### Martha's Vineyard Public Schools

# Project Headway Preschool

Located in the Oak Bluffs School, West Tisbury School and at Grace Church



**Parent Handbook** 

#### Dear Parents, Welcome to Project Headway Preschool.

This booklet contains detailed information about our program philosophy, practices, and policies. Please take time during your child's first days of school to become familiar with the information in this booklet and to complete and return the forms provided in this packet. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's classroom teacher or Jenny Royal, Early Childhood Coordinator, at (508)693-2007, X26.

#### PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

Project Headway is a preschool program operated by the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools to provide children with and without disabilities the opportunity to develop, learn, and grow together in an inclusive, diverse early learning environment. The program began in 1981 and has been providing high quality early education for Vineyard children 3, 4, and 5 years old who have a very wide range of abilities, strengths, needs, and learning styles. -Creating an inclusive setting affords all the children opportunities for highly specialized teaching, a low staff ratio, and opportunities to learn and interact within a very diverse group of children. All the children have strengths to offer any group-

The program philosophy is grounded upon a developmental perspective of child growth and learning. We believe that each child builds his or her own understandings and skills when engaged in carefully planned and supported learning and play experiences in interactions with peers and with skilled, caring adults.

Close attention is paid to children's social-emotional development and communication skills. The primary focus and mission of the program is to support each child's optimal development in the key areas of socialization, communication, and independence through play. The program also incorporates behavioral perspectives in supporting learning through functional behavior assessments and applied behavior analysis (ABA) for some learners.

An interest area classroom design is used to provide children with options and choices in a structured way. This child-centered, child-initiated approach builds the child's sense of self-direction, motivation, independence, and self-esteem. Practice in decision-making is important for all children and occurs throughout the program routines.

The daily schedule provides for some teacher-directed activities as well to help children develop specific skills for group interaction, turn taking, listening, and following directions. The daily routines provide activities that alternate between active and quiet, large group and small group, child-initiated and teacher-led.

The curriculum in preschool is provided primarily through hands-on activity as children engage directly with materials and interactive activities available to them in the classroom environment. The activities and materials are presented in a highly organized manner and are geared to the specific needs of the children in the program. Materials are easily accessible to the children and children make their own choices of activity most of the day.

Interest areas and materials emphasize sensory-motor play, construction play, and symbolic or socio-dramatic play. Materials are changed weekly and monthly to provide variety as well as to continually be appropriate as the children progress. Activities and materials are structured and

organized so that children have opportunities to share, communicate, learn to solve conflicts, and learn to be part of a classroom community (helping and being helped) with peers.

The curriculum is organized around themes. Themes selected offer a topic or key concept to stimulate curiosity and learning and to foster a deeper understanding about something meaningful and important upon which children will build their future learning. Themes may continue for a week or for several weeks depending on the children's interests and the complexities and varieties of activities that the theme offers. A theme on plants, for example, offers opportunities to sing songs or finger plays about plants, to read books about plants, to plant seeds, to care for a garden, to cook using plants or plant products, to create art using leaves, flowers, or seeds, to pretend to be a plant growing, to visit a farm, to study food groups, to compare different types of plants.

The interest areas in the classrooms vary somewhat from year to year, or classroom to classroom, and typically include many of the following learning areas that support the skills listed: *blocks and trucks* – balance, sorting, shape identification, imagination, symmetry, matching, measuring, safety, cooperating, sharing, turn taking

"house" corner/ dramatic play – sharing, conversation, cooperation, pretending, sequencing, creating, imaginative thinking, practicing roles

*indoor climbing and games/gym* – catching, throwing, moving through space, kicking, marching, hopping, dancing, balancing, imitation, being a team member, strength, flexibility, sportsmanship

*puzzles and manipulative toys* – sequencing, planning, organizing, eye-hand coordination, matching, problem solving, visual-perceptual skills, spatial skills

*science / discovery* – experimenting, inquiry, exploration, problem solving, observation, questioning

*painting / art centers* – creativity, motor coordination, color naming, self-expression, matching, sorting, planning, cutting, finger strength, sequencing, copying, symmetry

*sensory tables* – exploration, creativity, tactile processing, imagination, sharing, measuring, sifting, pouring, sorting, problem solving

music/dance – singing, moving, creating, turn taking, listening, cooperating, rhythm, imitating
books – making choices, visual attention, listening, left-right progression, parts and sequences of stories, characters, imagination, predicting, early literacy-letter, word knowledge
woodworking – gross and fine motor, spatial skills, sensory skills, creativity, responsibility, safety, eye-hand coordination

dollhouse/puppets – language, imagination, social interactions, role taking, storytelling outdoor play area –gross motor skills, social interactions, problem solving, strength, flexibility, turn taking, exploration,

As the children work and play they are doing many things at once. In the dollhouse, for example, they develop fine motor skills, use their imaginations, develop language skills, and build peer interaction skills. At the art table, children demonstrate creativity, learn colors, make choices, share materials, use language, and develop fine motor skills. Teachers are always nearby observing the children's play, ready to extend, expand, or redirect the children so that each play experience is indeed a valuable learning experience.

Literacy materials are found throughout the classroom in the form of signs, charts, labels, books, paper to "write" on, and many tools for writing, drawing, and painting. Early literacy is fostered

in the context of play: making letters for the mail carrier, lists for "shopping", menus for the "restaurant", or prescriptions from the "doctor". Math concepts also are built through play and natural daily routines, such as counting the number of cups and napkins needed for snack; deciding who has "more"; how many turns each person gets; building, comparing, and measuring blocks and other construction toys, making patterns of colors or shapes.

The teachers' job is to facilitate peer interaction and learning, to structure the environment so that the children can direct their own learning as much as possible, to stimulate the development of language and social interaction skills, to embed learning opportunities for each child into the play, and to provide feedback and support for each child for optimal behavior and growth. Teachers are observers, facilitators, and resources rather than instructors. They create the scaffold to support each child in his or her learning and growth.

Language and social development are central priorities of the program and permeate all program activities. Teachers focus on facilitating development within the peer group and within naturally occurring situations. In other words, the children learn language by using it when they need it to get something they need and to interact successfully with others. A little girl speaks or signs to a peer to get the toy she wants. Another child needs to find a positive way to get someone else to stop doing something. Two children need to figure out how to build a structure together, selecting blocks, placing blocks, taking turns, planning, and making sure they both like the way it turns out.

During preschool years, children need gentle encouragement to gradually become more and more independent from adults. Developmentally, the peer group is becoming increasingly an important focus of social growth. When appropriate, a child is redirected to his or her peers as playmates. Since the children in the program are at different levels of being able to communicate, play, and work productively with peers, various strategies and approaches are used to extend a child's social and communication repertoire. At times, interaction skills need to be specifically and directly taught and facilitated through more direct strategies such as demonstration, prompting, or specific direct teaching. As a child needs less and less help with social or communication skills, teachers will provide fewer and fewer cues until the child is playing interactively and communicating independently.

As teachers observe the children, they also are watching for ways to extend an activity for a child or to redirect a child who needs help. By stepping back a bit from a direct instruction role, teachers can be involved in a much more complete way with more of the children and can provide truly individualized educational experiences for each one.

Children who have intensive developmental or physical disabilities are supported by an adult throughout the day. Interaction among all the children is a priority whenever possible and adults move gradually to a less central role as the children are more comfortable and able to work and play independently with peers in small groups. This strong emphasis on peer involvement has been shown to have significant impact on all children's later learning and supports successful transitions to larger group classrooms in elementary school.

#### PARENT INVOLVEMENT

#### Observing and Volunteering in the Classroom

Parents are an important part of their children's learning and our program. We encourage you to visit whenever you can but request that you arrange a good time with the teachers in advance. In order to be a volunteer in our class, you must fill out a CORI at the Superintendent's office in Vineyard Haven.

Teachers are happy to suggest a time of day for you to observe or help out. This helps us to avoid having too many adults in the classroom at once. Any changes from routines and the regular flow of the day can easily become overwhelming or confusing for young children. We suggest that when you visit for the first time, you just watch from a quiet, out of the way spot. Unobtrusive observing is, initially, the best way for you to see what your child's school experience is like. Any visitor in a classroom is a change to the usual classroom environment and will affect the typical routines and behaviors of the children.

If you have questions that come up during your visits, we are happy to arrange a separate time to talk together by phone or after school. It isn't possible for staff to talk with visitors while school is in progress. Even if a teacher or assistant doesn't look like she is directly involved in teaching, she is intently observing and making decisions about if, when, and how to intervene and extend a child's learning activities.

Conversations among adults take the focus away from the children and can distract others working and playing in the room. Please have all of any adult conversations in the hall.

Once you have observed in the classroom a couple of times, your child will be used to having you there, you will have a sense of the flow of the day, and you will be able to interact with your child and his/her friends more comfortably in "their" space.

#### School /Home Meetings

A meeting with your child's teacher or members of the team is always available on request. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice yearly in the fall and spring with all families. The frequency of parent meetings or home visits for the families of children with disabilities is typically designated in each child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Please let your child's teacher or the Early Childhood Coordinator know if you would like to schedule a meeting or conference at any time.

For families of children with disabilities, joint conferences with a variety of specialists are arranged when needed. Parents or any Team member may request a Team meeting at any time, particularly if there is new information to share with the entire Team or a program or service change to discuss. The annual Team review meeting is another good time for parents to discuss their child's program and progress in detail with all the people involved in the preschool program.

#### Other Ways to Communicate

Should you want to talk with your child's teacher by phone, please call any day after 1:45 pm for West Tisbury and Oak Bluffs. For Grace, please contact the teacher after 12 p.m. If you cannot reach classroom staff working with your child, they are likely involved in staffing or team

meeting, so please try again the next day, leave a message, or e-mail to arrange a good time to talk.

During school hours, teachers are often unable to get to the phone because they are busy playing and working with the children. Please leave a message, if no one answers. If you need to reach the program urgently during the day due to an emergency, please call, hang up, and call back again immediately. This will signal the teachers that there is an urgent call. Also you can directly contact Sue or Orlaith in the West Tisbury School office (extension 400) or Michelle or Helen at the Oak Bluffs School or your teacher at the Grace Location about any emergencies and they will let the teachers know.

Some of the children carry a notebook to and from school, which is used by parents and teachers to share information about a child's day and to note pertinent information. This can be very helpful since some children travel by school bus. In addition to providing daily communication, these notebooks are seen by some parents as valuable records of their child's early school years. E-mail is another good way to stay in touch, ask questions, and share important information about a child's experiences at home and at school.

The teachers regularly send home newsletters or information sheets, either on paper or by e-mail, updating you on weekly curriculum plans, classroom or program-wide events and activities, and keeping you informed about important dates, parent events, or holidays.

#### Parent Conferences and Progress Reports

There are two parent conferences for all children each year in October/November and in May. Project Headway uses a portfolio based System to document child growth and learning in all learning domains for all children. Progress information based on your child's portfolio is provided at these Fall and Spring parent conferences. A parent survey for parents to use at parent conferences will be given to you by your child's teacher. You are welcome to use the worksheet to help you to share important observations from home during the conference. Written progress reports are provided to all families with students with special needs in January and June.

#### **NUTRITION**

There is a daily morning snack and lunch during school hours (WT and OB only). Snacks are usually provided by the parents, either for their own child or for the whole class through a cooperative snack schedule. Also, program staff always have some snacks on hand, just in case. Please be aware that the program places emphasis on eating healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, cheese, yogurt, grains, and natural foods without additives. We carefully avoid foods with added sugars, preservatives, and other additives such as artificial colors and flavors. Children are often involved in snack preparation and participate in cooking activities almost every week. We talk regularly about healthy foods and usually plan a curriculum theme on food and nutrition at some point during the school year.

Some children may have food sensitivities or allergies. The staff is very aware of how to manage gluten-free, nut-free, or casein-free diets and the classrooms nearly always have appropriate snacks on hand. If your child has any food allergies or sensitivities, be sure tell us and to indicate them on the emergency cards. Each classroom teacher will apprise you of any food allergy or restriction for you child's class, as well as allergy procedures, Epi-Pen training and documentation.

Children can bring their own lunches or order the school lunch, which is the public school inhouse lunch menu, prepared at each school daily. For packed lunches, we recommend you include sandwiches, soups, cheese, yogurt, applesauce, veggie sticks, bagels, rice cakes, fruit, popcorn, corn chips, or other healthy snack items.

Please avoid foods and drinks with large amounts of added sugars and other sweeteners. We specifically request that you do not send any candy, gum, or soda to school with your child. Many boxed or pouch juices such as Hi-C, Capri-Sun, or Hawaiian Punch, have only 10 - 15% fruit juice and contain mostly sweetened water. Items marked "all natural" often contain a great deal of sugar as well. Please also be aware that we strongly discourage children from sharing items in their lunches. This causes distress when there isn't enough for everyone and it can place children with food sensitivities at risk. We want to make sure that the children eat the foods that their parents intended for them. We will send home all uneaten food portions, so that you know what your child has consumed during his or her day.

#### ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS

The West Tisbury and Oak Bluffs Program day begins at 8:30am and ends at 1:30pm Monday through Friday with extended hours, M, T, TH, and F until 2:40. The Grace Church Program runs from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. If you drop off and pick up your child, it is essential that you arrive and leave on time. If an emergency causes you to be late at either drop off or pick up, please call to let us know.

It is very important for your child to arrive at the start of the program day and to be picked up promptly at the end of the day. Arriving late, after the daily activities have started, or staying late, after the other children have left, can be extremely unsettling and upsetting to children. Please be aware that no one is available to care for your child before or after school. These hours are needed for staff planning and preparation, room set-up and clean-up, staffing or team meetings, writing reports and documenting learning, and conducting parent conferences. This time is essential for the staff to work together to maintain the high quality of the program.

Your child's daily attendance is very important for your child's optimal growth and learning and for the classroom as a whole. When a child's attendance is irregular or infrequent, his or her own learning suffers, and so does the learning of all the children in the program. The classroom community is important even for very young children and when one or more children attend only occasionally, the whole group is affected. There also are children on the waiting list who would value the opportunity to participate in this program.

Please do not keep your child home from school unless he or she is ill. If you do need to keep your child home due to illness, please call between 8:00 and 8:30am or the day before. If your child rides the school bus, you must also notify the driver in advance before 7:30am that morning.

#### BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAY OBSERVATIONS

Birthdays are a very special time for each child and a real celebration with friends adds a great deal to the development of self-esteem. Children typically enjoy having a small birthday party at school and we are happy to help you with this. We usually have the party at lunchtime and the child's family is welcome and encouraged to participate. Families are asked to provide healthy

treats. We will advise you if there are special dietary considerations for any of the children. Public school/DPH Nutrition Standards are used for foods provided in school.

Holiday activities are often woven into the curriculum through art projects, cooking activities, books, rhymes, and music. Since so many holidays emphasize the giving of candy and sweets to children, we prefer to focus on other aspects of celebration. Holidays give us a chance to focus on a wide range of cultures and traditions. If your family would like to participate by sharing some of your traditions at one of the holidays or events important to your culture or religion, please let us know. If you have any difficulties or questions with our policies about holidays or birthdays due to your own beliefs, please let us know. We will honor your wishes in a manner that is acceptable for all families involved.

#### **CLOTHING**

We suggest you dress children in play clothes that you don't mind getting wet or dirty. Even though we use smocks for water play and art projects, spills and messes happen a lot in preschool! **Also, please send in an extra full set of clothing, including socks, extra diapers, and underwear.** To avoid mix-ups, please label all your child's spare clothing and outerwear. Please leave a complete change in their child's cubby until needed.

Extra outer clothes are also useful in case the weather changes suddenly, which happens particularly often during the fall and spring. We go outdoors every day for about 30 minutes, unless it is extremely cold (below 20 F), very stormy, or very wet. Please provide rainwear, a heavy coat, boots, mittens, and hats when appropriate so that your child will always be comfortable outside.

#### VACATIONS, STORM / SNOW DAYS, EARLY RELEASE DAYS

We follow the Martha's Vineyard Public School calendar and schedule. Please refer to the current year school calendar provided in this packet. We are closed for storms or snow whenever the whole school system is closed. Please listen to the radio or check the website (www.mvyps.org) for information about closings or delayed openings if the weather looks threatening.

Sometimes schools close early for teacher meetings or conferences. These are typically noted on the school calendar. Project Headway Preschool will usually close at 11:00 am on early release days. We will contact you each time to make sure there is no confusion. During each of the parent conference weeks in the fall and spring, Project Headway will close for one full day only, rather than having several very short half-day sessions. Those dates will be announced in advance, so parents can plan for childcare for those days.

#### HEALTH REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES, AND IMMUNIZATIONS

All children <u>must</u> have required immunizations and evidence of lead testing as required by state laws prior to starting the first day of school. Please send copies of immunizations records to us immediately if you have not already supplied them.

The preschool environment is a relatively confined space with many adults and children in very close contact. We use many play materials every day and when germs and illness are present, they are rapidly passed to other children and the teachers through the air, on toys, on carpets, cushions, furniture, and by very close hands-on contact among us all each day. From time to time we have children enrolled who have extremely serious illnesses or other delicate health issues. Typical childhood illness can pose a severe and significant threat to their health and well-being.

While we realize it is difficult for working parents to find alternative care for a mildly or moderately ill child, we must require that children not attend school if any of the following symptoms are present:

- temperature over 100.0 F
- diarrhea or vomiting in the last 24 hours
- conjunctivitis This is an eye infection in which the eye is usually red with burning. There is typically thick yellow drainage from the eye. This is highly contagious.
- head lice, scabies (not kept from school once treated)
- impetigo of the skin. This starts as a very small blister that contains yellowish fluid or white pus and is surrounded by reddened skin. It commonly occurs on the face or other exposed areas.
- contagious childhood diseases. Measles, mumps, chicken pox, roseola.
- any unidentified, untreated rash.
- chronic or serious colds or allergic reactions involving significant nasal discharge, watery eyes, excessive sneezing or coughing.

When deciding whether to keep your child home or not, please use your judgment as to your child's comfort and energy levels. Children expend a great deal of energy in preschool and, when their reserves are lower, a busy day in preschool can bring on more serious illness and further reduce their resistance to viruses and bacteria. A mild cold or runny nose by itself is not usually serious, but an overly tired, "achy" child with no appetite or energy may need a day or two at home to avoid contracting or spreading a more serious illness.

Please let the staff know immediately if your child has been diagnosed with either Strep throat, lice, the flu, or any other significant illness. We like to inform all of the parents of possible exposure to any of these illnesses

Please be particularly alert to flu-like symptoms involving fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea or vomiting. These may be indicators of seasonal flu or other types of influenza, including the H1N1 flu that is highly contagious. Please make sure you and your family know and use the practices recommended to control the spread of flu and other illnesses:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Keep hands away from nose, mouth, and eyes

- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available)
- Monitor young children's emerging self-care skills closely
- Remind children not to share cups or eating utensils
- See <u>www.cdc.gov/cleanhands</u> and <u>www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm</u> for more information on best practices.
- Stay home when ill and remain home for a minimum of 24 hours after all sign of fever is gone without fever reducing medication.
- Get vaccinated when vaccines become available. Primary target groups for the H1N1 vaccination include people ages 6 months through 24 years, pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, health care providers, and people ages 25-64 who have underlying medical conditions that place them at risk for complications.

Please be sure to immediately report any contagious disease in your household to us so we can observe all the children and notify other families.

To assure the health of everyone in the program, any child with flu-like symptoms that include fever will not be permitted to return to the classroom for at least **48 hours** after they are completely free of all signs of fever without fever reducing medication.

## MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROJECT HEADWAY PRESCHOOL

#### **Consent for Field Trips / Transportation**

Check all items to which you give your permission.
I give permission for my child to participate in trips away from the school site under the supervision of school staff.
I give permission for my child to be transported by the school bus for trips requiring transportation.
I understand that I will be informed, in advance, of each trip away from the school.
I do not give permission for my child to be transported by the school bus on trips away from the school.
Child Name
Parent Signature
Date

### MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROJECT HEADWAY PRESCHOOL

#### **Consent for Sharing Contact Information**

Please check all items that apply and provide information on the line as indicated. I give permission for the following information about my child and my family to be shared via a class/ program directory listing with the other families and staff members involved in the Project Headway Preschool Program this year: my child's name my name our family's mailing address our family's physical address our phone numbers our e-mail addresses I do not give my permission for information listed above to be shared in the Project Headway Preschool directory or in any other form with other families. Parent Signature Child Name

Date

## MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROJECT HEADWAY PRESCHOOL

### Consent for Photography/ Video and Audio Recording

Please carefully review the statements, check the statement that indicates your preference, and sign at the bottom of the page.

Chile	1's Name:
	_ I give permission for the staff of Project Headway Preschool to make audio recordings,
video	os, or photographs of my child for the purposes of:
0	sharing classroom activities with families in the program at parent events;
0	sharing with teachers working with or expected to work with my child;
0	providing documentation for individual child assessment and monitoring;
0	supporting staff training activities;
0	serving as record keeping for the program; or
0	providing publicity about Project Headway Preschool via flyers, newspaper, or other
medi	
show and c	lerstand and agree that any audio/visual materials that include my child will not be played or on to people other than program staff and their supervisors without my specific knowledge consent.
appe	lerstand that I will have access to any digital, audio, or film materials in which my child ars.
OR	
child	_ I do not give permission for Project Headway staff to record, video, or photograph my
Parei	nt Signature
Date	

### ESCOLAS PÚBLICAS DE MARTHA PRÉ-ESCOLA DA RODOVIÁRIA DO PROJETO

Consentimento para Fotografia / Vídeo e Gravação de Áudio

Revise cuidadosamente as instruções, verifique a que indica sua preferência e assine na parte inferior da página.

Nome da criano	ça:		

Permito que a equipe da Project Headway Preschool faça gravações de áudio, vídeos ou fotografias de meu filho para os seguintes fins: compartilhar atividades em sala de aula com as famílias do programa nos eventos dos pais; compartilhando com professores que trabalham ou esperam trabalhar com meu filho; fornecer documentação para avaliação e monitoramento individual de crianças; apoiar atividades de treinamento de pessoal;

servindo como manutenção de registros para o programa; ou

fornecer publicidade sobre a Project Headway Preschool através de folhetos, jornais ou outras mídias.

Entendo e concordo que qualquer material audiovisual que inclua meu filho não seja reproduzido ou mostrado a outras pessoas que não a equipe do programa e seus supervisores sem meu conhecimento e consentimento específicos.

Entendo que terei acesso a qualquer material digital, de áudio ou de filme em que meu filho apareça.

OU

\_\_\_\_ Não permito que a equipe do Project Headway grave, grave ou fotografe meu filho.

Assinatura dos pais

### Encontro

#### PARENT PAPERWORK CHECKLIST

#### **SCHOOL OPENS JANUARY 7, 2019**

#### ALL FORMS ARE DUE THAT DAY



Please use this checklist to make sure all documents have been provided and forms fully completed, signed, and returned to us.

- Emergency Card 2 copies
- Immunization Form
- Birth Certificate (Verification)
- Proof of Residency
- Home Language Survey
- Assurance of Confidentiality
- Consent for Field Trips and Transportation
- Consent for Photography, Video or Audio Recording
- Consent for Sharing Contact Information
- Sunblock Permission Form
- Health Insurance and Dental Forms (optional)
- Free and Reduced Lunch Application
- CORI form required for parents who participate in the classroom or on field trips

We are glad that you and your child are a part of our program. Please feel free to call us at school if you have any questions.