

Granby Nature Preschool
a unique program
where farms, gardens, woods, meadows,
streams and ponds
are our classrooms

**Handbook of General Information,
Policies and Procedures**

Granby Nature Preschool
West Granby CT 06090
info@granbynaturepreschool.com

MISSION

Granby Nature Preschool provides a child-centered learning program that aligns community, farm and nature lessons and activities with authentic, research-based educational models based on Connecticut Standards of Learning.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe in educating the whole child, that real learning comes from the integration of social, emotional, physical, academic and sensory areas of growth. We know that young children learn best in nature, in an experiential environment, and that

deeper learning comes when they learn within the context of their towns and neighborhoods. We encourage children to investigate their world through their senses and empower them to take charge of their own learning. Our role as teachers and parents is to guide their learning by providing a structural foundation of basic concepts and skills and supporting learning through inquiry-based prompts and activities. We also believe that we can further support learning by guiding children to apply and transform their learning through music, movement and art.

ABOUT

Granby Nature Preschool is a farm and nature preschool for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds in Granby, Connecticut. Ours is a 5-day program for morning, afternoon or full day. Children are outside every day hiking, planting, tending, exploring, wondering, discovering, building, running and playing. Our home base is at Holcomb Farm in partnership with Granby Parks & Recreation. Holcomb Farm is also home to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) with active, sustainable community-based vegetable gardens

and some 300 acres of meadows, pastures, streams, ponds, forests and trails.

We believe children learn essential skills and concepts most appropriately when they are guided to focus on their immediate environment. We embrace place-based, outdoor living and learning in the fresh air. Children experience the changes of weather and seasons, discovering the wonders of plants and animals.

Granby Nature Preschool follows the Connecticut State Standards of Learning for 3's, 4's and 5's. Concepts and skills are seamlessly integrated into the immersive experiences of farm and nature and unfold within an age-appropriate balance between free play, exploration and guided learning. Children enhance their knowledge, through music, movement and art. They learn about relationships and interdependence among themselves, classmates, families, neighborhood farms, natural settings and plant and animal communities.

We want our children to be healthy, curious, observant, reflective and empathetic to each other and to their environment. Guided outdoor

exploration is essential to our program, with daily nature hikes and/or working in our outdoor vegetable garden. **We plan to be outdoors in all weather except extreme conditions.**

GNP's goal is to offer learning activities using the rich resources within our community. Granby is an extraordinary town with more than 30 farms, a game preserve, land trust properties, and nature trails. Like many towns in New England, Granby's values of farm, community and land are a significant part of the Town's vision and offers children a solid grounding through experiential, integrated learning.

These Immersion Excursions are held two Fridays a month and are a family-centered experience. Off-site excursions require caregivers to provide transportation to and from the field trip and are required to assist in supervision. These visits to local farms, (orchards, McLean Game Preserve, and other ponds, streams and nature trails in Granby) are led by a farmer, gardener, park ranger or other specialist to give children an in-depth look at nature-based places.

MEET THE DIRECTORS

Amanda Hochschartner: Director

Amanda has both a BA and MEd in Early Childhood Education. She believes that children learn best in an experiential environment, and that deeper learning comes when they learn within the context of their towns and neighborhoods. As a teacher, she has worked in farm, garden, field and forest settings. She has completed the Reggio Emilia training whereby children are encouraged to investigate their world through their senses and are empowered to take charge of their own learning. She visited many Forest Kindergartens in Europe and co-wrote an article for Green Teacher Magazine about these programs. Amanda lives in Granby with her husband and young children.

Green Teacher Issue 94, Fall 2011.,

Waldkindergarten article pp. 18-21

<https://www.freewebs.com/chris-summerville/Green%20Teacher%20Issue%2094,%20Fall%202011.pdf>

Judy Kane, Consultant & Curriculum Specialist

Judy retired after 42 years as a K-12 educator. In addition to teaching grades PreK – 12, she was

Assistant Director for Curriculum Development and Student Affairs at Burgundy Farm Country Day School, Alexandria, VA, a school rich in farm, garden, field and forest learning opportunities. She is currently a school docent at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. Judy grew up in Granby and will be moving back to her childhood home. Co-existing with the farms, playing in Salmon Brook, exploring McLean Game Preserve and learning about the flora and fauna of Granby nurtured her life-long love of this wondrous town.

Olivia Burke, Teacher

Olivia is a young, creative individual with a passion for teaching. Olivia has spent several years working with children, from infants to grade school. She previously served as Director on Duty and Infant and Toddler Teacher at a local daycare. Her love for children comes from a desire to help young minds create and explore new ways to express themselves. As an artist, she is an expert at bringing imagination and fun into process-oriented activities. She attended the Suffield High School Agriscience Program and is familiar with nature and wildlife. Olivia finds great value in spending time outdoors

and believes in teaching young children the importance of taking care of our Earth.

OUR CHILDREN

Children must be 3 years old and toilet trained by September of their enrolling school year. We offer a 5-year-old transition program (additional year before Kindergarten) for those who might benefit. We offer a multi-age group model where younger children can learn from older ones who, in turn, gain experience and confidence as peer models. Individual lessons are differentiated to meet the specific developmental needs of children.

GNP children who move on to Kindergarten or first grade will be well prepared. GNP children learn to be open-minded, caring and healthy. They become inquisitive, are socially conscious, know how to take turns, ask good questions, and respect others and their environment. They will have learned the important skills of classifying, comparison, sequencing, and data collection. They will have learned the concepts of life cycles and interdependence in nature and will have

experienced transforming their skills, concepts and knowledge through play, music, movement and art.

OFFERINGS

Full Day Program

- *Monday – Thursdays 9:15 AM-3:15 PM*
- *Fridays from 9:15-11:45 AM*

Morning Program

- *Monday through Friday, 9:15-11:45 AM*

Afternoon Program

- *Monday – Thursdays 12:45-3:15 PM*
- *Fridays, 9:15-11:45 AM (Friday mornings are always included in the ½ day programs)*

Lunch Bunch

- *Monday – Thursday 11:45 – 12:45*
- *Drop-off for Afternoon Program – 11:45*
- *Pickup for Morning Program – 12:45*
- Lunch Bunch is a social extension of the half-day programs to allow children community time with classmates and those in the other half-day sessions. Children bring their own lunches and

share conversation and possible guided activities. (Lunch Bunch is included with the Full Day Program at no additional cost)

Immersion Fridays off the Holcomb Farm property is a family-centered experience and parent transportation & supervision is essential. We do realize, however, that sometimes parents are not able to stay. In these cases, with prior arrangement, parents can drop off and pick up their child at the site.

Visits to local farms, orchards, McLean Game Preserve, and other ponds, streams and nature trails in Granby are led by a farmer, gardener, park ranger or other specialist to give children an in-depth experience at these nature-based places and with members of our community.

Some weeks, particularly at the beginning of the school year, our Friday Immersion program will be at the Holcomb Farm. Invited guests will share their passions, expertise and creative energies with our students. These may be local bird photographers, herpetologists, painters and musicians, to name a few. Our community resources are boundless!

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is an essential component of the learning experience for young children who see how roles and relationships are modeled in various settings while they learn to make connections with members of our community. We are confident that parents who choose Granby Nature Preschool are those who are committed to our mission, philosophy and program. We ask that all parent involvement respect and follow the educational and safety guidelines and modeling of the teachers.

Throughout the year we will share insights into inquiry-based learning, prompts, and related aspects of our educational goals and philosophy for further information and inspiration. Please see Health and Safety for COVID guidelines.

-Our Friday Immersion experience is an integral part of our program. *We ask that at least one parent or family member take their child to and from our designated site and participate fully in the presentation (this includes refraining from private*

conversations and phone calls). This also includes helping to supervise their and others' children. In the rare event that a child travels with another family, please see registration information and waivers for reminders about procedures.

-We would love to have a parent volunteer photograph and film our Friday Immersion experiences for us to take back to our barn for reference, reflection, other learning activities and documentation.

-We welcome parents who garden and who are nature lovers to join us periodically to share their expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm with our students. In the same spirit we welcome musicians, storytellers, yoga enthusiasts and cooks, as readdressing lessons through these transformational ways enhances all aspects of the learning experience.

-As we begin to set up in late August we welcome parent volunteers to sort and clean the children's materials that have been stored in The Barn and which are now available for our use.

-We would like a list of parents who are able to substitute when one of our teachers is out.

-It would also be helpful to have a parent volunteer to coordinate parent volunteers!

School Calendar
Absences
Arrival/Drop Off

GNP follows the Granby Public Schools calendar including holidays, vacations, and inclement weather late openings and closings, and make-up days. Should exceptions arise (particularly on early release days for professional development and conferences) we will notify parents in advance as soon as possible. To further clarify yes, we are following Kelly Lane calendar; however we will notify you in advance if we will be in session on early release days for Professional Development and conference days.

-Parents/caregivers are requested to notify the school if a child is going to be absent.

-Parents/caregivers are required to accompany their child into The Barn and to come into The Barn or designated area for pickup.

- Parents/caregivers must sign their child in and out each day.
- Parents/caregivers are also urged to accompany their children to the Friday Immersion Excursions, which is an essential component of our program blending family and community through our local farms and nature. This is also important because we are off-site, and transportation and supervision is necessary.

Arrival times Monday – Thursday begin at 9:15 for morning and full day programs, and 12:45 for afternoon programs.

Pickup times Monday – Thursday is promptly at 11:45 for mornings, 12:45 for Lunch Bunch and 3:15 for afternoons.

Fridays Immersion Excursion times will vary.

Parents will be notified in advance of designated arrival time and approximate time of visit at our local farm and nature sites. We plan to have these visits within the morning 9:15 – 11:45 time frame.

Friday visits to us at The Barn will be within the 9:15 – 11:45 am time frame. We will notify parents in advance of any adjustments to the times of these morning visits. Parents are not required to be present during these on-campus visits and, in September and October as we

continue to develop routines and expectations within our classroom community, we ask that parents not attend.

Holidays and Birthdays

Learning about the holidays, traditions and the rhythms of the year are important, but we do not feel that the need for the hype, sugary treats and over excitement of these events are appropriate for our young children. For the most part we will emphasize broader concepts of, for example, gratitude and giving, and discuss ways we can apply those ideas to our communities and natural world. Our Thanksgiving traditions include discussions about the people in our families, and plants and animals that we are thankful for. December traditions for us include discussions and actions about ways we can give back to our natural environment (making bird feeders, creating paths, etc). These initiatives help children develop empathy while instilling a sense that reflection and service are parts of who we are within our communities. We also welcome the special holidays of the families of our school and

look forward to working with families to share their traditions. As holidays arise we will notify families of our plans.

Children's birthdays are important milestones and we will acknowledge and honor them (for those summer birthday children their half birthdays) in what we feel are low-key age-appropriate ways.

Costs

Our program is a 5-days/week half day or full day. We are not offering part time options (for example 3 days/week) at this time.

REGISTRATION

5-days/week half-day program - \$5000/year

5-days/week full day program - \$9250/year

Lunch Bunch for half-day children - \$ 350/year

33% due upon registration

33% due November 1

33% due February 1

Children who register in October will pay

33% November 1

33% February 1

Rolling Enrollment – GNP will offer rolling enrollment for new students including children who turn 3 after school begins. New students will start at the 1st of every month. We will pro-rate on a monthly basis.

Refunds

Refunds will be granted up to 30 business days prior to the start of the program less 25% of your program fee.

Dismissal

At Granby Nature Preschool we want to be sure that all our children are safe and benefitting from our program. The staff, though trained in early childhood education, is not equipped to handle some special needs. In the event that the school feels we cannot meet the needs of a child (see Inclusion Policy below) we will follow the Refund Policy as stated above.

GNP will try to work with families who do not meet financial obligations in a timely manner. We are, however, a small school with a tight budget. In the event that a family cannot meet its financial obligations, the school at the discretion of the director may ask that the child be dismissed.

Scholarships

At this time Granby Nature Preschool is not able to offer financial assistance.

Admission Policies **Granby Parks & Recreation Inclusion Policy**

We know that every person is unique and brings with them a wide range of skills and abilities. We continually strive to provide challenging experiences so that all can achieve their full potential. As such we encourage and support individuals with disabilities to fully participate in all programs. In the event that we do not feel a child is thriving for whatever reason we will work with the families to develop a process to move forward and, if necessary, guide families to appropriate diagnostic and therapy services. This may include a recommendation for a different educational setting. We aim to be able to accommodate student needs outdoors but that may not always be possible on outdoor trails with roots, rocks or steep inclines.

Applications and Registration

Granby Nature Preschool, in its capacity connected to Granby Parks and Recreation, does not have an application process, *per se*. Because of the unique nature of the school, however, we require parents to read and agree to the waivers on the registration form.

Waivers

These waivers from the Registration Form are listed here for your reference. Signatures are required only on the Registration Form.

**Please read and that you have read these, and initial that you agree
In a two-parent household, both parents must initial.**

____ We have read, we understand and we agree to follow the policies and procedures in the Granby Nature Preschool parent handbook.

____ We understand our child will have daily explorations outside in the woods, meadows, ponds, streams and/or gardens, farms and orchards in all weather (except when it is extreme and unsafe) as an integral part of this program.

____ We understand that we or our designated child care person will drive to and from and accompany our child on off campus excursions

(probably twice a month) to local farm and nature sites and that we will help to supervise our and others' children for safety purposes. We understand that this participation also means that we will refrain from socializing, including mobile phone use. This is for safety purposes and to model interest and participation, and share the experience at hand.

_____ In the rare event that a parent cannot stay with their child we understand that we must notify the school in advance. In those cases where prior arrangements are made parents can drop their children off at the site and pick them up at the designated time.

_____ We understand that our child may be photographed for educational, informational and advertising purposes. Parents who do not wish their children to be photographed and who do not initial this waiver are requested to state and sign their wishes here. Please distinguish, if appropriate between educational and public (advertising) purposes, and whether or not it is

okay to have your child photographed from the back and/or without a recognizable face.

Health Form and Policies

COVID POLICY

Granby Nature Preschool, like Granby Parks and Recreation programs, follows the Granby Public Schools protocols as recommended by the Farmington Valley Nurses Association. However, at GNP we are aware that our young children are not now, and may not be, vaccinated by the fall.

Because the situation is fluid regarding ability to have shots, and number and intensity of cases, we will revisit our own guidelines mid-August and inform you of any updates. Precautions may include mask-wearing and/or social distancing indoors, but it is simply too soon to determine if this is necessary.

Health Form

All children need to have a complete physical exam from their doctor **before beginning school, and need to have their (age-recommended) vaccinations up to date.** Click on the Granby Parks and Recreation site to upload and fill out required health form.

Health Policies

We ask parents to keep any child with a fever or communicable illness home and that the child is fever or communication free before returning to school. Please notify us if a child will be absent (for any reason) and to especially notify us immediately if the child has a communicable disease.

For specific reference we are including the Granby Public Schools Guidelines here. We realize that it is often frustrating to not be able to send a child who seems perfectly well to school, especially if childcare is an issue, but we must also consider the health of others in your child's class.

Granby Public School Health Guidelines

Illness	Stay Home or Go to School?	Details
Chicken Pox	Home	Children with chicken pox must stay home from school until ALL spots are dried and crusted, typically 5-6 days.
Cold with mild symptoms (stuffy nose, sneezing, mild cough)	School	Your child may attend school if he/she is fever free for 24 hours and is able to participate in school activities.

Cough	Home	If the cough is persistent and irritating, it is disruptive to learning.
Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)	Home	With discharge need to seek medical treatment, may return after 3 doses/24hours after treatment if prescribed.
Diarrhea	Home	Students should be kept home for 24 hours after the last episode of diarrhea without the use of medicine.
Fever	Home	Students should stay home if temperature is 100.0 degrees or more. Keep home until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medicine
Fifth Disease	School	By the time the rash appears, children are no longer contagious and do not need to stay

Impetigo	Home	home. Students may return to school 24 hours after treatment starts. Sores should be covered at school.
Ringworm	School	Students may come to school as long as area is being treated and is covered.
Strep Throat	Home	Students may return to school 24 hours or 3 doses after antibiotics have started and temperature is less than 100.0 degrees.
Vomiting	Home	Students should be kept home for 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting associated with a gastrointestinal illness (without the use of medicine).

Granby Public Schools do not require a child to stay home from school. We request children be treated at home. Because we do not have a nurse

on staff we request that in an abundance of caution parents who are unsure of the effectiveness of home treatment either keep their children at home or seek professional advise. Additional resources for parents can be found at [Lice Lessons](#)

In the event that a child does not travel with a parent to our Friday Immersion sites and must go with another family, the child's family needs to provide the driver with a copy of their health form. The driver must keep that form with them at all times.

Clothing

Our program includes daily outdoor time. All children need: daily sturdy weather appropriate clothing an extra pair of underwear and clothing to keep at school for emergencies

a sun hat

sun screen

long pants

sturdy shoes

rain boots

winter hat

mittens

warm jacket

ski pants

warm socks

rain coat
rain hat

winter boots
warm shirts

Rest Time

Children who are full day will have (mandatory) rest time after lunch. Until we are able to provide cots children will need a rest mat (yoga or exercise mat will be fine) and a blanket.

Toys and Electronics

Children are asked to NOT bring toys or electronics of any sort unless approved in advance at the discretion of the director. Exceptions may include items related to special events/holidays, travel or things related to our studies.

Food and Sustainability

We are a waste-free school and fully embrace the Holcomb Farm goal of sustainable living. We ask that children bring their snacks and lunches in reusable containers and that they use cloth

napkins. Children at GNP need to practice the healthy eating habits that are nurtured through the Holcomb Farm initiatives. To that end we ask that parents not include processed food such as lunchables and candy and that they encourage fruits, vegetables and healthy grains in their children's snacks and lunches. In addition to our waste-free initiative we believe that sitting at a table with others and using appropriate settings fosters a calm and inclusive environment and leads to habits of courtesy and belonging. In order for all to "be present" as we eat together we also ask that children **not** bring food that needs to be microwaved. We will have an orts bucket, which will be part of our gardening program.

In the event of nut or other food allergies, we will adjust appropriately and make a nut free policy.

Child safety and Hygiene

During our first weeks of school we develop parameters for playing and exploring outdoors. Self-regulation, and caring for one's self, others and the environment are our primary focus. We work with the children to find an appropriate

balance between boundless creative energy and curiosity, and appropriate boundaries. Children are learning the routines of staying together, observing, exploring, wondering, asking questions and sharing.

Our teachers are vigilant about keeping children safe. They are trained to handle incidents such as bee stings, insect bites, skinned knees and minor injuries. They always have cell phones for emergencies.

Indoors tick checks, appropriate toileting, and hand washing are important aspects of our everyday routines.

Child abuse of any kind is not permitted, and parents are reminded that suspicion of abuse by law must be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Weapons of any kind are not permitted.

Donations

Granby Nature Preschool is gratefully accepting donations to help cover startup costs and the expenses involved in maintaining the program, as well as both material and financial help with items children will need in order to fully participate in the program. These include:

Outdoor Exploration

Child-sized binoculars

Sit-upons and tarps for outdoor rainy day snacks

Wooden clipboards for observation checklists

Rain Barrel

Tree trunk stumps for outdoor circle sitting

Child-sized garden gloves

Childrens (extra) outdoor gear including

sturdy raincoats and hats/hoods

sturdy rain boots

sun hats

Natural sun screen

Natural insect repellent

General insect bite soothing gel

Indoor Exploration and Creativity

Wooden trays for displays in our classroom
science museum

Child-sized pencils
Potting soil
Terrariums

Indoor Enhancement

Rest mats for full day children.
Child Cabinet locks
Containers for storing toys, manipulatives
(wooden and fabric)
Caddies for supplies
Floor lamps
Small area rugs to delineate center areas

Cleaning Supplies

Dish washing brushes and towels
Reuseable dish towels
Scrub brushes
Caddies for supplies
Foldable drying rack for dishes
Wet bags for clothes
Laundry detergent
Wooden clothes pins

Health and Safety

Ice packs for kids' lunches
Medical Gloves
Natural sun screen

Natural insect repellent
General insect bite soothing gel
Water pitcher with filtration system
Thermometer

Administrative Materials

Manila folders
Pocket folders
Sheet protectors
Surge protectors
Laminating pouches
Small hanging chalk board to hang on door to indicate where we are outdoors
White board to share what we did each day
Heavy duty (3M+) hooks for coats, jackets...
Hooks for ceiling (for hanging plants, etc.)

We have many of these listed on our Amazon wish list which can be viewed at:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/14QQP-SKAXIX62?ref=wl_share