families with demonstrable financial needs. If you are interested in obtaining more information concerning application for provincial subsidies, please contact the Treasurer or your local Ministry Office.

Home and/or School Visits

Before classes begin in September, the Teachers will call all newly registered families to schedule a short home or school visit. This visit will take place in your home or school and allows the child to meet their new Teachers, making the first meeting between Teachers and child less overwhelming. During this visit, the child may share a favourite toy or book with the Teachers and parents will have an opportunity to discuss any special concerns they may have.

At the end of the visit, we encourage families to take a photo of their child with the teachers as a memento and a reminder of their upcoming entry to school. We strongly encourage you to hang the photo in a conspicuous place, such as the fridge door, at the child's eye level. This will stimulate discussions about school and allow the child to

become familiar and comfortable with the sight of them enjoying time with their Teachers.

Gradual Entry

Gradual entry is a process where children new to the preschool are slowly eased into the program through a series of steps to ensure that the transition is a smooth and positive one both for the new child and the children who are already at the preschool. It allows for new children to see the day in parts rather than the whole so it is not too overwhelming for them. All new children attending Stepping Stone Preschool will attend preschool for a reduced period of time to facilitate their gradual entry and will therefore not attend class for a full day on their first day of preschool. In our experience we have found that children who are eased gradually into the program are more successful than children who are rushed.

The steps taken after the first day of class are **guidelines and will be tailored to the individual needs of the child based** on the teachers' observations of how the child has adjusted each day. Communication between the teachers and the parent will be very important during this process and the Teachers will make every effort to facilitate these discussions.

The following is the 5 step guideline of what gradual entry could look like. As each child will adjust differently, some steps can be combined, extended or followed as is. The decision about the rate at which the child progresses through the 5 steps will be made by the Teachers based on their observations and will be communicated with the parent.

5 Step Guideline:

- **Day 1:** (9:00 - 9:50)
 - Child and parent stays for just under an hour for inside free play and leaves together just before transition to clean up happens.
- **Day 2:** (9:00 - 10:15)
 - Child's day is extended until after circle time with the parent leaving for the last 30 to 45 minutes.
- **Day 3:** (9:00 - 10:30)
 - Parent leaves after 15 minutes with child's day extended to staying until after snack.
- **Day 4:** (9:00 - 11:10)
 - Parent leaves after 5 minutes with the child's day extended to free play time. Parent returns just before transition to clean up.
- **Day 5:** (9:00 – 12:00)
 - Child stays for entire day. Parent arrives to pick up at good bye circle.

Another critical part of the gradual entry process is that good byes are said before the parent leaves as the child is in the process of building trust that the parent will return. For that reason, prompt return at the agreed pick up time is also very important.

At times, there will be flexibility in the agreed pick up time. For example, if the teachers are feeling that the child is doing really well and will benefit from staying longer than the agreed pick up time, the teachers will call the parent and let the parent know. Vice versa, if the teachers are feeling an earlier pick up time will be more beneficial for the child in order to have the child's day end positively, the teachers will also give the parent a call.

Upon returning to pick up the child during gradual entry, it will also be important for the parent to support the teachers in leaving with the child even if the child does not want to in order for the child to end their day on a positive note and look forward to coming back next time.

Gradual Entry for Returning Students

After being away for a lengthy period of time (i.e. summer holidays), it is typical for children to feel apprehensive about coming back to school. As each child may adjust differently, a parent may be required to stay a little bit longer on the first day back from the break to help ease their child back and/or be available to pick up their child earlier if needed. Frequent communication between the Teachers and the child's parents during the first week will be important to monitor how the child has adjusted back into the program and if any further steps (i.e. shorter days) are required.

Inclusion

Sometimes families approach our school to register their child with extra support needs. These extra support needs may be language barriers such as ESL, social or emotional challenges, or physical barriers caused by mobility issues or other health concerns.

Stepping Stone Preschool is committed to providing all of our students with the best possible environment at all times, and makes environmental adaptations as needed for the group, or for specific students. We are also committed to meaningful collaboration with families. We liaise with community programs such as PACE and Supported Child Care, or community health nurses to bring in specialized assessment officers who observe students in the preschool environment, and make recommendations to the school to better support the group or specific children. To this end, our teachers observe and document any extra support needs and bring them to the community officers, and before the Board of Directors if necessary. We aim to make every effort to successfully support the child within the scope of our program and the current classroom situation. If

the teachers note concerns regarding a specific student, the general process for accessing support for the student is as follows:

1. Teachers observe and document student behaviours (social, communication, cognitive, and/or physical)
2. Teachers make adaptations to the environment and note any differences in student behaviour (social, communication, cognitive, and/or physical)
3. If changes in behaviour (social, communication, cognitive, and/or physical) do not occur, teachers share concerns with the family and get further information that may help support the child and get consent to liaise with community program(s) if needed.
4. With consent, teachers liaise with community program(s), implement recommendations, and note changes in behaviour (social, communication, cognitive, and/or physical).
5. Teachers request support from the Board of Directors to inform the Board of the student behaviours and progress to date. A member of the Board may observe the student, meet with the teachers and family (if possible) to discuss further community supports to access.
6. Teachers, family, a board member, and any community support members previously involved with the child meet together to further discuss an action plan to support the student.
7. Teachers implement the support plan and discuss progress with the board.
8. The board evaluates the progress made, and whether or not the preschool can provide the supports necessary for the child. The family may be required to withdraw their child from the program.

Orientation

Often families wish to preview the school prior to enrollment. In addition to our annual Open House, we offer classroom orientations. This orientation must be booked in advance, and will occur after class time, to cause the least amount of disruption to the program.

Withdrawal

At Stepping Stone Preschool, we are committed to providing a caring and supportive environment for all children and families. However, there are certain situations that may require a child be withdrawn from our program. They are:

Family Decision

Should you need to withdraw your child from the program, a 30-day written notice is required. *A full month's tuition must be paid after the withdrawal notice has been given, whether or not the student remains at the school.* This policy applies even if the child withdraws before school begins (i.e. withdrawal notice given during the month of August means that September tuition must still be paid, and withdrawal given in September, before school begins means that both September and October tuition must still be paid). Refunds are specific only to the child registered in a specific class, and cannot be applied towards the tuition of siblings in other classes.

A reminder that June tuition fees are not refundable as they make up part of the registration fee.

Unpaid Fees

Unpaid fees in arrears of more than one month put the student's enrolment at risk of termination. Please communicate with the Registrar immediately if you find yourself in this situation. In some cases, special arrangements can be made.

Violence or Harassment

If any child or family member's behaviour disrupts or potentially threatens the well-being or safety of a child or Teacher, the Teachers will immediately approach the appropriate Family member. The school and family will then develop a plan in an attempt to alter these behaviours.

If the behaviour continues, or in the event that the family is not willing to work as partners with the school to resolve the problems, the family will be asked to withdraw their child from the program, immediately.

Consistent Late Pickup

If we are unable to satisfactorily resolve consistently late pick up of a child, the school may ask the family to withdraw.

Extra Support Needs Beyond the Scope of our Program

Occasionally, a child may have Extra Support Needs beyond the abilities of what our Teachers can manage within the context of our program. The school will access every available professional resource before a decision to terminate enrollment will be made. In those cases where we cannot accommodate the needs of a family, every effort will be made to identify more suitable programs and resources within the greater community for the family and to establish connections with those programs on the family's behalf.

Criminal Activity

Families who engage in any criminal activity in or on school property will be withdrawn.

Failure to Meet Enrolment Requirements

Children who are unable to communicate their toileting needs or who are not of age as required by licensing may be asked to withdraw from the program.

Extenuating Circumstances

The Board reserves the right to review requests for withdrawal and to determine accompanying reimbursement when extenuating circumstances such as physical injury or a medical condition would prevent a child from actively and fully participating in the program. The Board may request supporting documentation supporting the extenuating circumstance.

III. OUR DAILY OPERATIONS

Classroom Environment

Our program integrates many aspects of learning including: fine/gross motor play, self-directed discovery, socialization, experiential and intellectual learning. We provide access to many of these activities through the classroom environment.

“The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences.” Loris Malaguzzi

PLAY IS THE CHILD’S WORK

At Stepping Stone Preschool, we prepare the classroom as an environment that allows the child to be actively engaged in the process of learning. Our values and curriculum are reflected throughout the classroom in each of the areas, as the teachers can see the children observe, become curious, and show interest in the environment around them, therefore allowing the teachers to further develop the curriculum according to the interests of the children. Our “hands on” learning centres include:

Playground – This area provide opportunities for children to develop their large muscle skills and explore nature in an outdoor setting. We believe outdoor activities are part of a healthy balanced life.

Sensory Play – Examples of sensory play areas include the sand and the water table, playdough and cornstarch. Sensory activities provide opportunities for children to transform open ended materials in many different ways. This is important because many children explore their world and acquire information in a kinaesthetic way.

Dramatic Play Corner – This is an area designed to inspire children’s imaginations using diverse props and real life materials. The dramatic play corner helps children to use role-play as a means to express their stories and feelings from both their imaginative world and daily living.

Construction Area – This is an open space for individuals and groups of children to build structures using blocks, natural materials, and manipulative toys. We believe that with construction play, children can further develop their cognitive thinking through activities such as: balancing blocks, creating homes for animals, and negotiating/working with others.

Writing Centre – This is a space dedicated for children to practice their fine motor skills by using a variety of mediums such as: felt markers, pencils, pencils crayons, chalk, stencils, tracers, and scissors. We believe children benefit from a variety of tools to motivate and enhance the foundations of the writing process.

Creation Station – Materials and tools are provided for children to construct 3D creations using “beautiful junk” items. We believe this area inspires children to be creative and resourceful using everyday household objects.

Puzzle Table – This area provides a variety of games and puzzles incorporating math, science, and life skills. We believe that with these types of games, children can further develop logical thinking such as: classification and 1:1 correspondence.

Quiet Corner – A tent with soft pillows and mats are set up as a cozy and calm place for children to relax and read. We believe children need an emotional space to go during times when they may need to step away from the group.

Light Table – This is an area provided for children to manipulate light by arranging transparent objects. We believe this is a unique tool for children to explore the possibilities of light.

Classroom Activities

2/3/5 Day am Classes	Routines
9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	Outdoor Play
10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Wash hands & Snack
10:30 a.m. – 11:40 a.m.	Play
11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Clean up & Circle Time
12:00 p.m.	Home

The focus of our activities is to offer learning opportunities that allow children to explore and discover at their own developmental rate. Teachers ask pertinent questions which guide learning rather than giving answers for children to memorize. Music, art, science, math and language are active parts of learning that are integrated with each other to make them more accessible to young minds. For example, in an art activity we may cover the concepts of lines, colour mixing, shapes, textures, and patterns, many of which are considered Mathematical concepts.

We also engage the children with group activities centred on children’s questions that may spring from project literature, current events, family experiences, etc. Children’s questions can come from infinite sources and our Teachers will facilitate their discovery of answers.

Whether indoors or out, gross motor development is an important part of every day; through directed games and activities using our playground and indoor play equipment. Our last day of school includes a family picnic and 'sport day' that emphasises team spirit and self-esteem.

Snack time is an activity that serves many purposes. Older children are exposed to 'open' snack concepts that allow them some freedom and responsibility in meeting their own food needs. All the children enjoy the social aspect of eating with friends and sharing their news of the day, while younger children may be experiencing eating on their own for perhaps the first time.

Classroom Hours

Stepping Stone Preschool offers three different programs and children between the ages of three and five may attend, provided that they meet our registration criteria (see Enrolment Policies). Stepping Stone Preschool offers a flexible programming structure designed to meet the needs of many families. Below is a listing of our class times.

5-Day Class	Monday to Friday	9:00a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
2-Day Class	Monday and Tuesday	9:00a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
3-Day Class	Wednesday to Friday	9:00a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

- 5-day morning class: This class will run Monday through Friday mornings.
- 2-day morning class: The students in the 2-day class will participate with the 5-day class on Monday and Tuesday mornings.
- 3-day morning class: The students in the 3-day class will participate with the 5-day class on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings.

Days of Operation

In order to accommodate families with older children, Stepping Stone Preschool attempts to stay as close as possible to the dates set by the Vancouver School Board. Therefore:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • First day of classes | Tuesday, September 03, 2019 |
| • Last day before Winter Break | Friday, December 20, 2019 |
| • First day back from Winter Break | Monday, January 06, 2020 |
| • Last day before Spring Break | Friday, March 13, 2020 |

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- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • First day back from Spring Break | Monday, March 23, 2020 |
| • Last day of School | TBD |

Statutory Holidays

Stepping Stone Preschool observes and is closed for the following Statutory Holidays:

- Thanksgiving Break
- Remembrance Day
- Family Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Victoria Day

These will be posted on our website.

In Class Observations

Parents are welcome to observe how their child is doing in school, but they are encouraged to do so by sharing in a special activity with all the children. We do ask that you pre-arrange your visit with the Teachers in order to minimize class disruption. Some previous activities include: making traditional holiday cookies, learning Chinese ink brush characters, reading stories in other languages, Ukrainian Easter Egg dying and having a pet bunny visit.

All regular visitors, including college students or volunteers, must have clear Criminal Records Checks and are under the guidance of the Teachers and the Board.

Drop-Off Policy

Teachers welcome the students on the outdoor playground at 9:00 a.m. Prior to 9:00 a.m., parents must remain with their child until the arrival of a teacher. Parents are required to sign-in their child on the sheet provided at the playground gate. Children are encouraged to hang up their own backpack on the hooks provided.

****Toileting – Please ask your child if he or she needs to use the washroom before drop off. Take your child if needed as this assists the Teachers immensely. ****

Pick-up Policy

Pick-up will take place inside the classroom. Please be sure to make eye contact, and be in the line of vision of the Teacher that is releasing the children. You must SIGN OUT your child from the sign in/out book at the sign-out table. If you intend to take your child home early, you must first notify the teachers and sign out your child, and let the teachers call the child and bring them to you.

Please be on time for pick-up. If a parent is more than five minutes late, they will receive a verbal 'reminder' from the Teachers. The second offence will result in a written warning from the Registrar. For each subsequent late pick-up, there will be a **\$25.00 fine** to cover the Teachers' extra supervision time. Consistent lateness will be grounds for the school to ask the family to leave the program.

If after 10 minutes, no one has arrived to pick up your child, the Teachers will attempt to contact, in order, the persons listed on the Community Care Facilities Licensing Registration Form (see your Registration Package). If, by 12:30 pm., the Teachers have been unable to contact an authorized individual to pick up your child, emergency social services will be contacted.

Everyone who picks up a child from school must be on the Community Care Facilities Licensing Registration Form. Parents must provide the Teachers with written notice at drop-off time if someone unknown to the Teachers will be picking up their child. The new person will be required to show photo identification to the Teachers before the child can be released. If someone not listed on your registration forms, but known to the Teachers, will be picking up your child, the Teachers will also have to be informed by the parents, preferably in writing, but at least verbally. Children **cannot** be released to intoxicated adults, regardless of parental authorization. In this situation, the Teachers will follow the same procedures for contacting an alternative authorized individual set out above, including contacting emergency social services if necessary.

In an emergency, please call the school during session and leave a message informing the Teachers who will be picking up your child. This person must follow the above procedures for our Teachers to be able to release your child to them.

If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up your child, the child cannot be allowed to leave **even if they know the person or believe their family has authorized the pick up**. Teachers will attempt to contact the family to obtain authorization but they cannot and will not release the child without appropriate consent. In cases where the Teachers believe that the child, staff, or anyone else at the facility is in danger, the police will be called immediately.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE NOTIFIED YOUR TEACHERS IF YOU HAVE MADE ALTERNATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PICK UP OF YOUR CHILD.

Outdoor Policy

Outdoor play is an integral part of Stepping Stone Preschool's program. *The B.C. Early Learning Framework* describes the key areas of learning for children from birth to age five. Varied physical activity is included within the *B.C. Early Learning Framework*, and Stepping Stone Preschool supports the acquisition of physical skills by providing daily outdoor play. In addition, outdoor play allows children to connect with nature and learn through play in varied environments with natural materials. Outdoor play continues to be a daily part of elementary school, and outdoor play at Stepping Stone Preschool prepares children for recess and lunch time in their Kindergarten year and beyond.

We would like to remind families that **children will be participating in outdoor play every day**. Please continue to bring the appropriate outdoor clothing for your child, according to the season such as: waterproof pants, boots, warm waterproof jacket, hat, and waterproof gloves or mittens. In the event of very heavy rain, or very cold weather, the teachers may reduce the time spent outside, or make the decision to play inside. If you have any specific questions or concerns regarding outdoor play, please speak with the teachers directly, or you may also speak with the Board Chair/Co-Chairs.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed on school property by any member of our School: Teachers, Board members, nannies or family members. Not only is it a serious health risk to us all and a fire hazard, but the laws governing Child Care Facilities also prohibit it.

Nutrition & Snack Policy

At Stepping Stone Preschool, we value both the social experiences enjoyed by the children during snack time and the nutritional value of maintaining adequate energy stores during activity. In light of substantial research into the benefits of proper nutrition and the negative impacts that certain foods have on memory, learning and attention span, we have adopted a healthy policy toward acceptable snacks.

Therefore, all children are required to bring a small snack, in their own lunch pack, every day. Please label your lunch bags and juice containers. Appropriate snacks can be small portions of fruit, vegetables, crackers and a non-carbonated drink. In addition, as part of our criteria to teach environmental awareness, we do encourage the use of recyclable containers such as no-spill cups and reusable snack containers over the use of juice boxes, etc.

Please follow the following guidelines when preparing snack for your child:

1. We have a **NO NUT** policy.
2. Teachers should be notified of all food allergies.
3. Children may not share their snacks with others, as some children may have allergies or food restrictions.

4. The following are not acceptable snacks: cookies, candy, any kind of chocolate, chips, pop and/or any nut products.

When any inappropriate snacks are brought to school, the teachers will ask the child to enjoy the particular snack after preschool.

Birthday Snacks

You are welcome to bring a small, individually cut/prepared treat to class for your child's birthday. Also, if you wish to hand out party invitations at school please slip them quietly into the children's mailboxes, rather than risking a child's hurt feelings if not invited.

Toileting & Cleanliness

Upon enrollment, children should be able to communicate their need to use the toilet. The school promotes self-directed toileting skills and recommends parents work with their child to help them communicate these needs to the Teachers. Teachers are there to support children with the training process and will remind children throughout the day. Although the Teachers can change a child with an occasional accident, children who regularly need diaper changes during class cannot be accommodated.

Along with assisting the child with their toileting when needed, our Teachers will provide your child with clear instructions on proper bathroom hygiene, hand washing techniques, dressing and undressing advice, and a patient, supportive and understanding attitude toward them during this learning process.

Special Events & Field Trips

Throughout the year, our school participates in several Special Events. Notices and details for all events are provided on our website and on our bulletin board so be sure to check them regularly.

Parent Evening

This is a great opportunity to meet other families, and find out more about what your child is doing and learning at school.

Halloween Ball

We participate in the Halloween festivities through such activities as putting on a fun dress-up party with games and prizes and creating fun-filled activity centres.

Winter Holiday Potluck

In the last week of classes before winter break, all of our families will gather for a Winter Potluck Dinner at the school. The children make gifts for their families and share their holiday plans with one another. Traditionally, there is entertainment too! It's a wonderful chance to meet and chat with the other families at your school and to join in some holiday cheer. Our winter raffle concludes the evening.

Valentine's Day Party

Our classes will share in a special Valentine's Day circle. Please ensure that your child brings a Valentine card for all the children to avoid any hurt feelings.

Mother's & Father's Day Celebrations

We offer special events to make these days special. A significant female and male figure in your child's life is invited to attend the school on these days.

Sports Day

The last day of school wouldn't be the same without a picnic at Maple Grove Park. The children and parents have a great time while saying goodbye to our teachers and classmates.

Field Trips

We take 2- 3 field trips throughout the school year, and classes are cancelled the day of field trips due to travelling time and logistics of the event. Transportation to and from the field trip must be arranged by the family and parental attendance is optional. We generally arrange field trips on Mondays or Fridays.

Clothing & Personal Items

While at school, the children will be busy exploring, experimenting, painting, etc. They will go outside daily, even on rainy and wet days. Please send them in appropriate clothes, for indoor and outdoor play. We ask that you provide a complete change of clothing in a large Ziploc bag with the child's first and last name written on it in large letters. Give this to the Teachers during the first week of school. These will be stored in the bathroom in case a change of clothes is needed.

Please **label** all of your child's belongings in order to avoid lost items and to allow the Teachers to know which items belong to which child. The Lost and Found box is located near the school entrance. All unclaimed items will be donated to thrift stores in June, after classes have finished.

Personal Toys and other items from home are discouraged at our school except during our special 'Show and Tell' week, typically the first week of every month. This is to avoid conflicts that can arise from children who do not wish to share a personal item or from damage that can accidentally occur when these items do get shared. We ask for your assistance in upholding this rule at our school. Thank you.

Active Play Policy

Stepping Stone Preschool adheres to the B.C. Licensing Regulated Active Play Policy.

Active play helps to promote healthy growth and development while building strong bones and muscles. It supports body control, movement, improves balance, coordination and assists with the development of gross motor skills which in turn assists children's fine motor skills. Children's confidence grows, as does their concentration and active play provides opportunities to develop social skills, flexibility, endurance while at the same time helping to conquer fears and builds resilience in the face of future challenges. It decreases stress and depression, helps to develop good sleeping habits and helps children have longer attention spans therefore able to concentrate in class better now and in the future.

Children attending Stepping Stone Preschool shall play outdoors daily for 50 minutes when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk. It is our expectation that children will start their morning at Stepping Stone Preschool outside in our playground at the front of the building. If you feel your child is too sick to be outside then your child is too sick to be at Preschool. We request that you keep him/her at home until they are well enough to go outside.

Activities shall include structured play (games led by a teacher) for example "What time is it Wolf?", football, bowling, basket ball, skipping, chase, active exercises and throwing and catching balls. The children will also enjoy free play (not led by an adult) such as bubble blowing, (chasing and popping them), going up the stairs and down the slide, in the sand box, at the water table, bouncing on space hoppers, using hoops, skipping ropes, imaginary and role play in the wooden houses (as well as in the whole playground), using the chalk board and walking/jumping over the wooden tree stumps.

Children shall be dressed appropriately for the weather, including wearing appropriate seasonal clothing and footwear, so they can participate fully, move freely and play safely.

Children should wear clothing appropriate for the current weather:

Snow: warm coat, snow boots, hats and mittens

Rain: raincoat and waterproof boots

Sun: (Spring and summer) light jacket/light (long-sleeved) shirt, runners, sun hat and sunscreen (applied by a parent or guardian before entering the playground)

Different temperatures during the day: layers of clothing.

Footwear should provide support for running and climbing. Examples of appropriate footwear include runners, gym shoes and other shoes with rubber soles that enclose the feet and will not come off easily.

Examples of inappropriate clothing and footwear include:

1. Footwear that can come off easily while running or does not provide support for climbing for example flip flops and clogs
2. Clothing that can catch on playground equipment for example clothes with drawstrings or loops
3. Clothing that does not protect children from the current weather conditions.

Water availability: children's snack bags are hung up on pegs in the playground so at any time during outdoor play they are free to access their personal water bottles.

Large sun umbrellas will be positioned in the playground during the sunny months for shade and shelter. The 2 wooden houses in the playground provide shelter too.

Physical Literacy inside the classroom:

During their time in the classroom children will enjoy and benefit from active play activities and scheduled short bursts of activity; examples include:

1. Music, movement, full body stretching and exercises, yoga and dancing at group time (adult led) and during free play (not adult led)
2. Through child led free play...for example, walking freely around the class room, picking up toys, lifting, pushing and pulling toys from one place to another, building tall structures from blocks, playing in the water table, the sand box, painting/chalking/drawing at the easel and playing in the dramatic play area. The children also develop fundamental movement skills by walking around the classroom with the stroller and shopping cart, playing hop scotch with number mats, bean bag toss games, putting on puppet shows, bowling with wooden pins, freely choosing activities from a shelf then taking them to a table or carpet and returning them to the shelf, participating in cooking activities and science experiments.

Screen Time Policy

We do not provide screen time (TV, iPads, tablets, etc..) for students.

IV. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Illness, Immunization & Public Health

Children must be well enough to attend school. Please keep your child home from school if your child has a fever, is listless or has a headache. Children who are sick with diarrhea or vomiting should stay at home until 2 days after they are symptom free. (Even when diarrhea and vomiting have stopped, the virus can still be in the bowel movements.) If a child becomes ill at school, the Teachers will phone the family or emergency contact to take the child back home from school. The child can return when recovery is complete. Please advise us by phone if your child is staying home due to illness.

Children who are seriously ill with a communicable disease may not attend school. If your child shows symptoms as described in “Sneezes and Diseases” Public Health Handbook, staff will ask you to bring the child home. A doctor’s note may be required for returning to school following any serious communicable illnesses. Symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, pink eye, a fever over 38° Celsius, or undiagnosed infections or rashes are sufficient cause for a child to be sent home.

Please ensure that your immunization records are up to date. The Vancouver Coastal Health’s list of recommended immunizations is included in your registration package, as well as a form for you to complete which is to be kept on file at the school. The board will review each case where a child has not received the recommended vaccinations, and make decisions regarding attendance and/or registration on a case-by-case basis.

The Public Health Nurse visits us and can check records and observe the children. She can also make referrals to other health professionals for initial assessments such as speech therapy.

Administering Medication

The Teachers are not trained medical personnel and as such would prefer to avoid administering medication. However, in some cases, it is necessary and there are guidelines set by Child Care Licensing that regulate the conditions and procedures we must follow.

If your child requires that medication be administered at school, please provide a Medication Consent form signed by both yourself and your doctor. This form must CLEARLY outline the amount and timing of the medication to be given. Also, all medication must be in its original containers. Medication is stored in a locked cabinet or in the fridge, if necessary.

Major medical treatments cannot be accommodated at our facility. Please speak with a Board Member and/or the Teachers if you are unsure whether your child's needs can be met.

Medical Emergency Policy

If your child becomes ill or is injured while at school, the Teachers will quickly assess the situation to determine what action/attention is required and then will act accordingly.

First Aid Situations

In an instance where a child is not seriously injured and First Aid is sufficient, all Teachers are First Aid Certified and will provide such treatment as is necessary. They will comfort and reassure your child while acknowledging their feelings as well as recognizing the needs and concerns of the rest of the class. An incident report is filed and the family is notified upon pick up.

Medical Attention Required

One Teacher will remain with the child while the other attempts to contact either the family or the emergency contacts provided. If none can be reached, the family physician will be contacted. If the family physician cannot be reached, the Teachers will proceed as though it were an emergency situation. (See next).

As in the first aid situation, the Teachers will comfort and reassure your child while acknowledging their feelings as well as recognizing the needs and concerns of the rest of the class. An incident report is filed.

Emergency Medical Situation

One Teacher will remain with the child while the other calls 911 for an ambulance and attempts to contact either the family or the emergency contacts provided. When the ambulance arrives, one Teacher will accompany the child to the hospital, to provide comfort and reassurance to your child. The Teacher will bring your child's medical information as provided by you in your Registration Package along with your Medical Consent forms and remain with your child until either a family member or an emergency contact arrives to relieve them.

The other Teacher(s) will continue to attempt to contact the family of the injured child as well as calling the Board to request classroom assistance. The Teacher(s) will remain with the rest of the children, calming and reassuring the children as they return to regular class activity. Teachers will work with the children to discuss and debrief the event as necessary.

Natural Disaster Emergency Procedures

Stepping Stone School has developed an Earthquake/Disaster Preparedness Plan as required by the Ministry in 1991. This involves a plan of action (classroom drill and evacuation procedures), having an Emergency Preparedness Kit and ensuring that the classroom is safe in the event of a disaster. The school is equipped with 72 hours worth of emergency supplies, including a tent for shelter. The drill is taught to the children as a game so as to not alarm them. Please feel free to speak with the Teachers if you would like more information about our classroom drills.

In the event of evacuation of the school, a notice of intent will direct you to our meeting place, which will likely be on the church property, or at McKechnie Elementary field. Teachers will remain with the children until they are picked up by family or emergency contacts. The school is equipped with a large tent and earthquake supplies that will be utilized on or near the church property.

The Teachers have attended Earthquake Preparedness courses and are available if you have any questions about our disaster policy. Also, please ensure that you have completed your Earthquake Form and sent your Emergency Kit to the school.

Custody & Access Policy

If parents live separately, Stepping Stone Preschool expects that the information provided by the enrolling parent is accurate. If there is a court order regarding child custody, the Teachers will verify and file the statement and, by law, must comply. If no court order or custody agreement is filed with the Teachers, staff cannot deny access to the non-enrolling parent. Legally restrained parents are treated the same as unauthorized persons as outlined in the Pick up and Drop off section of this manual.

If custody has not been legally determined and conflict between family members is evident, the school may require that a signed agreement be provided confirming the details concerning authorization for pick up and access to the child's information. This agreement may be a requirement for conditional enrollment in the program, with conditions that state that breach of the agreement may result in withdrawal of the student.

If a Ministry Officer intends to apprehend a child at our School, our Teachers will verify with a Ministry Supervisor that the Officer is indeed authorized to apprehend the child. If all is in order, our Teachers are legally bound to comply.

Suspected Child Abuse Policy

The Child, Family and Community Service Act state that all children in the Province of B.C. "are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect and harm or threat of harm." The

Act also states that any “person who had reason to believe that a child needs protection must promptly report the matter” to the appropriate Ministry. We adhere to this law.

Preschool Door Policy

The Preschool Doors are locked when the school is not in session.

Snow-Day Closure Policy

In the event of heavy snow in Vancouver, Stepping Stone Preschool will notify families about school closure by putting a notice on the main page of the Stepping Stone Preschool website by 8am on the morning of the snow day. **A notice will only be placed on the website in the event that school is closed for the day.**

V. PARENT VOLUNTEER AND BOARD POSITIONS

As a non-profit organization, we are managed by an elected Parent Board of Directors and we rely heavily upon the enthusiastic participation of parent volunteers. While we are not an official Parent Participation School (there is no mandatory classroom involvement), we do require parents to volunteer as either a Parent Volunteer, or as a Board Member. This parental involvement helps us to create a sense of community and family within our school, while keeping our costs down.

Parent Volunteer Positions

Listed below are the Parent Volunteer Positions that help to make our school run more efficiently. Each family is required to fill one position. In order to do that, please identify 4 jobs that interest you from the list below. Please indicate your choices numerically, (e.g. #1 Scholastic Fundraiser, #2 Playground Maintenance etc.), in case the first position you are interested in is already filled.

- Scholastic Fundraiser** – Runs the Scholastic book fundraising program (monthly orders).
- Purdy's Fundraiser** – Runs the Purdy's Chocolates fundraiser (once or twice a year).
- Shopfunds Fundraiser** – Runs the Shopfunds (gift card purchasing) fundraiser (once or twice a year).
- Assistant Raffle Coordinator** – Assists Fundraiser/Winter Raffle Coordinator with annual winter raffle (planning is done in the fall for an early December event).
- Special Events Assistant** – Assists Board and teachers with school special events (Fall Parent Social, Winter Potluck, Annual General Meeting, Year-End Picnic).
- Website Manager** – Maintains preschool website.
- Procurement Parent** – Purchases, and is reimbursed for, any items needed for preschool earthquake kit (once per year in September) and also any miscellaneous small items for classroom throughout the year.
- Playground Maintenance** – Weekly rotation. Coordinate with teachers to ensure playground equipment and grounds are maintained (need 2 or more).

- ❑ **Handyman/Equipment Maintenance** - Coordinate with teachers to ensure school equipment and toys are maintained. Sometimes an immediate response will be required to resolve safety issues.
- ❑ **Carpet Cleaning** – Renting a carpet cleaner and cleaning all area rugs (twice a year). If anyone has their own carpet cleaner taking this position would be greatly appreciated.

Brief Summary of Board Positions

As you may already know, a Parent Board of Directors runs our school. These people make up the Executive of the school and make the ultimate decisions on how the school should be run. A Board job is a volunteer position, but it is important as, under legal guidelines, our non-profit school requires an Executive Board in order to operate. Listed below are the volunteer Board positions at Stepping Stone. Please select ONE position that would interest you. This does not mean that you are committing to this job, but you may be contacted if a position on the Board becomes available.

- ❑ **Co-Chairperson (Administration)** – Oversees administration and operation of school. Develops agenda for monthly Board meetings and, with Co-Chair (Human Resources), facilitates communication with Board members between meetings. Liaises with St. Faith's Church, preschool licensing officer, and community groups and assists with development of school policies.
- ❑ **Co-Chairperson (Human Resources)** – Liaison between teachers and Board regarding day-to-day issues, Board decisions and other information. Responsible for annual renewal of teacher contracts and/or leading hiring committee. Assists with development of school policies and communication of policies to families.
- ❑ **Treasurer** - Deals with all the financial workings of the school, pays staff, pays bills and creates monthly and yearly budget sheets for Board meetings using provided computer software. Handles major purchases of equipment and supplies for school. With Co-Treasurer, handles preschool government grant applications and purchases.
- ❑ **Co-Treasurer & Grants Officer** - Assists with all financial workings of the school; pays staff. Handles preschool government grant applications and purchases.
- ❑ **Secretary** – Schedules and attends monthly Board meetings, takes minutes of all meetings and distributes them to Board members. Maintains meeting records and assists with other Board paperwork as needed.
- ❑ **Enrollment Officer** - Handles all school enrollment inquiries and registration process. Maintains spreadsheet of registered students and waitlist. Liaises with

teachers and facilitates school visits from inquiring families. Ensures registration packages are completed in full and forwards cheques to Treasurer for deposit.

- **Advertising Officer** - Creates flyers, brochures and posters for school events and for advertisement of school programs in the community. Maintains school website and researches advertising opportunities. Creates and maintains advertising on sites such as Yelp, Google and Westcoast Families.

- **Fundraiser/Winter Raffle Coordinator** - Organizes annual Winter Raffle: helps Board and school families identify raffle donors, obtains raffle license and tickets, and distributes raffle tickets. Planning takes place in the fall and the raffle is held in early December. Oversees other fundraising activities (e.g. Scholastic, Purdy's) run by parent volunteers.