



# **Family Manual**

1805 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle WA 98122

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Mission Statement	4
Non-Discrimination and Religious Statement	4
Program Goals and Philosophy	4
Organizational Structure	5
Program Curriculum	6
Culturally Relevant Anti-Bias Education	7
Guidance and Conflict Resolution	9
Family Communication	10
Family Participation	12
Family Observations and Visits	12
The First Day of School	13
Required Paperwork for Children's Files	14
Signing In and Signing Out	14
Toys from Home	15
Gun Play	16
Outdoor Play	16
Other Program Information	16
Age Transitions Policy, Classrooms, Daily Schedule, Toilet Learning, Costumes, Pesticide Free Policy Animal Policy, Naps, Field Trips, Birthdays, Holidays, Meals	
Transportation Policy	21
Parking Policy	21
Health and Safety	21
Immunizations and Health Exams, Medications, Illness, Illness Prevention, Injuries, Sexual Development, Allergies, Child Abuse and Neglect Policy	
School Closures	25
Emergency/Disaster Plan	26

# **Epiphany Early Learning Preschool FAMILY MANUAL**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to Epiphany Early Learning Preschool!! This family manual describes our school from its philosophical foundation to its daily operations. We encourage you to read it carefully and save it for future reference. If any of your questions are not addressed in the manual, please contact the director at (206) 324-2920.

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is a member of Sound Child Care Solutions, a nonprofit corporation licensed by the State of Washington to provide childcare services. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool meets and exceeds the standards and regulations that are required by the State of Washington and the accrediting body of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is open from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, for children aged 18 months through five years. Children, families, and staff of all races, creeds, income levels, sexual orientation, languages, abilities and national origin are most welcomed at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool.

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool works with an Advisory Board, which is composed of staff, parents, and volunteers from the greater community. Advisory Board meetings are held monthly and interested parents are welcome to attend. Further information about the Advisory Board is included in this manual under "Organizational Structure".

## **Contact Information**

Address:

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool  
1805 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle WA 98122

Phone: Main line and voice mail: (206) 324-2920

Website: [www.epiphanyearlylearning.org](http://www.epiphanyearlylearning.org)

Tax ID: 02-0551791

## **Mission Statement**

Sound Child Care Solution's mission is to education children for life by deeply integrating child-centered, high quality, anti-biased, early childhood education with excellent business practices.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy and Religious Statement**

### Non-Discrimination Policy

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, marital status, physical abilities, religion, age, sex or sexual orientation. We are an open and affirming program, seeking diversity in children, staff, and families.

### Religious Statement

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is a non-religious institution. At Epiphany Early Learning Preschool we strive to affirm and celebrate each child and family in a myriad of ways. We welcome and support families from various religious and non-religious traditions alike. Our curriculum is not religious in nature.

## **Program Goals and Philosophy**

### Program Goals

Our goals at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool are to:

Provide high quality, affordable childcare that meets or exceeds the accreditation criteria established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Provide a well-educated, skillful staff who interact positively with children, foster their self-esteem and encourage their social-emotional development.

Ensure that the environment and experiences that are provided match each child's culture, developmental level, and individual style of learning.

Support families in achieving their hopes and dreams for their children.

Share our vision for early childhood education with other teachers and professionals.

Operate a center with humane and positive principles and procedures for all involved.

Create an enriching workplace for our staff.

## Philosophy

At Epiphany Early Learning we create an environment where children can continue to live out their childhoods. We believe children learn best when the curriculum is child-centered, play-based, and emergent, based on their interests and passions. We also believe that by thoughtfully planning social experiences, activities, environments, and teacher-child interactions we facilitate children's success in kindergarten and beyond.

We believe that all children are full of remarkable capabilities and have a right to a childhood filled with play, exploration, and excitement about learning. Children's learning is enhanced with respect and support from adults. As you move through our classrooms you may recognize influences from the schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy.

We see children as enormously creative, and capable of complex learning through self-directed play. We build our curriculum around their questions and pursuits and the skills they are trying to master. We pay close attention to cultivating their self-esteem and their dispositions toward learning, risk-taking, socialization and problem solving.

We implement anti-bias practices and emphasize the value of diversity that does not stereotype, trivialize, or objectify. We seek a team approach in our care giving and teaching, and strive for collaboration with families and the wider community. Our staff values children as individuals, and as members of families, cultures and communities.

## **Organizational Structure**

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is a chapter of Sound Child Care Solutions, a non-profit consortium of child care centers. SCCS co-executive directors report to a Board of Directors that meets regularly to ensure that the organization is living out its mission in a fiscally responsible way.

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool has an Advisory Board of 7-10 family and community members who support and advise the Director of Epiphany Early Learning Preschool. The largest duty the Advisory Board performs is fundraising. New Advisory Board members are voted on by Board consensus, and serve a one- to two-year term.

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool's Director is responsible for all aspects of the day to day operations of the program and all staff report to her.

Epiphany Parish is our landlord and although we seek to work cooperatively with the parish community as our neighbor and ally, there is no formal relationship between the church and the parish other than one of landlord and tenant.

## **Classroom Staffing:**

Each classroom is run by a partnership or team of teachers. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool values shared decision making and egalitarian teams so that all teachers at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool work together to ensure the best possible educational

environment for children and work environment for teachers. Teachers receive paid planning time each week out of the classroom as well as a weekly team meeting to work on documentation, discuss curriculum as a team, share observations of the children and classroom dynamics, and plan future trips, events, etc. In addition, all staff meet for two hours once/month in an all-staff meeting/training to continue to hone practice and ensure that children thrive.

### **Program Curriculum**

The word "educate" means to "draw out." Teachers at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool spend a great deal of time planning the environment for learning, then observing closely as things unfold. It is not uncommon to see adults writing observation notes, taking photos, or talking with each other about what they are seeing. Our staff members delight in children's play and learning, and we document, analyze and draw inspiration from it. Central to our approach is in-depth curriculum investigation that grows from children's pursuits and reflects their developmental themes.

Adults at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool help children represent their ideas and experiences in multiple media. Typically we think of this as "artwork," but beyond creative expression, representation is also an expression of symbolic thinking, a developmental process critical to all academic learning. Through representation children make their thinking visible. This process often leads to expanded thinking or a transformation of their ideas. The representation process offers opportunities for children to dialogue with, learn from, and influence each other. As children represent and re-represent their evolving understandings in a variety of media, they deepen and extend their own thinking.

The role of "the teacher as researcher" is enhanced by the teacher's ongoing observation and documentation of children's work and play. Children's representations provide a window for adults to get to know the thoughts and questions that the children are pursuing. This in turn, enables teachers to plan curriculum that is relevant and developmentally appropriate. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool teachers see themselves as facilitators for children's social construction of knowledge. They engage actively in learning and adventuring along with the children.

The education of the whole child is achieved through a balance of learning activities that foster language development and emerging literacy, the understanding of number concepts, gross and fine motor skills, self-help skills and social and emotional development. Through a combination of large and small group activity and individual choice making, each child is guided toward a holistic awareness of self and the world. At all times the developmental level, natural affinities and family and home environment of each child are considered.

One of the primary concerns of the curriculum is that the adults in the program appreciate children and their parents as they are--culturally, developmentally, and linguistically. Such acceptance means that teachers do not try to maneuver children into preconceived roles

ordained by arbitrary methods or objectives, but view them instead as participants: contributing members who help to create the program.

We strive to foster an emergent curriculum, one that arises out of the children's interests and responses to the prepared classroom environment and experiences. This intent helps ensure a positive and supportive relationship between teachers and children that is, of course, crucial to social and emotional growth. Children in the program have control over what happens to them. The emphasis on investigating, creating, and reflecting together strengthens children's sense of themselves as capable learners, and grows a deep sense of community.

Because the teachers are attuned to the cognitive development of each child as well as to the collective understanding of the group, children have ample opportunity to explore and experiment at their own level of knowledge. Their activities are both interesting and satisfying to them because they offer both challenge and accomplishment. Full involvement in and satisfaction from one's work is of prime importance for social and emotional growth. Family members are invited to be active participants in the daily life of our school and contribute to the process of developing curriculum by reading their children's journals and responding to the questions raised in documentation, by participating in collaborative conferences and by sharing their ideas, interests and skills in the classroom and on behalf of the Epiphany Early Learning Preschool community.

### **Culturally Relevant Anti-Bias Education**

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool staff is committed to peace, acceptance, and justice, and strives to model and teach those attitudes in everything we do. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is also committed to an anti-bias approach.

#### Anti-Bias Goals

Anti-bias education has four core goals, each of which applies to children of all backgrounds and influences every arena of our programs. Each goal interacts and builds on the other three. Together, they provide a safe, supportive learning community for all children. Effective anti-bias education happens when all four goals are part of your program.

**Goal 1:** Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

**Goal 2:** Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.

**Goal 3:** Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

**Goal 4:** Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

## Vision of Anti-Bias Education

The heart of anti-bias work is a vision of a world in which all children are able to reach their greatest potential, and each child's particular abilities and gifts are able to flourish. In this world:

- All children and families have a sense of belonging and experience affirmation of their identities and cultural ways of being.
- All children have access to and participate in the education they need to become successful, contributing members of society.
- The educational process engages all members of the program or school in joyful learning.
- Children and adults know how to respectfully and easily live, learn, and work together in diverse and inclusive environments.
- All families have the resources they need to fully nurture their children.
- All children and families live in safe, peaceful, healthy, comfortable housing and neighborhoods.

We strive to provide toys, pictures, puzzles and books that are non-sexist and free from stereotypes and show people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in a variety of careers and family groupings. However, the Epiphany Early Learning Preschool classrooms are not purposely stocked and decorated with dolls and posters portraying children from many cultures. Though we do have such materials available, they are not our primary mode for creating a culturally relevant, anti-bias program. We recognize that anti-bias work is about more than skin color, so we talk with children about the range of individuals and families that make up our school community and the wider world. We take care with the words we use, the beliefs we express and the books and stories we share.

We support multilingual children and families by showing that we value their language. We learn words from their home languages and incorporate those words into daily classroom use. We also provide books for children that reflect all of the languages in use in the classroom. For children who are working to learn English as their second language, we offer support in the context of social play and classroom activities and encourage them to maintain their first language while learning English.

Social problem solving and conflict resolution are an ever-present part of our daily lives together. We challenge children to articulate their wishes, feelings, and ideas and support them in working towards mutually agreeable solutions. By emphasizing negotiation and alternate perspective-taking, we help children advocate for themselves and recognize the needs of others.

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool teachers devote part of their professional development time to discussing ongoing culturally relevant and anti-bias efforts and opportunities in the classroom, and current thinking about the best practices for supporting culturally relevant, anti-bias learning. We purposely introduce meeting topics, thinking games, teacher skits,

and other activities to provoke conversations about bias and fairness. In addition, we support in-depth study projects that contain elements of activism for social justice. Though perhaps not immediately visible on our walls, all of these anti-bias efforts are recorded in our documentation of classroom work.

Our wish is to nurture within each child a disposition to speak and act for peace, tolerance, and justice.

### **Guidance and Conflict Resolution**

All young children are developing the social skills that enable them to play cooperatively with other children and to function as part of a group. Often when children “misbehave,” it is because they haven’t yet learned the skills to negotiate, to ask for what they need, or to join in play with others, without grabbing, pushing, or hitting. Children are still learning cause and effect regarding how their behavior might impact others.

Behavior at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is managed by providing children with clear expectations about what behavior is acceptable and by encouraging, with positive reinforcement, those behaviors that are valued. Consistent limits are established and group cooperation is emphasized. Corporal punishment and humiliation are never used. Logical consequences are established for behaviors and positive guidance techniques are employed to reinforce them. All of these efforts take place within a framework of unconditional affection for each child.

It may sometimes become necessary, as a last resort, to remove a child from his/her peers for a short period of time, if disruptive, aggressive, or unsafe behavior persists. Children are asked to “take a break from other kids” until they are ready to rejoin the group and remember classroom agreements. Children always have the company of a teacher or other staff member while they’re calming down. When they have returned to their peers and are exhibiting cooperative behavior, the teacher will then talk to them about what they could have done differently to solve the problem without acting out inappropriately. In the case of a persistent or repeated problem, we will always inform and consult with a child’s family, and work together on a collaborative plan for helping the child. We might also talk with the director or the school’s consulting psychologist (with parental consent) to get suggestions and develop a strategy for supporting the child and family.

We strive to work out all interpersonal conflicts and issues between children verbally, by identifying the disagreement and then collaboratively generating possible solutions until one can be agreed upon by everyone involved. This form of conflict resolution, sometimes called “social problem solving,” is more respectful of children’s processes than a teacher-dictated solution, and builds social and cognitive skills, as well. Our goals always are to foster in children competence in negotiating and resolving problems they encounter and awareness of themselves as able, caring, resourceful people when faced with a conflict.

We see conflicts as opportunities for supporting children's learning. During conflicts, children practice self-awareness and communication, they master the skills of negotiation and compromise and they deepen friendships. As teachers, we choose from a range of roles when conflict arises. We may choose to act as a coach, helping children find appropriate language for talking about a problem, or we may choose the subtler role of facilitator during a conflict. We may simply listen to children talk about problems, mirroring their understandings and ideas back to them, or we may offer gentle suggestions for approaches to a problem. Our priority is always to nurture children's self-awareness and communication.

Our goals for children during conflicts are that they:

- calm themselves down enough to negotiate,
- find words for their feelings, needs, and wants,
- listen to others' feelings, needs, and wants,
- develop and agree to a mutually satisfying solution, and
- continue to play together, or feel friendly and understanding.

In some circumstances we may find that we need extra support to help meet a child's needs. When those circumstances arise, we take some or all of the following steps:

1. Conference with the child's family to share information and brainstorm avenues for helping the child to thrive and be successful in the classroom.
2. Teachers partner with families and utilize as many techniques as possible to help support the child in the classroom including observation, shadowing the child, examining the environment, tweaking the class schedule, and taking a look at the number of transitions during the day among other things.
3. Offer local resources and contact information to the family that might provide support.
4. Ask for the family's permission to schedule a professional on-site evaluation by a child psychologist.
5. Offer to work in partnership with outside professionals if appropriate.
6. If necessary, and only as a last resort, we may require disenrollment and offer to help find a setting that better meets the child's needs.

We do all of the above while staying rooted in the relationship we have with the family and our care and compassion for the child.

As with all of our practices here, please feel free to ask the director or your child's teachers for more details on the social problem solving approach we use at Epiphany Early Learning.

## **Family Communication**

At Epiphany Early Learning Preschool, we strive for clear and open communication between families, staff, and children. We ask parents/guardians to read all written communications from teachers and the Epiphany Early Learning Preschool director, including posted signs, emails, blog posts, newsletters, and personal communications, and to respond when necessary. Please see below for further details on our forms of communication. Also, we ask families to notify Epiphany Early Learning Preschool, in writing, of any important changes or information regarding their child's health, attendance, schedule, etc.

Email is used as a regular form of communication between Epiphany Early Learning Preschool and families. Please provide Epiphany Early Learning Preschool with your preferred email address(es), and keep us updated if they change. Each class has an email list from which the teachers and the director can email families as well. If you do not use email or irregularly check it, please let us know to ensure that hard copies of emails are distributed to you.

Each classroom has a system for communication between families and teachers, usually including a dry erase or bulletin board where important information is posted. There are also systems in place in each classroom for families to leave written messages for teachers and to receive important information and documents such as injury reports.

Other forms of communication are intended to offer families a view into their child's daily life and ongoing work in the classroom. This includes an evolving curriculum board posted outside of each classroom that gives an overview of current in-depth curriculum investigations and the daily life of the children in the group as well as weekly blog posts.

There are many avenues for communication between families and staff. We encourage families to communicate directly with teachers and they are welcome to involve the Director in the communication loop.

### Documenting Children's Learning

Staff members are in regular communication with families about their child's pursuits, interests, strengths and struggles. Teachers share anecdotes with families informally on a weekly basis. Teachers are available during their planning time to talk with families via phone about their child's development. These phone conversations are an ideal time for families and teachers to follow-up with each other on any issue a child may be having at home or at school. In addition to this, teachers highlight children's learning and development through documentation posted on curriculum bulletin boards, in individual

children's journals, and in the group's archive of written documentation. **Please feel free to take these journals home and add your own reflections!!**

Teachers meet with families in the fall in informal, half-hour conferences, to get to know each other and to learn more about families' hopes and wishes for their child.

In the spring, families are invited to attend group conferences. At these collaborative conferences, teachers and families come together to study and reflect on children's in-depth investigation work. Together, we read transcriptions of children's conversations, and study photos, video footage, and examples of children's work, looking for the underlying meanings of their work and the questions they're pursuing. Teachers and families think together about how to support and deepen the children's investigation. There is also an opportunity for a half hour one on one conference with your child's primary teacher in the spring.

### Grievance Procedures

It is our hope that teachers/administrators and parents/guardians develop a relationship of mutual respect that will allow them to resolve issues of concern on an ongoing basis. If a conflict arises that cannot be worked out, an objective individual from Sound Child Care Solutions will mediate as needed or upon request to help the parties reach a mutually agreeable solution.

### **Family Participation**

Family members are welcomed and encouraged to form partnerships with staff in supporting their child's growth and development while at EELP. In addition, we welcome each family as part of the classroom and overall center-wide community. There will be many opportunities to participate in potlucks and celebrations and we hope you will join in these community events. In addition, you are welcome to spend time at the center or join your child for lunch when your schedule permits. There are a number of ways that families can volunteer, most of which fall into one of the following categories: staff support (field trip attendance, washing, sewing and mending, helping maintain the environment etc.), school maintenance (gardening, painting, carpentry, repairs, etc.), computers and other technology, and fundraising (auctions, parties, special events, grant writing, etc.). We are extremely grateful for the support we receive from families.

If you have a special skill that you would like to share with the school or classroom, please let your child's teacher know. Maybe you can arrange a field trip to your place of work for a group of children, or bring in something special that relates to what the children are studying. The possibilities are endless, and your contribution of time and energy helps bring you and your child closer as you become part of their world at school. Please ask your child's teacher if you need ideas for ways to become more involved.

## **Family Observations and Visits**

Families have access to all areas of the center used by the children anytime their children are in attendance. You are welcome to drop in and observe whenever you like, but advanced notice is helpful for both you and your child. For example, the class may be out of the building at the time you decide to drop by. If you do make a plan with your child and her or his teacher to visit, please try to attend as planned or inform the teacher if there is a change in your plan.

Your presence in the classroom is exciting to your child, and she or he will probably try to engage you in play, or act differently than usual because you are in the room. If you'd like to get a chance to observe what your child's day is like when you are not present you can try finding a place to sit that will help you remain as unobtrusive as possible. Your child may get engrossed in social play, and you will get a chance to see what his or her day is like when you are not present. Please do not bring food or treats to school (unless discussed with a teacher), or distract children from their play and work in the classroom. Families are also welcome to come visit to play, work, or have lunch with the children.

## **The First Day of School**

We want to help your children's first days of school be as successful as possible. If possible, please allow yourself plenty of time to get ready for school. Please take your child to his/her room and sign her/him in. Upon arrival please ask your child to wash their hands. In the classroom, let your child stay with you to allow time for him/her to feel ready to become involved with the group. After looking around with your child, you may want to find a comfortable place to stay and remain there. Often children will use you as a "home-base" from which to explore the environment. Make sure that you meet all the teachers in your child's classroom, and pass on any important information to them.

On your child's first day at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool, please bring:

a small blanket and one soft toy for nap time

a full set of spare clothes (labeled with your child's name)

a framed photo of your family

When you want to leave, let your child know you're leaving. When you say good-bye, feel confident that the teachers will support your child with his/her feelings, offering comfort, reassurance, and acknowledgment of what she/he is feeling. Our intention is to honor the bonds between you and your child, and to make room for your child's feelings. It may help you to make a specific plan with your child on the way to school about how the drop-off time will look. Here is one example, not necessarily a fit for all families: "Let's read two books together, and then you can give me two hugs and three kisses, and push me out the door."

The first few days of school can be stressful and/or fatiguing for children, and this is sometimes expressed by regressive behavior or irritability. Feel free to discuss any concerns you may have with your child's teacher. You may also wish to consider picking your child up a little earlier than usual for the first few days of school. Having quiet routines at home will ease the transition.

Please bring your child to school in clothes designed for active indoor and outdoor play. These should be clothes that you and your child are willing to get dirty, and that your child can get in and out of by herself or himself. We will go outside for play and exercise each day, so please help your child dress comfortably and appropriately, including shoes for running and climbing and a jacket or raincoat for the ever-changing Pacific Northwest weather. On sunny days, please apply sunscreen at home, or when you arrive. We will reapply it as necessary, with your written consent.

Make sure there is a full change of clean clothes in your child's cubby at all times, clearly labeled with your child's name or initials. Please check your child's cubby for soiled clothes at the end of each day and replace any extra clothes that your child has used. Epiphany Early Learning has a limited supply of spare clothing. If your child is sent home in Epiphany Early Learning spares, please launder them and return them the next day so that they may be used by another child.

### **Required Paperwork for Children's Files**

The following forms are required for children's files. We ask that you complete and return these to the office before your child's first day. You can find all of these on our website at <http://www.epiphanyearlylearning.org/enrollment-forms/>

#### Required Forms for All Children:

Emergency Contact Information  
Family Volunteer Form  
Development History Form  
Holiday Questionnaire  
Payment and Enrollment Agreement  
Certificate of Immunization Status  
Certificate of Exemption from Immunizations  
Sunscreen, Field Trip, Pet, and Photo Permission

#### Forms Required as Needed:

Diaper Cream Authorization Form  
Medication Authorization Form  
Asthma Plan Packet  
Allergy Plan Packet

## **Signing In and Signing Out**

Your child must be accompanied to and from school by an adult and signed in and out with an authorized adult's full name in writing. This is a Washington State licensing requirement. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool cannot assume responsibility for any child not signed in and out by the parent/guardian or authorized representative. Children will be released only to those adults whose names are provided in the child's initial enrollment forms. Families may include additional names by notifying the office in writing.

If someone other than her or his parents/guardians will pick up your child, their name and information **MUST** be on file in the administrative office and you must leave teachers a note with the name of the person picking up your child and your full signature. As a safety precaution, staff may ask the pick-up person for identification before allowing them to take your child from the center. Please, when you have someone new pick up your child, remind them to bring a driver's license with them.

Posted near the sign-in sheet and in your mailbox you will find important information about your child's day, upcoming events, field trip permission forms and other notes that help us keep you informed. Please take time each day as you sign in, and again as you sign out, to read these important messages from teachers and the administration. Also, you should check each day for things your child needs to take home, including artwork, extra clothes, etc.

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool closes promptly at 5:30 p.m., and at 3:30 p.m. on the second Friday of each month. You will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 for every minute after the official closing time that you are late. For children on a school day schedule, late charges will apply for every minute after 3:30 p.m.

## **Toys From Home**

Please leave personal toys at home or in the car rather than bringing them into the school. Our toy policy is one soft toy for naptime use only. When personal items are brought to school, they frequently get lost or broken. They can also cause disagreements and hurt feelings, and distract children from the wealth of materials and experiences available to them at school. Here are some suggestions for how to say "no" to your child in a positive way, when your child wants to bring toys to Epiphany Early Learning:

"Epiphany Early Learning has an agreement: only one soft toy at school."

"Epiphany Early Learning has lots of school toys. This is a home toy."

"What's your teacher's agreement about toys from home?"

"I will keep this toy safe for you, at home or in the car, and it will be here for you after school."

Occasionally, children may want to bring a photo, a great find from nature, or some other "treasure." We honor that delight and enthusiasm in children, and it's fine if your child brings a natural object or some other "big excitement." Please consider that the classroom is a busy space, with lots of children, so you may want to think twice about delicate items.

We ask that your child never bring action figures or commercial toys, games, or movies. If a child does bring such items, we will keep them for her or him until pick-up time, with a reminder that "our agreement at Epiphany Early Learning is that children leave their toys at home. We'll keep that for you until you go home."

Though it's sometimes hard for a child to part with a cherished toy, our experience is that it's much easier to do so before leaving home, rather than delaying that negotiation until you reach school.

### **Gun Play**

At Epiphany Early Learning, we don't allow guns or weapons of any kind (real or pretend) at school, on the property, or at any school functions. We also don't allow children to make guns out of play dough, tinker toys, legos, a grilled cheese sandwich, etc. and unless the play is being specifically facilitated/supported by a teacher, we don't allow them to do any kind of sword/gun/knife weapon play at school. It is our goal that Epiphany Early Learning is a safe place where all children feel comfortable and protected, without any worry about being treated aggressively.

### **Outdoor Play**

While on the playground your child will be supervised by all Epiphany Early Learning Preschool teachers present. However it is important that you make contact with your child's primary teachers when picking up your child. For the safety of your child, be sure to sign him/her out as well as verbally notify the teacher on the playground that you have signed the child out and are taking her/him.

As children go outside every day, we'd like to ask you to be mindful of your child's dress at school. Please make sure they are dressed for the weather, and in clothes that are appropriate for outdoor activity. We do go outside in the rain, so on rainy and potentially rainy days, please send your child with rain gear. Flip flops, sandals, and Crocs, while fun to wear, are not safe for active play. If your child comes to school in such shoes, please provide a pair of sneakers as well.

### **Other Program Information**

#### Age Transitions Policy

The Toddler Room is for children who are primarily 18 months -2 years old and the preschool rooms are for children who are primarily 3, 4, and 5. Most enrollment placements

are made in the summer and fall. On a rare occasion, a transition from one room to another may be made during the school year.

With transitions from the toddler room to the preschool classrooms, we'll examine a number of variables including a child's:

Age

Social skill development

Cognitive skill development

Length of time in the classroom (i.e. if the child has just recently started in a classroom, we'd be reluctant to impose yet another transition on the child)

Whether or not she has any siblings, and if so, birth order (i.e. if the child is the youngest in the family, possibly being the oldest in the classroom is a great opportunity)

Which room her closest companions are placed in

Group make-up as a whole (i.e. kids with similar family structures, cultural identities, gender balance)

Family's placement preference

As with most other decisions at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool, we reference general guidelines, but do not impose them broadly across the board, as no two children are exactly alike. Rather, we take into account the uniqueness of each child and make a decision accordingly.

It's important to note that rarely will a child spend time in all of the classrooms during their tenure at EELP. There are several reasons for this including:

- It is our goal that children stay with the same group of teachers and children for two years. This often means staying in the same class for at least two years.
- The age range of each of the preschool classrooms shifts a bit from year to year so while the Salmonberry class may have 4 and 5 year olds one year, the class make-up may be 3's and 4's the next year.

### Classrooms

The Epiphany Early Learning Preschool's classrooms are designed to help children explore and integrate a variety of play experiences. All of the classrooms offer spaces for sensory play, block building and construction play, dress-up and dramatic play, sorting, counting, and design work, book reading and other literacy work, quiet alone time, and more. In addition, each room has a variety of art media for artistic creation, expression and

representation of ideas in multiple media. We also have access to an indoor play area for movement games and active play during inclement weather.

### Daily schedule

Each classroom has a daily schedule or “flow of the day” designed by the teachers to meet the needs of the particular children in that group. These schedules may change from day to day depending on class interests and activities, but everyone has a predictable routine for breakfast, lunch, snack and rest time. The rest of the day consists of a balance of flexible times where children are free to interact with each other and the environment, and teacher-facilitated times with small or large groups. Every day there are at least two active play times scheduled either outdoors or inside, depending on the weather.

### Toilet Learning

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool teachers will work in partnership with families to create toileting plans that reflect family culture and values, the child’s individual needs, and our approach to living and learning at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool. Teachers will make diaper changing a valuable, positive time to interact with children and will track diaper changes and provide this information to parents on a daily basis.

Each classroom has a bathroom that meets licensing standards for young children. Children will be able to use the bathroom in an unregimented fashion. In addition, teachers will invite children to use the bathroom before leaving the classroom for outdoor trips or play, before lunch, before naptime and following wake-up from nap. After each use, or attempted use of the toilet, teachers will ensure that children thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water. In some classrooms, there is the practice of singing the ABC song while washing hands. This ensures that children spend ample time disinfecting their hands. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool does not use antibacterial soap; we have found it to be exceptionally harsh on children’s delicate skin and the King County Department of Public Health advises against its use. The single most significant thing parents can do to keep their children healthy is to teach, model, and reinforce proper hand washing.

Children will occasionally have toileting accidents. This is a normal part of childhood. We do not make a big deal out of these accidents. We ask that a complete change of clothes is available in your child’s cubby in case it is needed. Please check your child’s cubby for soiled clothes at the end of each day and replace any extra clothes that your child has used. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool has a limited supply of spare clothing. If your child is sent home in Epiphany Early Learning Preschool spares, please launder them and return them the next day so that they may be used for another child.

### Costumes

Costumes and dress up shoes can inhibit active outdoor and large motor play, all necessary experiences for children’s development. We have many items at school for dress up/dramatic play and find the children to be more creative when the clothes do not present

a pre-determined character. We want your children to feel confident, secure, and safe on their feet and in their bodies, so we can provide satisfying outdoor experiences for them.

### Pesticide Free Policy

For children's safety, we do not use pesticides at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool. If there is ever an insect problem on a plant, we use soap and water to rid the plant of unwanted insects. Although we hope never to have the need for pesticides in our center, in the event we needed to use them we would follow the Integrated Pest Management Policy recommended by the Public Health Department of Seattle that includes posting a notice and a myriad of other safety precautions.

### Animal Policy

To ensure children's health and safety, we follow state child care licensing guidelines regarding pets. We currently have guinea pigs at Epiphany Early Learning. All current and future pets at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool will be kept in well-managed, clean cages and containers. Fish tanks will be maintained by parent volunteers or teachers and staff would make part of their weekly routine to ensure that pets were well cared for and that the space is kept clean and free of germs. On the rare occasion that children touch animals, they are asked to wash their hands with soap and water immediately afterwards. We understand the desire to bring family pets into the classroom, however prior approval from the director must be obtained before doing so. Please leash your family pet safely away from where children play.

### Naps

Children rest in their rooms on cots or mats for at least 30 minutes each day. Each child has his/her own cotton sheet, provided by Epiphany Early Learning Preschool, and usually brings a favorite blanket and soft toy from home. Staff will wash each child's sheet or mat weekly. Please take home your child's blanket, soft toy, and or pillow weekly to wash them as well. Children generally start their rest time between 12:30 and 1:30, and get up between 2:30 and 3:00, depending on the age group. Each room has naptime rituals, like reading a book to children, then putting on music. Teachers rub the backs or feet of children that respond to this kind of soothing touch. After a period of relaxation and rest, quiet activities may be provided for those children who do not need to sleep.

### Field trips

Field trip notices will be posted near the sign-in sheet at least two days before a trip. We will ask you to sign a permission form allowing your child to participate in the trip prior to each outing. When children go on walks to neighborhood parks a note will be posted on the door telling you where they are. No special permissions are necessary for these walks.

## Birthdays

We love to acknowledge children's birthdays in the classroom. We welcome you to come in and tell a story about the day your child was born or to share a baby book or a special photograph. We're always happy to make time at meeting/gather time for this. If you would like to bring in a treat to share with the class, we welcome that too! Instead of cupcakes or cookies though, please bring either fresh fruit or fruit popsicles instead to help ensure that children with food allergies can safely partake in this special snack and to support us in keeping large amounts of sugar out of kids' diets while at school. As always, remember that we require that all food be NUT FREE. Please check with your child's teacher to schedule this birthday recognition and to determine if there are any additional food allergies or dietary restrictions in the classroom to be aware of.

## Holidays

There are many different kinds of holidays celebrated and they are all special and wonderful to the families who celebrate them. It is our practice at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool to craft an approach to holidays that reflects the children and families in our program and that acknowledges the wider world in which we live.

Holidays are an opportunity to live our commitment to anti-bias practices at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool. We invite families to share their holiday practices with us in developmentally appropriate ways through such avenues as stories, pictures, artifacts, activities, and snacks. An open sharing of such customs and beliefs expands children's understanding of their peers and others in the world. It is also another way to learn acceptance and appreciation for people's beliefs and differences.

Epiphany Early Learning staff will work with families who don't want their child to participate in holiday activities. Please let us know if you don't want your child to participate in holiday discussions or activities.

## Meals

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool provides breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack and a light, late afternoon snack for children who stay into the late afternoon. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool provides 1% cow's milk, soy milk or rice milk for children ages 2-5 and whole milk for children 18 months-2 years. A "food intolerance form" must be completed in order for us to serve your child soy or rice milk.

Eating food with children is as important as any other time of day in a child's life. Children learn life-long habits and develop relationships with food and their bodies during meal times. It is our goal that lunch will be a relaxed and conversational time for children and teachers to visit and enjoy their food. We will encourage children to try what's on their plate at least twice but will not insist that children eat everything. Research tells us that children can learn to listen to their bodies if they are given healthy foods from which to

choose and are not forced to eat them. This is how children learn to listen to and trust cues from their bodies about hunger and fullness. Menus are posted each week.

Families who bring children to school after meal service has ended should provide a meal for their children prior to arriving at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool makes an effort to accommodate each child's food allergies and dietary choices and restrictions, including vegetarian, vegan, and dairy-free options. Please talk with your child's teacher and the director if your child has a food intolerance, allergy or if your family has a food preference (i.e. vegetarian).

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is a participant of the USDA food program and follows criteria established by the United States Department of Agriculture. Each family is asked to complete a USDA eligibility form each fall, whether or not the family's income meets the program criteria. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool's food program is available to all children regardless of race, color, handicap, sex, or national origin.

## **Transportation Policy**

### Transportation for Field Trips

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool uses the Metro bus system for some field trips. We also take many walking fieldtrips.

### Parking Policy

We, along with our neighbors Epiphany School, are working hard to ensure safety and efficiency in our traffic and parking management during school hours. Following the policy outlined here will ensure an efficient and safe way for families to drop off and pick up children and it will respect the rights and wishes of our neighbors.

- First, please drive safely and obey all City of Seattle traffic ordinances, especially those of parking.
- When driving around the campus, *please do so in a clockwise fashion*. This will facilitate the drop off/pick up process.
- You may find staff of Epiphany School out at drop off and pick up times directing traffic for families. Please follow their directions.
- Epiphany Early Learning families can park in the lower fenced parking lot on East Howell at the corner of 38th, on the north side of Denny (facing west), and on neighboring streets. *Please only cross in designated cross walks*. Please do not park on 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- For short term parking, 30 minutes or less, EELP has two yellow striped 30 minute load/unload zones on East Howell, at the corner of 38<sup>th</sup> across from the lower fenced parking lot. These load/unload zones will accommodate about three cars at a time.
- Please remember that blocking a neighbor's driveway is not only illegal but also discourteous to the home owner.
- U-turns are not permitted around campus at any time.
- Please do not park within 30 feet of a crosswalk, and not in front of fire hydrants.
- Please share this plan with any adults (nannies, babysitters, grandparents, and friends) who might be driving to and from Epiphany Early Learning Preschool.

Thank you for making safety our number one priority while also helping ensure that Epiphany Early Learning is a good neighbor.

## **Health and Safety**

### Immunizations and Health Exams

State law requires a "health history" and record of immunizations for each child prior to admission. We must also have the date of your child's last physical exam, which must have been completed within one year prior to admission. We also ask for the name of the family physician and dentist, who to contact in case of an emergency, and any conditions of the child which may require specific attention.

Children must have all immunizations that are recommended for their age by the State of Washington. A licensed physician may grant medical exemptions to immunizations; personal or religious exemptions can be claimed by parents/guardians. In the event that your child is not immunized against a particular disease and an outbreak of that disease occurs, your child may be excluded from care.

Yearly we must file an immunization report with the state. At the end of each school year we will send out a form asking for updates of your child's immunizations records. Your cooperation in doing this is greatly appreciated and will be facilitated if you keep a record of immunizations in a safe place. King County Department of Health provides free immunizations for children.

### Medications

In order for staff to administer ANY medication to a child, we must have written authorization from the parent/guardian. Check with your child's teacher or the office to locate the "Medication Authorization" form. This form must be filled out for prescription and non-prescription medications. Fill it out completely and return it to your child's teacher. Inform your child's teacher that you have completed this paperwork and she or he will tell you where to store the medication. Parents should also leave a note for teachers EACH DAY that the medication is to be administered. When the medication is administered the teacher will sign and write the date and time and amount given on the reverse side of the form.

The following types of non-prescription medications may be administered by Epiphany Early Learning Preschool staff with written parent permission: antihistamines, non-aspirin analgesics, non-narcotic cough suppressants, anti-itch ointments or lotions, chap stick, diaper ointment, sunscreen. Medications must be provided by the parent and be in the original container labeled with child's FULL name. We can only administer medications according to the dosage and age recommendations on the packaging. Any exceptions must be accompanied by a signed note from your child's physician.

All prescription drugs must be in the original container with the original prescription label on the container, including the child's first and last names, date prescription was filled,

medication's expiration date and legible instructions for use. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool cannot administer sample medications, medications prescribed for a sibling, or medications packaged in any container other than the original. Hint: Ask your pharmacist for 2 labeled bottles so that you can keep one at home and one at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool.

### Illness

A day at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is easy and fun for a child in good health, but exceedingly demanding for one who is not feeling well. Sick children need the one-on-one care and unlimited rest and fluids that they can get at home. Bringing a sick child to school exposes him/her to other secondary illnesses and exposes the staff and other children to illness. Bringing a child back to school before all symptoms have subsided risks a relapse and further delays recovery.

Families whose work schedules do not allow them to stay at home with a sick child will want to have options for the inevitable day when their child will be excluded from care. If you do not have a friend or relative who can care for your child in the event of illness, you can pre-register for one of the services that can care for sick children. The office can give you more information on these services.

Seattle-King County Department of Public Health issues the following guidelines on keeping children home, which Epiphany Early Learning Preschool adheres to. Children who show signs of illness as follows should not be brought to the center. We do not have sufficient staff to keep a child indoors. If a child is well enough to come to EELP, they should be well enough to play outside.

#### **Keep me home if:**

1. I'm vomiting, two or more times in 24 hours.
1. I have a rash, lice, or nits.
2. I have diarrhea, three or more watery stools in 24 hours.
3. I have an eye infection, thick mucus or pus draining from the eye.
4. I have a sore throat, with fever or swollen glands.
5. I'm just not feeling very good, unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused, or cranky: or
6. I have a fever, of 100° (F) or more (taken under the arm) and sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, or just not feeling good. (We require children who have had a fever to stay home one **full** day after the fever subsides).

\*We reserve the right to exclude ill children at any time.

If your child should display signs of illness while at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool, you will be notified to come and pick up the child as soon as possible. The child will be isolated in the classroom or in the office until you arrive, to prevent the communication of the illness. Please notify us if our child is diagnosed as having a communicable disease such as chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, hepatitis, herpes, infectious diarrhea, or any other disease or parasite, so that we may notify other families.

Children with communicable diseases such as impetigo will not be admitted until we have received a statement or phone call from the doctor indicating that the child has been treated for at least 24 hours. Children with head lice will not be readmitted until the child has been treated and is free of all nits.

### Illness Prevention

We work to prevent the spread of communicable diseases by practicing careful sanitation. Children and staff wash hands before and after toileting and before meals, toys are washed regularly, and bedding is laundered once a week. We also ask that when your child arrives at Epiphany Early Learning Preschool each day, you take him or her to wash hands, as a means to prevent the spread of infections. Each child uses only his or her own cot and bedding.

Staff take Blood Borne Pathogen training yearly and First Aid and CPR training every two years, and stay aware of possible safety hazards in the environment. We routinely cover sanitary hygiene practices and safety rules as part of our curriculum. In addition, we prepare children for how to respond during fire and earthquake drills and hold monthly fire drills and quarterly earthquake drills as required by child care licensing regulations.

### Injuries

If your child is injured while in our care, an accident form will be filled out, noting the time of the injury, what happened, how the injury was treated and by whom. We are limited to standard first aid procedures and we will not apply anything other than soap and water to a cut and ice to a bump or bruise.

If you do not find an explanation for an injury, do not hesitate to ask the staff. If an injury requires treatment beyond what can be provided at EELP, you will be contacted. In the event that a parent or approved guardian cannot be contacted, we will call the person that you have listed as an alternate in case of emergency, and if we are unable to reach this person we will call your physician. If medical attention by a physician is required and we have been unable to contact any of the people you have listed, we will call 911.

### Sexual Development

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool teachers and staff believe that sexual development occurs in the context of overall growth and development, along with physical,

social/emotional and cognitive development. Like all areas of childhood growth, sexual development is highly individualized. Our experience is that an environment which fosters this growth in a positive light is essential. We recognize that families at our center have differing values around sexual development and expression. It is our hope that parents will feel free to communicate with staff about their own individual family's beliefs and values

We believe that a positive environment allows children to learn about and feel good about their bodies, develop a vocabulary which allows them to understand and talk about all of their body parts and functions and allows them freedom of self-expression in a wide variety of non-stereotypic roles during dramatic play. At the same time, we support children in learning the boundaries that help them respect their own and the bodies of others. During dress up children may undress to their underwear in order to try on drama clothing. While we do not allow nudity (although this is normal for children), there might be other times of day when you see children in their underwear. In addition, we do not allow the use of profanity, teasing and intimidation and sexual exploration that involves touching each other's private parts. Our ultimate goal is to foster in children a high sense of self-esteem as their bodies grow and change.

### Food Allergies

If a child has a food allergy when enrolled or develops one at a later date, we'll need a statement from the doctor indicating the type of allergy, symptoms, and foods to be avoided and anything else that the child should not be exposed to. In the case of food allergies, the director and families will decide whether or not the parent should bring supplemental food. For severe, life threatening allergies, an "emergency plan of care" needs to be signed by parents and the doctor. For other food issues, there is a Child Care Nutritionist available through the Seattle/King County Health Department when needed.

### Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool is required by law to report suspected physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Child Protective Services immediately. We are not required to notify parents. Child Protective Services recommends that we don't allow a child to leave with a high or intoxicated person as this can put the child in great danger especially if the person is driving. Should this occur, we will approach the person with kindness and a suggestion that we call a cab or call someone on their emergency list. If a parent does leave with a child and they are drunk or high it can constitute a CPS referral. To ensure a child's safety, it might be necessary to contact 911 for assistance. This is an uncommon occurrence but the more prepared we are for the possibility, the better.

### **School Closures**

A calendar of closures will be distributed to families each fall, covering the period of September through August. Signs will be posted reminding families of closures.

HOLIDAYS: EELP is closed New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday following, Christmas Day and December 26th through December 31<sup>st</sup>. If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, Epiphany Early Learning Preschool will close on the nearest working day prior to or following the holiday. These closures will be noted in the school calendar.

IN-SERVICE: Epiphany Early Learning Preschool closes eight days each year for classroom preparation and professional/organizational development to allow for a smooth running center, to share best practices and to keep staff updated in advancements in the field. Our closures are usually one day in February, one day in May, one day in June, and the week before Labor Day. These days will be listed in advance on the annual calendar that is provided for families in September of each year.

STAFF MEETINGS: Epiphany Early Learning Preschool classrooms close at 3:30 p.m. on the second Friday of each month, so that the whole staff can meet together for discussions of all-school business and participate in professional development. Epiphany Early Learning Preschool's late pick-up charges will apply after 3:30 p.m. on those days.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES: Epiphany Early Learning values opportunities to talk with families about their children's growth and development. We also value families' input and collaboration on our curriculum. To that end, EELP holds brief conferences in the fall and longer conferences in the spring. In order to facilitate those spring conferences and the scheduling they require, we close for two full days in the spring for conference meetings with families, once in April and again in May. The exact days will be posted on the calendar that is distributed in September.

SNOW/WEATHER: Epiphany Early Learning Preschool reserves the right to close at any time due to severe weather conditions, or for other emergencies or natural disasters. In general, Epiphany Early Learning Preschool will close for severe weather whenever the Seattle Public Schools close. During times that the public schools are out of session (winter break, late afternoon, etc.) Epiphany Early Learning Preschool's closure will be at the discretion of the Director. No refunds or credits are given for closures due to severe weather.

### **Emergency/Disaster Preparedness**

Epiphany Early Learning Preschool has a comprehensive Emergency/Disaster Preparedness Plan in place and all staff members receive training in this plan. This includes things like building and site evacuation, earthquake preparedness, emergency lockdown/intruder alert, fire safety, power outage, storms and snow, and any other emergency that could occur. As required by licensing, staff and children practice monthly fire and quarterly earthquake drills so that this becomes a routine, non-threatening occurrence for the children. All of our staff members are trained in CPR/First Aid and Blood Borne Pathogens. We have 72 hours of food and water on site as recommended by disaster specialists.

A complete copy of Epiphany Early Learning Preschool's Emergency/Disaster Preparedness Handbook is available on our website.

Updated 3/3/18