

Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten

a unique program
where farms, gardens, woods, meadows,
streams and ponds
are also our classrooms

Handbook of General Information, Policies and Procedures

2024/2025

Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten is
a drug and weapon free zone.

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

MISSION

Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten provides a child-centered learning program that aligns community, farm and nature lessons and activities with authentic, research-based educational models with reference to Connecticut State Domains 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 solid structural foundation of basic concepts and skills and by 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 and Kindergarten 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 and discover the wonders of plants and animals. Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten refers to the Connecticut State Domains 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 are outdoors in all weather except extreme conditions.

GNPnK's also offers Immersion Excursions - 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. Granby offers our children an exceptional environment for experiential, integrated learning.

These Immersion Excursions are generally held two Fridays a month and are a family-centered experience. Offsite excursions require caregivers to provide transportation to and from the field trip and are required to assist in supervision. In addition, parent participation models community curiosity, engagement and learning for children. 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 young student and a teacher, she has learned and 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. 16-21
[https://www.freewebs.com/chrissummerville/
Green%20Teacher%20Issue%2094,%20
Fall%202011.pdf](https://www.freewebs.com/chrissummerville/Green%20Teacher%20Issue%2094,%20Fall%202011.pdf)

Judy Kane, Educational Consultant & Curriculum Specialist

Judy retired after 42 years as a PreK-12 educator. In addition to teaching 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. After retirement as a classroom teacher she was 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 there in the future. It is there co-existing with the farms, playing in Salmon Brook, exploring at McLean Game Preserve and learning about the flora and fauna of Granby in school that nurtured her life-long love of this wondrous town.

OUR CHILDREN

Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten serves children ages 3, 4 and 5. Children must be 3 years old and toilet trained by September of their enrolling school year (or when space is available the month after they turn 3 during the school year). For 5-year-olds we offer both Kindergarten and a Transition program (additional year before Kindergarten) for those children who might benefit.

For the most part we believe in multi-age grouping. Younger children can learn from older ones who, in turn, gain experience and confidence as peer models. Within this model individual lessons are differentiated to meet specific developmental needs of children.

GNPnK children learn to be open-minded, caring and healthy. They are inquisitive, socially conscious, know how to take turns, ask good questions and respect others and their environment. They have learned the important skills of classifying, comparison, sequencing, and data collection. They have learned the concepts of life cycles and interdependence in nature. They have experienced how to transform their skills, concepts and knowledge through play, music, movement and art. In addition they have been introduced to pre-reading and math activities, and some read and do simple math.

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.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

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 afternoon ½ day programs)

Lunch Bunch

Monday – Thursday 11:45 – 12:45

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is a 1-hour 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 Excursions

Immersion Excursion 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, yoga and mindfulness instructors, 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 and Kindergarten 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 share insights into inquiry-based learning, prompts, and related aspects of our educational goals and philosophy for further information and inspiration.

Opportunities for parent involvement include:

-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 one another's 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.

-GNPnK offers our community a once a month Play Group (1 1/2 hours) for children age 2-5. We would love a parent volunteer to oversee these.

-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 we revisit lessons through these transformational pathways enhance all aspects of the learning experience.

-As we begin to set up in late August we welcome parent volunteers to sort and clean the classroom materials that have been stored in The Barn over the summer.

-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!

REGISTRATION

Registration is through Granby Recreation and Leisure Services

5-days/week half day program - \$6,500/year

5-days/week full day program - \$12,000/year

Lunch Bunch for half day children - \$ 500/year

Full amount due at registration unless automatic payment plan is set up through Granby Recreation and Leisure Services.

33% due upon registration

33% due November 1st

34% Remaining Balance due February 1st

Scholarships

At this time GNPnK is not able to offer financial assistance.

Rolling Enrollment

When space is available GNPnK offers rolling enrollment for new students including children who turn 3 after school begins. Children who turn 3 during the school year begin the month after they turn 3. Other new students start at the 1st of every month. For children entering during the school year we pro-rate on a monthly basis.

Refunds

Refunds prior to the beginning of school are granted up to 30 business days prior to the start of the program less 25% of the registration fee.

Admission and Retention Policies

We follow the 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.”

Applications and Registration

Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten does not have an application process, *per se*. Because of the unique nature of the school, and for safety, legal and information purposes we require parents to read, agree to, sign and submit these documents and forms which are available before entry into the program in the fall.

Documents to be read and, as appropriate, to initial, sign and submit to the school before child enters the new school year:

- Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten Policies and Procedures
- Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten Waiver Form
- Appropriate Age (Age 3, 4 or 5 in September 2024) Milestones Chart
- Granby Nature Preschool Medication Administration Authorization Form
- State of Connecticut Dept. of Education Early Childhood Health Assessment Record

Dismissal

At Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten 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 always equipped to handle some special needs, including personal safety and safety of others.

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 also 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. In the event that the school feels we cannot meet the needs of a child refunds are at the discretion of the Director.

GNPnK 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 unfortunate event that a family cannot meet its financial obligations, the school at the discretion of the Director may ask that the child be dismissed.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

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.

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.

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.

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?

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/
24 hours 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 home.

Impetigo 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).

COVID POLICY

Granby Nature Preschool and Kindergarten follows the Granby Public Schools
protocols as recommended by the Farmington Valley Nurses Association. Additional
precautions may include mask-wearing and/or social distancing indoors,
determined at the discretion of the Director.

Granby Public Schools do not require a child to stay home from school. GNPnK,
however, requests that 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 AND OTHER ESSENTIALS

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

backpack	warm jacket
water bottle	warm hat
sun screen	mittens
insect repellent	ski pants
extra underwear,	warm socks
pants, shirts, socks, shoes	winter boots
long pants (recommended as tick repellent)	sturdy shoes
socks to tuck into long pants “ “	warm shirts
rain boots	warm sweater
rain coat	winter boots
rain hat	warm shirts
sun hat	
indoor shoes or slippers	
rest mat and blanket (for Full Day children)	

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 GNPnK 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 have an orts bucket, which is part of our gardening program.

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

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.

**Granby Nature Preschool, LLC
Waivers**

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

Signature/s

Date _____

POLICY REGARDING VISITORS

All visitors (other than authorized parents and guardians) to the school are by registration (for tours, play groups, etc) through Granby Parks and Recreation and/or are required to check in with the Director or designated teacher or parent upon arrival.