



Family Handbook 2011-2012

This handbook is designed to give you information about the school's policies, and practices. There is also a wealth of information on our website regarding our philosophy and inspirations. We hope you find both the handbook and website to be helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact us regarding any questions or concerns you might have. Our goal is to have open communication with parents to ensure the best possible experience for you and your children.

-Michele Beach & Elizabeth Baker, Directors

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MISSION STATEMENT

Located in East Boulder County, The Patchwork School works with children, families, and the community to preserve every person's right to a life of self-direction, meaning, and joy. Within our educational environment, we place equal importance on both freedom and responsibility, and understand that all people, regardless of age, are agents for change when they engage critically and compassionately with the world.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

To foster an equitable, nurturing, and stimulating environment for educational experiences and community building, The Patchwork School affirms that its students, staff, volunteers and guests have a right to be free from discrimination. We invite all people to participate in the activities, events and community of our school. We do not discriminate on any basis (cultural background, ethnicity, race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, sex, disability, marital status or spirituality) in the administration of our care, instruction, admission, employment, or tuition assistance policies.

DESCRIPTION

The Patchwork School is a nonprofit, democratic school in Louisville, Colorado. We offer full-time and part-time programs for children ages 12 months to 3 years old in our Toddler Program, ages 2 ½ to 5 years old in our Preschool/Pre-K program, in Kindergarten through Fifth grade in our Elementary program, ages 5 to 12 in our Afterschool & Homeschool programs, and ages 2 ½ to 12 in our Summer Camp program. Our philosophy is comprised of principals from Democratic Education, Reggio Emilia and Humane Education. We are committed to preserving every person's right to a life of self-direction, meaning and joy.

CONTACTING US

- **Hours of Operation** – 8:00am-5:30pm, Monday through Friday.
- **Phone** – During our Hours of Operation you will be able to reach us at: 720-271-6729. If we are unable to answer, please leave a message. Messages will be checked periodically throughout the day and calls will be returned as soon as possible.
- **Office Hours** – There is typically a director in the office from 1pm-4pm.
- **Fax** – Our fax is 303-604-4365. You may use this to fax us any forms for registration.
- **Email** – The best way to reach us outside of our normal operating hours is by email. Please email admin@thepatchworkschool.com for scheduling questions. All other questions and concerns should be sent to info@thepatchworkschool.com.

TEACHERS & STAFF

- **Directors** – Michele Beach is the Director of Operations and Elizabeth Baker is the Director of Development. Michele & Elizabeth both have Master's Degrees in Educational Psychology, have teaching licenses for Early Childhood from the Colorado Department of Education, and are Director Qualified by the Colorado Department of Human Services. For more background and biographical information, please see the "Teachers & Staff" section of the website.

- **Teachers** – All of our teachers have been chosen based on their commitment to the Patchwork philosophy, their previous experiences working with children, and their educational qualifications in the field of Early Childhood Education. You can read the teachers’ bios and qualifications on the website.
- **Training** – all teachers and interns are certified in CPR and First Aid as well as Universal Precautions. Teachers are also all provided with at least fifteen hours of professional development each year on topics related to education, philosophy, licensing and regulations, child development, etc.

AGE GROUPINGS

Children will be placed into a group, roughly according to age. However the groupings may change from year to year depending on the make-up of the ages overall and on individual children's needs. The children will spend morning meeting time in their age groupings (or in all-school meetings).

Each group will be assigned one or two advisor teachers. The advisor teacher will be the parents' first point of contact for questions and concerns about their child.

Children in any age grouping may attend half-day or full-day (or part-time, depending on the program) for any consistent number of days each week. Parents may select their days at registration time.

Please note that children are not required to be potty-trained for any program.

For the Toddler, Preschool and Elementary programs, there is a minimum of two half-days.

PAYMENTS, FEES & DISCOUNTS

- **Registration** – There is a \$165 registration fee per child each year for returning families (\$190 for new families). Your *reservation deposit* will automatically be applied towards the *registration fee*. The registration fee and one third of the first trimester’s tuition are due at time of registration and are non-refundable. The first trimester’s tuition will be pro-rated if the child is registered after the trimester begins. There is no registration fee for Summer Camps.
- **Parent Orientation** – There is a required parent orientation class for new families, which is covered by the additional \$25 of your registration fee. Please check the website for details on the time and location of the class. This is optional for participation in Summer Camps or Afterschool programs.
- **Tuition** – Tuition for all programs, except Summer Camps, is calculated for the entire year and then divided into three equal trimester payments. Tuition must be pre-paid and is **non-refundable**. Please see the Payment Contract for the tuition rates.
- **Sibling Discounts** – Any siblings (after the first child is enrolled) will receive a 5% discount on Tuition (this discount does not apply to the registration fee). The sibling discounts will be applied to the children with the lowest total tuition rates.
- **Drop-In** – The rate for drop-ins is hourly, at \$8.75/hour for all programs except for the Toddler program, which is \$9.50/hour. Payment will be required on or before the drop-in date. Siblings who aren’t enrolled may drop in on a case-by-case basis, but will need to have all paperwork completed prior to first visit.
- **Payments** – Payments may be made in cash or check payable to The Patchwork School. Payments for the first trimester are due in full by April 15th, 2011. Payments for the second and third trimesters

are due by October 15th, 2011 and February 15th, 2012, respectively. Invoices will be sent home at the beginning of October and February. If you fail to pay your child will be dis-enrolled.

- **Returned Checks** – The returned check fee is \$25.00.
- **Late Fee** – If payment is received after the due date a \$25.00 late payment fee will be assessed.
- **Overtime Fee** – After a ten minute grace period, any late pickups will be charged \$10.00 for every ten minutes (or any portion thereof).
- **Tuition Increases** – This year's tuition for the Preschool program has increased by 4% from last year's. This is to cover the increase in rent and for a small increase in teachers' salaries. In addition, the Registration Fee was increased by \$15 to cover new materials. We also want to let you know that, barring any extreme circumstances, our goal is to keep increases to no more than 2-4% each year and to avoid any mid-year increases.
- **Schedule Changes** – Parents may choose to change their child's schedule at each trimester, provided that the requested days & hours are available. We will not make any schedule changes or refunds mid-trimester, unless you would like to add a new day, add an afternoon, or add new after care, and we have openings for the requested addition.

ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION

- **Registration Forms** – All registration and authorization forms (except for health status forms) must be received by April 15th 2011.
- **Health Status Forms** – Health Status forms must be filled out by a physician who has seen your child for a well visit within the last year. The Health Status form must be received by us by August 15th 2011 (please mail or fax). Your child will not be able to start school and you will lose your reserved space if all forms are not received on time. Toddler health forms will also need to be updated at each well child doctor visit.
- **Immunizations** – Please have the certificate of immunization filled out by your child's physician, along with the Health Status Form. If you choose not to have your child immunized because of medical, religious, or personal reasons, please sign the appropriate section of the form. This must be returned on the provided form.
- **Asthma Forms** – If your child has Asthma, you will need an additional form signed by your physician (this can be our form or theirs). If they require an inhaler, it will need to be provided in the original packaging (with prescription label). We will also need the dosage and doctor's directions either on the Asthma form or separate.
- **Allergy Forms** – If your child has any severe allergies requiring medication, you will need an additional form signed by your physician (again this can be our form or theirs). Any prescribed medication needs to be provided in the original packaging (with prescription label). Medication name and droppers must match the prescription exactly (ex. If prescription states "Benadryl" we cannot accept generic, or if prescription states "1 tsp" we cannot take a dropper with only mL).
- **Student Information Changes** – Whenever anything from the student information form changes, please be sure to let us know as soon as possible. It is important for us to have current medical, pick-up, and contact information.
- **Special Needs** – For any child with a disability, defined by the ADA as a "physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities," we will make all "readily achievable accommodations" possible, in accordance with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. Therefore, children will be accepted on a case by case basis. Children with disabilities will be fully integrated into the school's regular activities. Teachers will work with parents to determine

if and how the school can meet the child's needs. The school may also offer various screenings which parents may take advantage of if they choose. Please see more information regarding Special Needs in our Special Needs Statement near the end of this handbook.

- **Withdrawals** – We ask that families give us as much notice as possible before withdrawing their child from school. We do not offer any refunds of tuition. If tuition is not paid by the required date, we will have to assume that the child is being withdrawn and will offer their space to another family. The Patchwork School does not anticipate any scenarios under which an eligible student would be refused service – we hope to work with families to ensure that teacher, parent and child are all in agreement regarding the child's needs. However, in the unlikely event that we are unable to reach consensus with a family regarding any issues that may arise, the child will be dis-enrolled with no refund.

HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS, SICK DAYS & CLOSURES

- **School Holidays** – Please see the school calendar for closure dates.
- **Student Vacation/Sick Day** – Families will not be refunded for school days (or After Hours Care) missed for family vacations or student illness. Please notify us as soon as possible if your child will be missing one of their regularly scheduled days.
- **Afterschool & Homeschool Program Make-ups** – For the afterschool and homeschool programs only, make-ups are allowed within one week prior to a scheduled absence or one week after a missed day, providing that there is space available.
- **School Closures** – The Patchwork School will be closed on all days for which the Boulder Valley School District declares a school closure (this could be for snow or other emergencies). There is always a chance that we will need to close the school for some other reason. In such a case, families will be contacted as soon as possible using our automated phone tree. Feel free to call any morning to verify that school will be open. Again, no tuition will be refunded for any school closures.

ILLNESSES

- **Sick Children** – If your child appears to be too uncomfortable to be at school, or seems to have an illness that could be contagious, we will ask that you keep your child at home. If they become sick while at school, we will call you to pick them up. We request that you keep your child at home until they are symptom free and/or on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school. If you are working, please be sure to plan for alternate care for your child when they become sick, as illnesses do occur more often in group situations.
- **Medication** – Any prescriptive or non-prescriptive medication can be administered by faculty members only with a current prescription (or written authority) from a physician AND written parental consent. You may use the form provided (available in the office) or any equivalent alternative. Epinephrine or nebulized medication must also be accompanied by a written protocol (See "Allergy Forms" above). Please provide the medication in its original container with pharmacy label (if applicable) and labeled with your child's first and last name. Medication will be stored in a child-proof area and administered only by a teacher that has been delegated with medication administration from the Nurse Consultant in compliance with the "Nurse Practice Act."
- **Lotions/Creams** – Topical preparations provided by parents, including diaper creams, lotion and bug sprays can be administered with written parental consent as long as they are not applied to open wounds or broken skin.

- **Contagious Illnesses** – Please report any contagious illnesses (including pink eye, strep, chicken pox, measles, mumps, hepatitis, etc.) to a director as soon as possible so that we may alert other families. Your child’s name will be kept confidential. Certain illnesses and accidents must be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care.
- **Cuts/Scrapes** – Due to licensing requirement, we are not permitted to apply antibacterial ointments or remove splinters. The mandated treatment of minor cuts and abrasions is to wash thoroughly with soap and water and apply a bandage. Such an injury will be communicated to parents with a “Bandaid Receipt.”

EMERGENCY & SECURITY

- **Pick-up** – Children will only be released to the adults for whom written authorization has been given. In an emergency, the child may be released to an adult for whom the child’s parent or guardian has given verbal authorization. If the caregiver doesn’t know the adult, identification must be required to assure the adult is authorized to pick up the child. The last teacher to leave the school each day will be responsible for using the sign-in sheets to verify that all children have been signed out. If for some reason a child is not picked-up at the end of the day, the teacher will contact a director and then attempt to contact the parent, guardian, and or emergency contacts until someone is reached that can pick the child up. If no authorized person is located after two hours, the teacher or director will notify the Police and/or Social Services. Overtime fees will apply. Please note that if a teacher senses that a child is genuinely uncomfortable about leaving with an authorized person, the child will not be forced to leave. Another parent or guardian will be contacted to come and pick the child up.
 - **Contacting Parents** – In the event of an emergency, our first priority will be to attend to the child(ren). Emergency services will then be called if necessary, after which parents will immediately be contacted. If we are unable to contact you, we will contact the emergency contact listed on your Student Information Form. In the event of an all-school emergency, you will be notified via our automated phone tree.
 - **Contacting School** – If parents should ever need to contact the school, they should call the school phone number. If we are not able to answer, please leave a message. Messages will be checked periodically throughout the day and calls will be returned as soon as possible.
 - **Door Code** – There will be a security keypad on the door through which you will normally be entering and exiting. You will be informed of the code on your first day of school. Please be sure not to give the code out any more than is necessary. If you feel the code has been compromised, please let us know so that we may change it. Also, be aware that the code will only be effective during operating hours.
 - **Emergencies** – If an emergency situation (such as a tornado warning, blizzard warning, fire, etc.) were to occur while your child is at school, you will be notified via our automated phone tree. You will be directed as to how and where you can pick up your child. Teachers would remain with the children until they are all picked up. Certain incidents will be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care, as required.
- Lost Child Emergency Procedure** — In the event that a child cannot be located, faculty will begin by searching the immediate area. A director will be notified, as well as all other faculty as they are encountered. A faculty member will be assigned to stand watch at the front gate, and other faculty members will be assigned to each area of the school. If the child cannot be found within 5 minutes, 911 will be called and parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible.

- **Train Derailment Emergency Procedure** (as required by the Colorado Department of Human Services) – In the wildly unlikely event of a train derailment, the school has an emergency procedure as follows: 1) Should the train derail, children and staff will move calmly and rapidly away from said train. 2) Moving away from the train will entail moving towards the front of the school building, and children will be led outside the school gate onto the front sidewalk where roll-call will happen in order to ensure that no one is remaining in the school yard or building. 3) Children will progress from the sidewalk, via a safe crossing of the street, to the middle school, where staff and children will wait together until a further plan of action is developed and appropriate emergency officials are contacted.

MEALS & SNACKS

- **Snacks** – We will provide both a morning and afternoon snack for Toddlers and Preschoolers, and one snack for older children. These will occur roughly at 10am and 2:30pm, but times will vary according to the children’s needs. If you would like to participate in helping us with snacks ideas or with providing food, we would be more than happy to have your input.
- **Lunches** – Children will need to bring a lunch with them every day for which they are in attendance at lunch time. Please be aware that children will not be able to share any food from their lunch with any other child (including a sibling) due primarily to allergy concerns. We will also not be able to heat food up and we recommend including ice packs in lunches, as we will not be able to store any lunch items in the refrigerator.
- **Dietary Restrictions** – We will do our best to work with you to ensure that all of the children’s dietary needs are met, despite any restrictions you or they may have. However, if a child requires food that significantly differs from the menu for the rest of the children, we ask that parents either bring food or provide reimbursement for special items.
- **No Nuts** – We are a nut-free school, so no foods containing peanuts, tree-nuts, or other nut products may be brought into the school. At least one of our students has a severe, life-threatening allergy to nuts and thus it is critical to avoid any contact with this food. Please help us in reading labels before packing any foods for school – especially muffins, granola bars, cereals, etc. to check for “hidden” ingredients. If your child has eaten nut products before coming to school, please be sure his or her hands and face have been thoroughly washed before entering the building. Please note that Sunflower Butter and Soy Butter are both excellent alternatives to nut butters.
- **Milk/Drinks** – Please bring a water bottle or cup labeled with your child’s name so that they have access to it throughout the day. No juice or other drinks will be served except possibly for special celebrations. No milk will be provided, so if desired please provide in a leak-proof container in your child’s lunch box with ice pack. Please make sure that all drink containers are taken home each day to be washed (or for water bottles, at the end of the week).
- **Treats/Special Occasions** – For birthdays and other special occasions, we are happy to have parents bring in special foods. Please check with a teacher to find out about any allergies or other dietary restrictions of children that will be attending that day.

DAILY LIFE

- **Drop-Off/Parking** – We understand that it can be very difficult to get young children to and from places on time because they don’t really think of time in the same way that adults do. Therefore, we would like to encourage parents to drop children off anywhere between 8:50 & 9:20, or between 8:00 and 8:15 for morning care. Having staggered drop-offs allows us to welcome each child individually as

they arrive, and helps parking to go more smoothly. Please do make sure that you park only in the spaces directly in front of the school. Please do not park in front of the businesses to the north or the south of the school or in the middle school parking lot. If you are visiting the school for any reason besides just dropping off or picking up or expect to stay longer than about 10 minutes please use alternate parking in front of a nearby residence (not business) in order to keep the traffic in front of the school moving smoothly.

- **Sign-in/Pick-up** – Please be sure to fill out all information on the sign-in and pick-up sheet. This will help us to ensure that your child is picked-up only by those persons authorized by you on the Student Information Form. Teachers will also use the sign-in sheets throughout the day to confirm that all children that are signed in are accounted for. Please be sure to pick children up early or on time (there is a ten minute grace period after which overtime charges will apply).
- **Visits** – Parents and families are always welcome. Anyone else that would like to visit your child may also do so (grandparents, etc.) with your permission. Please let us know when they will be coming and ensure that they are prepared to show identification and sign-in upon arriving.
- **Television** – There will be no TV watching at school. Teachers may occasionally show the children a short educational video or clips from the internet pertaining to something we are studying.
- **Green Cleaning/Sanitizing** – The school employs a “green” cleaning company to clean the school at the end of each day. We also have recycling and composting in addition to trash. Teachers sanitize all eating areas and diapering areas throughout each day. Other areas of the school are sanitized on a rotating basis.
- **Computers** – Computers will be used with teacher supervision throughout the day for the purposes of research, communication, and expression. No video games will be allowed at any time.
- **Celebrations** – We would welcome your help in celebrating your child’s birthday or any other family holidays. Please let us know about any traditions you would like to share, and see the “Treats/Special Occasions” section above for information about bringing food.
- **Walks** – We will occasionally take walks with the children to nearby locations. Please ensure you have given permission on the Student Information Form. Walks will likely be to the park, library, or other neighborhood facilities.
- **Toddler and Preschool Field Trips** – Parents will be notified of plans for any field trips requiring vehicular transportation. Transportation will be arranged by recruiting parent volunteers. We would appreciate your help in volunteering, and may request small fees if appropriate. All children requiring car seats or booster seats will need to have their seats dropped off with them in the morning. All children will always be required to remain seated and securely fastened in the vehicles, and no parent or teacher will be responsible for driving and/or supervising more than four children at one time. All chaperones must carry a cell phone at all times so that they may immediately call 911 in an emergency. All chaperones will be provided with instructions as well as emergency contact information for the directors, teachers, and the children. Should a child arrive after a small-group field trip has departed they will be allowed to join an alternate group. If a child arrives after an all-school field-trip, the parents will be required to bring the child to the field trip location and will not be able to leave the child at the school.
- **Older Child Field Trips** – For the Elementary students, parents will be notified of plans for any major field trips requiring vehicular transportation. However, short trips may occur spontaneously if the teacher vehicles are sufficient for transporting all of the teachers and children participating in the trip. For pre-planned trips, transportation will be arranged by recruiting parent volunteers. We would appreciate your help in volunteering, and may request small fees if appropriate. All children requiring

car seats or booster seats will need to have their seats dropped off with them in the morning. All children will always be required to remain seated and securely fastened in the vehicles. All chaperones must carry a cell phone at all times so that they may immediately call 911 in an emergency. All chaperones will be provided with instructions as well as emergency contact information for the directors, teachers, and the children. Should a child arrive after a small-group field trip has departed they will be allowed to join an alternate group. If a child arrives after an all-school field-trip, the parents will be required to bring the child to the field trip location and will not be able to leave the child at the school.

- **Outside** – We will ensure that children have an opportunity to be outside at least once a day when weather is permitting. Please be sure to bring clothing that is appropriate for the weather (including snow pants and boots when necessary). We will apply sunscreen to any child who remains outside in direct sunlight for more than ten minutes. We will provide sunscreen (Water Babies), but you are also welcome to provide your own (please label).
- **Naps & Still Time** – All children staying in the afternoon will be provided with an opportunity to rest and/or sleep after lunch or whenever they appear to need it. Nap mats with individual sheets will be available and children are encouraged to bring any blankets or comfort items that might help them to sleep. Due to licensing requirements, we are not permitted to wake sleeping children. For children that are no longer napping or children at the Elementary School, they will be asked to choose quieter activities during Still Time, which will occur every day after lunch.
- **Diapering/Toilet Training** – We ask that you provide any diapers or pull-ups that your child may require. We will provide wipes, but you are also welcome to provide your own (please label). If your child is toilet training, please be sure to let us know so that we may be consistent at school (although we will not be able to offer any rewards). We do not require that children be toilet trained by any particular age. Children will be encouraged to use the toilet, but will never be pressured to do so. During toilet training, it is a good idea to provide multiple changes of clothing.
- **Supplies/Belongings** – Your child’s personal belongings will be kept in a cubby at school. Because some project work will be messy, please be sure that your child is dressed appropriately and that they have a change of clothing available. The following items should be available at all times:
 - o Extra clothing
 - o Diapers or Pull-ups (if applicable)
 - o Sippy Cups and/or water bottles
 - o Coats, boots, mittens, hats, slippers, etc.
 - o Blanket or other comfort items (if applicable)
 - o Swimsuit & towel (during the summer)

See the attached school supply lists for details on what school supplies to provide.

PLEASE LABEL ALL PERSONAL ITEMS (see our website for a labeling company)

- **Share/Store Policy** – Children are allowed to bring additional items from home with the understanding that if they are not interested in sharing, the item will need to remain in their cubby. We request that money stay at home, however if a child does bring money to school, the school will not be responsible for ensuring its safe keeping.
- **Communications** – We strongly encourage parent involvement, and will make every effort to keep communication open and ongoing. Please be sure to speak with one of us whenever you have a question, idea, comment, or concern. We will also be communicating with parents daily at drop-off and pick-up, regularly through notes in parent mailboxes and documentation in the school, and

monthly through newsletters. We will also offer "Learning Dialogues" between teachers and parents at regularly scheduled intervals, and can meet beyond that as needed.

- **Anonymous Comments** – If you do have a comment that you would like to have voiced to the Board of Directors anonymously, you may utilize the comment envelope in the cubby room – this is checked by the Parent Connections Committee Board Member periodically.
- **Family Participation** – Besides regular communication, we hope that parents will be frequent participants in the daily lives of the school. We offer numerous ways for parents to volunteer, and various resources to help support you. Please see the "Parents" section of the website for additional information.
- **Adjustment Period** – Children all respond differently to change. Some will be excited about trying something new, some will be nervous, and most will have both feelings at different times. It is normal for your child to cry when you leave, but it is also normal for them not to miss you at all. It is also normal for them to be anxious for the first few weeks and then fine, but it is also normal for them to be excited at first and then have a few weeks where it is more difficult to say goodbye. Keep in mind that the anxiety about saying goodbye is usually the most difficult part. Once the parent leaves, children are almost always fine within minutes. We will work with each family to find a drop-off routine that works well for both the parent and the child. Also, please know that if a child is truly having a difficult time adjusting, and doesn't seem to feel better shortly after you leave, we will absolutely let you know so that we can work together to find a solution.
- **Conflict Resolution** – In order to support the children in conflict resolution, we use strategies found in democratic learning communities, specifically adhering to a restorative justice approach. Our stance on conflict resolution is heavily influenced by our belief in an education based on relationships within the learning community. This means that we will not use any treats or rewards, or punishments such as time-out. Rather than developing morals, punishments and rewards merely keep children obedient. Autonomy or self-regulation is encouraged by exchanging points of view with children, allowing them to construct their own understanding. At times we must impose restraints, but rather than using unrelated punishments, we help set necessary limits as children infringe upon the rights of others in the community. We view conflicts, either with the environment or with others, as opportunities for learning rather than something to be summarily extinguished. In this approach, the teacher appreciates all perspectives and works to create an inclusive community. In addition, the teacher begins with an image of the child as successful and capable of working through problems within a group. The teachers are committed to honest communication through questions and conversation. Thus the teacher's role is to observe, scaffold, and mediate as conflicts arise. Each year we host at least one workshop for parents on conflict resolution to discuss strategies used at school, useful language, and ideas that can be used at home. Consistency in language and conflict resolution methods can further strengthen the connection between home and school.

SPECIAL NEEDS STATEMENT

At The Patchwork School, we believe that every child has their own unique strengths and their own challenges, and we strive to get to know each child as a person so that we can support him or her in the best way possible. Thus, we do not really think of a child with "Special Needs" any differently than any other child, but instead prefer to treat every case uniquely. However, we do also understand that some children will require additional support in order to accomplish tasks that may come more easily for a "typically developing" child. This could be a physical, learning, emotional, social, or behavioral challenge. We understand that certain challenges can make participation in various activities especially difficult. We do not strive to "label" children, but do seek to find strategies and resources that can help

us to be properly equipped to meet the child's needs. We try to view any special challenges as opportunities for learning -- both for the child and the community. At times the other children (and teachers) may need help learning how to work with the child, but ultimately this will help everyone learn how to be in community with (not just tolerant of) people that are different.

We also know that we must be realistic in our abilities to meet every child's needs and thus will evaluate each situation with regards to how well we can support the child, what effect that child may have on the other children, what strain any extra support needed will place on the teachers and other staff, and what the effect will be on the community as a whole. Working with a child that requires extra support can be both time consuming and stressful, and it is important for everyone involved that we not take on more than we can truly handle well.

Therefore, we will try to carefully evaluate whether or not we believe we currently have the resources available to accept a new child with Special Needs. After enrollment, we will work with each individual family on a periodic or as needed basis to share observations, set goals, and discuss any necessary adjustments. Adjustments may include requesting that the family provide extra support people, special trainings for staff, access to necessary professionals, schedule changes, research or other data, etc. We will work with the family to ensure that we have consensus on the plan for meeting their child's needs and that everyone is working together to support one another.

SAFETY STATEMENT

We frequently get questions from parents about safety, including security, abuse policies, hitting, and other related topics. This is to be expected, given the weight of the decision that you are attempting to make. We understand that trying to determine who you want to place your trust in, when it comes to your child's well-being is not an easy matter. Therefore, we would like to let you know our philosophy regarding the topic of safety. First, the safety of your children is of the utmost importance to us. If children are not safe, then we are not meeting the most basic and necessary goal of our school. However, given that it is not always entirely clear what "safe" means, we want to define it more completely. To start with, we want to ensure that children **feel safe** when they are here, that they are kept **safe from serious injury**, and that their **social and emotional well being** is nurtured and protected. To this end, we adhere to all required safety measures, starting with background checks and fingerprinting on every teacher, licensing by the Colorado Department of Human Services, inspections by the Boulder County Health Department, and fire inspections by the Louisville Fire Department.

We also strive to build solid relationships between teachers, parents, and the children. Strong, open relationships are our best defense against the undesirable aspects of the world. As we work with parents, and we encourage them to become a part of the community, we get to know each person individually, so that we know when someone new walks in the door, and we know who we can really depend on. As for teachers, we do not just interview them and hire them based on a resume. Instead, we ask them to spend some time in the school, allowing us to get to know them first. We even have out-of-town interviewees stay at our houses. Then, as a staff, we regularly have open and frank conversations about risks, concerns, safety, and more. We also have a co-teaching environment that in a very natural way, ensures that teachers are not working alone, but are handling problems as a team. We have created a close-knit community rather than a collection of strangers.

In addition, we also believe that with the responsibility of the protection of children, comes a **responsibility for the protection of their rights**. Besides asking us to watch over your child, you are also charging us with ensuring that your child has the right to participate, the right to speak their mind, and the right to the pursuit of happiness. This responsibility is no less important to us, and in fact must even be more present in our minds, as society is often quick to punish for failing to

protect, but rarely recognizes failures to allow. Thus, we seek to **balance the need for protection and participation** in such a way that honors adults' concerns and fears about safety, but at the same time also honors the child's need to take reasonable risks, to explore their world freely, and to experience success and failure first-hand.

We understand that parents are constantly bombarded with books, media, workshops, TV programs, and more, insisting that your child's safety and wellbeing depends on your adherence to a specific set of safety guidelines. We also live in a world where parents are blamed, and even persecuted, when any ill befalls their child. "Assertive advocacy groups, ambitious politicians, and sensationalistic media promote unrealistic fears... Real risks exist, but they are often far less than adults believe. Even when school shootings seemed to occur everywhere, Americans faced a far greater risk of being struck by lightning than falling to school violence" (Rudkin, Hall, 2010). Thus, we feel that any media that aims to counsel parents on how to keep their children "safe" should be considered carefully and utilized as provocation for discussion, but that we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be taken in by frightening statistics.

We believe it is important to ensure that children have opportunities to take risks. It is beneficial for them to experience the normal bumps and bruises that accompany a true and authentic experience, so that they have a chance to learn first-hand what the consequences of their actions are. Therefore, we want to create a space that is "...as safe as necessary rather than as safe as possible" (Rudkin, Hall, 2010). This allows the children to experience small risks in a safe environment where they are supported as they experience and learn to handle pain, disappointment, and conflict, as well as excitement, friendship, and joy. We work to empower children to say "no" to anything they don't like, to seek help when they need it, and to stand up for one another. **Our goal is to look to our children, our surroundings, and our community to make accurate assessments of the true risks at hand as we work together to protect the physical and emotional well-being, as well as the rights, of the children (and the adults) in our community.**

If you have additional specific questions about security, safety, or anything else, we are of course more than happy to talk with you in person, or on the phone. We also recommend the following resources, which echo our ideas about how we can approach the topic of children's safety, and from which we have drawn upon to compose the above statement:

RESOURCES

Rudkin, J., Hall, E. (2010). *Seen and Heard: Children's Rights in Early Childhood Education*.

Skenazy, L. (2009). *Free-Range Kids: How to Raise Self-Reliant Children (Without Going Nuts With Worry)*

Bronson, P., Merryman, A. (2011). *Nurture Shock: New Thinking About Children*

Faber, A, Mazlish, E. (1999). *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*

- **Colorado Department of Human Services** – The Patchwork School is licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care, 1575 Sherman Street, Denver Colorado 80203-1714 (303-866-5958). This department is responsible for issuing and renewing licenses for child care facilities and handles all questions, concerns, violations, and complaints.
- **Boulder County Family and Children's Services** – The Boulder County Department of Social Services handles reports of suspected abuse or neglect via a 24-hour telephone service (303-678-6247). We are required by law to report all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.