# SCHOOL CALENDAR 2014-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ice Cream Social</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Day of School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>** School Closed — Rosh Hashanah</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>** School Closed — Teacher Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12:30 pm Dismissal — Curriculum Meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOVEMBER</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs. &amp; Fri.</td>
<td>6–7</td>
<td>** School Closed — N.J.E.A. Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal — Curriculum Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal — Thanksgiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs. &amp; Fri.</td>
<td>27–28</td>
<td>**School Closed — Thanksgiving</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DECEMBER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal — Winter Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weds.—Weds.</td>
<td>24-31</td>
<td>**School Closed — Winter Recess</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>JANUARY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs. &amp; Fri.</td>
<td>1—2</td>
<td>**School Closed — Winter Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>School Reopens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>**School Closed — Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>**School Closed — Teacher Workshop</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEBRUARY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal — Curriculum Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon.—Tues.</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>**School Closed — President’s Weekend</td>
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<tr>
<th>APRIL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>**School Closed — Good Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal — Curriculum Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon.—Fri.</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>**School Closed — Spring Recess</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>MAY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri.—Mon.</td>
<td>22 &amp; 25</td>
<td>**School Closed — Memorial Day Weekend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>JUNE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal — Curriculum Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. Dismissal — LAST DAY OF SCHOOL — NO EXTENDED CARE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If emergency or snow days are required, any in excess of three (3) will be made up as full days in the flowing sequence: May 22, Feb. 27, April 24, April 21. When advisable, a two hour delayed opening will be used rather than an emergency closing. A delayed opening on an early dismissal day will cancel the early dismissal and school will end at the regular time. On delayed opening days, staff is expected at the regular time or as soon after as weather permits.
Dear Families,

Welcome to the Montclair Community Pre-K! We look forward to having you as part of the MCPK family. Our goal is to create a caring community of learners not only with the children in the classroom, but with their families as well. Together, we are partners in your child’s education; a partnership we take seriously. We all love what we do and we hope it shows.

It is our hope to create an atmosphere where all children feel needed and need each other, feel cared for and care for each other, feel respected and give respect, feel safe and provide safety to others and feel seen and heard and hear and see others. We want our classrooms to be places where all children are respected as individuals and challenged in a way that meets their individual needs. Children’s cognitive, social, motor and language development are all interconnected and included in that connection is their personal and emotional development.

We know that play is the central force in furthering that development. While children play they are thinking, negotiating, taking risks, experimenting, exploring, making decisions, problem solving, socializing, inquiring, etc. Combining a strong academic curriculum with a strong emotional curriculum, we hope to prepare the children for the learning which will take place in kindergarten and beyond and to create caring, kind, successful, productive members of society.

**Please take the time to read this handbook completely!** It contains essential information about the MCPK program and will hopefully answer your questions. Keep it handy as a reference to help guide you throughout the year.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to call us at 973-509-4500 or via email at sfitzgerald@montclairprek.org.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Fitzgerald
Executive Director

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”
~William Butler Yeats
The Montclair Community Pre-K has an open communication policy that encourages input, suggestions and feedback from our families. In addition, when a family has a concern they are welcome to voice it by following a communication chain.

The first place for concerns should always be the classroom teachers. The teachers want to hear from you and welcome your questions and/or concerns. The classroom teachers will direct your concern to another appropriate MCPK staff member if it is necessary.

Stephanie Fitzgerald          sfitzgerald@montclairprek.org
Executive Director            extension 15

Carolyn DeVito                cdevito@montclairprek.org
Assistant Executive Director  extension 22

Susan Bryant-Gaither          sbryant-gaither@montclairprek.org
Family Services Director       extension 12

Robin Virgil                  rvirgil@montclairprek.org
Business Manager              extension 11

Dana Pinto                    dpinto@montclairprek.org
School Nurse                  extension 19

In addition, the Montclair Community Pre-K is a not-for profit corporation that is guided by a Board of Trustees. These Trustees are community members who volunteer their time to help promote, guide and lead the school. The chairperson is always available to parents to answer questions and/or concerns.

Sean Flynn                    sean.flynn@mac.com
Chair, Board of Trustees      

A NOTE OF THANKS!

We thank you for choosing us! We know your decision was made with care because you want only the best for your child. We are so happy you are with us and we welcome your participation with our school. Working together, we can look forward to doing wonderful things with your children!

The Montclair Community Pre-K admits students of any economic status, race, color, and national or ethnic origin.
Montclair Community Pre-K
Our History and Mission

The Montclair Community Pre-K (MCPK) is a not-for-profit community school that opened its doors in 1998. In 1996, the Montclair Board of Education voted to end its 20 year public Pre-Kindergarten program due to budget and space constraints. The public school system had a unique history of providing Pre-Kindergarten and its demise was met with a great outcry from the citizens. A public-private partnership was created by the Montclair Township Council which ensured that a Pre-Kindergarten program would survive, but not as part of the public schools. The newly appointed Montclair Early Childhood Corporation Board of Trustees created the Montclair Community Pre-K. The program receives a yearly subsidy from the Township Council to ensure that any Montclair resident may attend, regardless of ability to pay.

The mission of our school is to provide a high-quality pre-school education to any resident of Montclair, regardless of ability to pay. In addition our school is committed to the support and education of all families of young children. We believe strongly that a high-quality, developmentally appropriate early education is the cornerstone to later academic success. Our school exists today because of the Township's commitment to this goal. We believe public education should begin with high quality Pre-Kindergarten programs and have maintained this program for the Township of Montclair until the State of New Jersey decides to fund universal pre-school education in the entire state.

Our school depends on funding from three main sources: tuition revenue, Township subsidy and private and corporate donations and grants. We actively fundraise in the private and corporate sector to help underwrite the cost of our tuition assistance program. We receive grants from philanthropic and corporate entities as well as from private citizens who support our mission and goals.

We work actively on a statewide movement that advocates funding for public pre-school programs. We are considered a model of a public-private partnership that can help sustain quality early childhood programs for the community. We welcome your support of our program through donations, connections to potential donors and/or advocacy for early childhood education.
The Montclair Community Pre-K Parent Association helps to support the school by organizing activities for family involvement. It is an opportunity to volunteer for school and community events sponsored by the PA such as a Fall Harvest Festival, a Winter Family Dance, Spring Garden Day and other family events during the year. Announcements of PA meetings and events will be sent home in your child’s backpack regularly and/or communicated by e-mail.
WE APPRECIATE YOUR COOPERATION AND REMIND YOU THAT THE SAFETY OF YOUR CHILDREN IS ALWAYS OUR FIRST CONCERN!

We ask that you follow the procedures below everyday to ensure that all children are safe and secure in and outside of the building.

Our school program begins at 8:30 am and ends at 2:30 pm. **It is essential that children arrive on time each day.** Lateness causes disruption of classroom daily routines (see page 7, Attendance & Tardiness.) Please see page 9 about extended care opportunities in the building from 7:00am-6:30pm.

## SAFETY PROCEDURES

Parents/Caregivers **must sign in** their child in the classroom. Children **may not be signed-in in the lobby.** Your child is considered “signed-in” when you use curbside car drop-off. The caregiver **must sign out** children at dismissal time as well, except for children who stay for enrichment classes or for extended care. **A late fee will be imposed by the business office if children are continually picked up later than their designated dismissal time.**

Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. A parent/caregiver or teacher/aide must be with all children in the building, including on the stairs or in the elevator. No children under the age of 10 are allowed on the elevator or in the stairwells without adult supervision. In addition, MCPK students may NOT be dropped off/picked up by their siblings **under the age of 16.**

Children may not be released to an **unauthorized** person. We must have a **WRITTEN** consent to release a child and the person authorized to pick up a child must present identification upon arrival.

If your family is having difficulty with drop off/pick up please let us know and we can help with alternative arrangements.
The Family Services Director and Family Network Center provides services to the families and staff. The Family Services Director, in conjunction with the Assistant Executive Director and Executive Director, arranges the placement of each child in the school. In addition, she is available to staff during the day for help in the classroom and to parents/caregivers who may have concerns about their child. She works closely with the Montclair School District Child Study Team and the Developmental Learning Center. Please contact her if you feel your child will need special educational services. Listed below are some of the services provided by our Family Services Director to families:

- Referrals to Programs for Parents (a government program that assists with school tuition)
- Referrals to community resources on education and counseling such as:
  - Montclair Public School System
  - Special Needs Services / Evaluation services
  - Family Counseling
  - Crisis Intervention
- A family resource library in the Family Services Director’s office.
- Referrals for individual and family mental health therapy at an affordable cost.

FAMILY ORIENTATION NIGHT: This is required of all families and will take place over three nights. Every family needs to choose one night to attend. The purpose of these sessions is to orient families to the MCPK community. (This is a different session than Back to School Night.)
EXTENDED CARE OPTIONS

The Montclair Community Pre-K offers several options for an extended day for families on site including Morning Care, Extended Day Care, Emergency Extended Care (punchcard), and After-School Enrichment classes. Our building is open from 7:00 am to 6:30 pm.

MORNING CARE

The MCPK sponsors early morning care for those families who need child care before school hours. Families can sign up for care starting at 7:00 am until 8:20 am. Morning Care is run by the MCPK faculty and provides fun and games, quiet activities and arts and crafts for the children while they wait for the school day to start. Families are welcome to bring in breakfast for their child. Children must be registered to attend Morning Care and a fee is charged to your tuition bill. Special arrangements for occasional morning care can be made for an additional fee.

Families registered for morning care should arrive no earlier than 7:00 am and bring their children directly to the morning care classroom. When Montclair schools call a delayed opening due to inclement weather, morning care will have a two-hour delay as well and will begin at 9:00 am. Parents/caregivers are required to sign in with the staff in charge before leaving. No child may ever be left unattended.

EXTENDED DAY FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The MCPK offers an extended day on-site program in our building for working families that includes opportunities for children to attend after-school enrichment classes.

The teaching faculty coordinates a complete after-school program for those families who cannot pick up children at 2:30 pm. The fee for the program includes participation in our after school enrichment classes as well as other planned activities including active and quiet play in small groups at learning centers, a late afternoon snack and time to play on our playground or indoor activity room.

The Extended Care program runs from 2:30 pm–6:30 pm. Parents can pick-up their children anytime before 6:30 pm. Please note: Parents/caregivers are asked to make every effort to pick up a child on time. A late fee of $1.00 per minute is imposed if children are picked up after 6:30 pm. Please have an alternate pick up plan for days when you may be delayed.

The fee for Extended Day Care is listed on our tuition sheet. Please note that there is a sliding scale for extended care that is similar to our sliding scale tuition for the school program.
The Intergenerational program brings senior citizens from the community to the school for interaction and story telling with the children. Both the seniors and the children enjoy this opportunity to develop nurturing and caring relationships.

Through these programs the children are able to explore artistic and musical creativity with accomplished artists from our community. The children are also able to experience the interpersonal joy of sharing time and activities with older citizens. It is because of these programs that the MCPK remains a vital part of the total community.

**BIRTHDAYS IN SCHOOL**

Birthdays are a significant part of each child’s life and we welcome the celebration of children’s birthdays in school. Because the concept of community is a central element to our philosophy it is important that each birthday celebration be respectful of all the children and families. For this reason, each child celebrating a birthday will be ‘honored’ in the same way during the school day—a birthday crown and/or class project and the sharing of muffins, mini-bagels or cupcakes during snack or lunch time. If your child is having a birthday party out of school, invitations may be distributed in the classroom, ONLY IF ALL THE CHILDREN IN THE CLASS ARE INVITED.

**PARENT/CAREGIVER-TEACHER COMMUNICATION**

Our goal is to maintain exceptional parent-teacher relationships at all times. This involves effective communication systems. Every teacher has a bulletin board in the classroom where weekly lesson plans are posted and has developed a method of communicating with families the activities that occur in the classroom on a daily basis. Parent/Caregivers should check both these resources every day.
Since our program is a first year school experience for many parents/caregivers, we remind you how quickly lost items accumulate and how children’s items look alike! Please be sure that **all clothing is labeled and that your child’s name is on his/her lunch box and backpack.**

For your convenience our “Lost and Found” is located in the 1S stairwell. Please check it regularly. At the end of the school year all items not claimed will be donated to charity.

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**PARENT/CAREGIVER DONATION OF CLASSROOM ITEMS**

Throughout the school year, teachers may ask for a variety of donations for the classroom. This helps in the day-to-day operation of the classroom. These items may include the following:

- Boxes of tissues
- Food items for snack time (see list of healthy snacks below for examples of what to bring)
- Recyclable items such as toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, empty cans, etc.

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**SNACK**

Each day the children are offered a morning snack. It is only a snack and not meant to take the place of breakfast. We provide a beverage as well as the napkins and cups. We ask families to share with us in providing the snack foods. **We ask that all snack foods provided be **peanut and nut free** and that families choose snacks that are nutritionally sound.** Some examples of snack foods donated by families include:

- Crackers, Graham crackers
- Go-gurts
- Raisins
- Fig Newtons
- Pretzels
- Mini-muffins
- Pita chips
- Vanilla wafers
- Animal crackers
- Popcorn
- Fresh fruit
- Cheese
- Vegetables and dip

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I – School Day
The quality of our program can be observed in measurable and practical ways. Parent/Caregivers can look for the following indicators:

Our educational program…….

- Designs hands-on experiences in an environment that allows children easy access to tools and materials, and adequate space and time to explore their good ideas.
- Provides opportunities for creative, investigative play, followed by group times so children can reflect on their play experiences and build on knowledge through reenactment.
- Confirms and acknowledges each child’s disposition to have strong, even idiosyncratic, personal interests.
- Supports a child-teacher ratio that gives teachers the ability to work with children individually or in small groups.
- Honors the cultural traditions of the families and builds a sense of community.
- Implements emerging literacy by encouraging familiarity with children’s written names, environmental print, theme-related words and expressions and labeling original artwork.
- Models critical thinking and intelligent problem solving.
- Assesses progress through developmental portfolios. The teacher, child and parent contribute to, select, and review contents of the portfolio to document developmental milestones.
- Ensures smooth transition for children as they move from Pre-K into Kindergarten.
- Provides families with a narrative at the end of the school year that describes a child’s growth and development throughout the year.
- Asks families to give us feedback via an annual anonymous survey.
Immunizations and emergency information are kept on file for each child. In the event of an emergency we will contact the family immediately. If the family cannot be reached, the nurse, Executive Director or designated supervisor will take responsibility for the child until a family member arrives.

Please remember to keep the school and nurse up to date with any changes of phone numbers at work and/or at home, address changes, and emergency phone numbers.

The MCPK requires that every staff member be trained and certified in CPR/First Aid.

Illness – We expect and encourage you to send your child to school on a daily basis. However, please remember it is very important for children who are ill to stay home. This helps them to regain their health and helps other children to keep from being sick. The MCPK follows the regulations in the State Manual of the Standards for licensed childcare centers:

Keep your child home if:
- he/she has had a fever within the last 24 hours
- he/she has symptoms of a possible communicable disease (e.g. redness of the eyes, sore throat, headache, abdominal pains or diarrhea, rash, vomiting, etc…)
- he/she requires one-on-one care

Children must be totally symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child becomes ill while in our care, we will call you and ask you to come and pick him/her up within 1 hour. If you cannot pick your child up, you are responsible to have a reliable emergency person to come in your place.

### COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Rules and regulations for returning to school are as follows:
Please confer with the Nurse before your child returns to the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Return Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Pox</td>
<td>7 days with all pox scabbed over and dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea</td>
<td>none within 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vomiting</td>
<td>none within 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetigo</td>
<td>dry, healing skin with no crusts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctivitis</td>
<td>pus gone and on medication for 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lice</td>
<td>nit-free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>fever-free for 24 hours w/o the aid of a fever reducer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strep</td>
<td>on medication for 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coxsackie Virus</td>
<td>fever free for 24 hours and blisters dried up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The curriculum consists of five baseline themes that all classrooms develop during the school year:

1. Who Am I?
2. The Family and Friends
3. Community
4. The Global Child
5. Seasons/Time

This list is not all-inclusive. The classroom explores many other themes throughout the year based upon the interest of the children and staff. Themes / activities will vary from class to class.

A primary focus in our program is Celebrating Diversity. A second focus is The Environment, Preserving our Earth for the Future. We are committed to recycling and re-use whenever possible.

These themes are an integral part of all our activities.

Teachers approach a theme in the following way:

- Observe / document the interest of the children.
- Start with a core concept (big idea).
- Connect/explore what the children already know.
- Introduce new content through children’s literature.
- Create an interactive learning plan together (web ideas).
- Develop learning centers with activities that also contain key skills all kindergarten children will need to know.
- Assess learning and construct an on-going portfolio for each child.
- Communicate with parents and invite their involvement in the classroom.

Our classroom materials are rich and engaging, appealing to the range of intelligences, so that all children can use their learning strengths to help them explore new concepts and content.

Every classroom has activity centers that focus on the varieties of intelligence:

1. A listening center for musical intelligence.
3. A math and science area for logical-mathematical and naturalist intelligence.
4. A large open space for kinesthetic intelligence.
5. An art center for visual-spatial intelligence.
6. A quiet corner for intrapersonal intelligence.
7. A large table for interpersonal intelligence.
Medication may only be dispensed by an RN. No homeopathic or natural herb medication will be given unless FDA approved. All medications will be kept locked in a cabinet. Unused medication & health care equipment will be returned to the parents when no longer being used. Long-term medication and "as needed" medication will be left in nursing office. Short-term medication will be returned to parents at the end of each day. All medication to be dispensed must be supplied by the parent. Vitamins are not medication and are not dispensed by the nurse at any time.

Medication, prescription or over-the-counter medicine should never be placed in a child’s backpack, lunch box or clothing pockets.

**TOILETING POLICY**

Our school program is designed for students who are comfortable taking care of their own toileting needs. Our teaching staff must be available to the needs of all children in the classroom and therefore we expect that children will understand and be able to conduct routine toileting needs. For this reason, all three and four year old children are required to be toilet trained before they enter school in September. Following is the list of our school’s readiness criteria for you to consider in determining if your child is ready to begin our program.

Your child must:

1. Consistently recognize when he/she needs to go to the bathroom.
2. Have the ability to wait to use the toilet.
3. Pull down pants and sit on toilet without assistance.
4. Use toilet paper correctly and understand how to wipe.
5. Pull pants back up with no assistance.
6. Flush the toilet.
7. Wash and dry hands after using toilet.

These are the seven (7) skills that must be in place before your child enters our school. **Some young children may need to wait to start school if these skills are not evident.**

**Pull up diapers are not acceptable underclothing.**

It would be helpful to dress children in clothing that is easy to manage so that toileting is not difficult for the child. In case of an occasional accident at school, a child needs to be able to clean him/herself up with a minimum of assistance. If not, parents (or a designated adult) will be asked to come to the school in a timely manner, to assist the child and take the child home if necessary. **Children also should not bring bottles, sippy cups or pacifiers to school.**

II – Health