

# CAST Parent Handbook

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# Welcome!

Julie Clark and Linda Goodman opened the Creative Arts Studio in 1987 as a haven where children could experience and appreciate the Arts. Since that time, the school has expanded and now hosts a number of Reggio inspired programs for infants through Kindergarten. Extended care is available for all ages\*. CAST also offers KidzKlub, a before and after school program for children that attend Mitchell and Bethlehem Elementary Schools.

\*CAST is open 50 weeks each year from 7:00 am until 6:00 pm.

## The Guiding Principles of Reggio Emilia

- Children are curious and interested in constructing their learning, negotiating with everything their environment brings to them.
- Education focuses on each child in relation to other children, the family, the teachers and the community, rather than each child in isolation.
- The design and use of space encourages encounters, communication and relationships.
- Teachers document their work with children, whom they consider researchers.
- The exchange of ideas between parents and teachers is an intrinsic element of collective wisdom.

## CAST Philosophy and Mission

CAST is committed to providing the Community (children, staff, and families) with an emotional and physical environment that fosters independence and creativity and celebrates each person's unique attributes. We believe that we are best motivated by laughter, spontaneity and curiosity and flourish in an environment where we are free to explore the many wonders and opportunities that surround us. We believe that it is our mission to model respect for each other, our planet and our surroundings, as well as our inner feelings, visions, and goals. We believe that praise, encouragement, affection and respect for all people shape a safe and caring community in which we all achieve success and positive self-esteem.

***We believe that children are:*** competent, inquisitive, imaginative, motivated

***We believe that our classrooms must be:*** inviting, stimulating, conducive to exploration, hands-on and accessible to all children, set up to encourage cooperative *learning and creativity, aesthetically appealing*

***We believe that, as teachers, we must be:*** respectful of children and the world, dedicated, compassionate, supportive and positive, cheerful, playful, active researchers and facilitators.

***We believe that every classroom at CAST must have:*** a quiet cozy corner, art materials, an abundance of literature, sensory exploration, building resources, a science/observation center, dramatic play, a comfortable meeting area, manipulatives and games, movement opportunities, a writing/message center, an inviting eating area, documentation on display, children's artwork on display, elements from the natural world, natural light, a variety of musical experiences.

***We believe that CAST is:*** a caring community that supports families, an educational resource for parents, a place where diversity is celebrated, a contributor to the larger community, respectful of the environment, a safe place where we practice respect and strive to promote peace, committed to professional and personal development, rich in musical, artistic and creative experiences.

## Licensing and Accreditation

All of the programs offered by CAST are State Certified, fully licensed, and have been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children since 1995. Children may be enrolled in our preschool programs for any combination of days per week. Minimum enrollment requirements vary per program. Make-up days are not available; however, additional days may be added as approved by the Office.

## CAST Curriculum & Assessments

Our CAST curriculum is based on the Connecticut Framework, which is a comprehensive compilation of objectives in the areas of social, motor, cognitive and language development. This tool allows us to assess each child's progress on an ongoing basis and to determine activities in the classroom that will improve children's skills. Assessments are shared with parents at Parent-Teacher conferences which occur twice a year.

In the spirit of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, children's interests drive a wide variety of classroom activities which support exploration and growth in all of these developmental areas.

### **We will provide activities in the following areas:**

Art	Language
Music	Reading
Dramatic Play	Manipulatives
Movement Exploration	Sensory
Cooking	Socialization (sharing &
Housekeeping	taking turns)
Nature & Science Studies	Independence & Self-Help Skills
Snack	Concept Development
Early Math Concepts	Outdoor Play

## Communication with Parents

Whenever possible, daily contact is maintained between parents and faculty. When deemed necessary, teachers/staff will initiate conferences with parents. Parents are invited to request conferences at any time with teachers and/or directors.

Conferences, both formal and informal, are scheduled twice a year—fall and spring. We will notify you regarding our conference schedule. The conferences are meant only to be a positive guideline of your child's development.

Parents are encouraged to make the CAST faculty aware of any personal changes in home life or family dynamics which may affect your child's emotional well-being. For infants and toddlers who stay all day, a "Let Me Tell You About My Day" sheet helps to facilitate communication and keep parents informed of the details and highlights of their child's day.

## Confidentiality

Employees of CAST respect the confidentiality of all students and their families at all times.

## Parent Participation

We encourage parents and grandparents to visit the school and share special activities/skills with all the children. It is necessary to prearrange these visits so that they can be a part of the educational plan for all children. Workshops covering areas of interest and concern are made available to parents throughout the year.

A Parent Network is formed each year which includes at least one parent of a child from every classroom. This important group meets every other month and is involved in classroom activities as well as special projects and fundraisers. Parents who are interested in being part of the Parent Network should speak to their child's Head Teacher.

## Arrival & Dismissal

All children must be accompanied into their classrooms upon arrival. Please sign your child in at the computer terminal located in the main entrance near the office. All children must be signed out by a parent or guardian at the time of their final dismissal.\*

If an emergency should arise which prohibits you from picking up your child on a timely basis, parents are urged to call us. Your child worries when you are late!

If any other person is to pick up your child, CAST must have written authorization from the parent stating the name of that person. Our staff will check that person's ID before releasing your child.

Any child who is dropped off for preschool or kindergarten prior to 8:53 a.m. will be charged for KidKare/Toddler Care. Any child who remains more than seven minutes beyond the ending time of their program will also be charged for KidKare/Toddler Care. Upon arrival, please BRING YOUR CHILD TO HIS/HER PROPER CLASSROOM first, and then sign them in on the check-in computer. At pick up time, SIGN YOUR CHILD OUT IMMEDIATELY UPON YOUR ARRIVAL at CAST and then go to your child's classroom.

\*There will be a \$50 late fee posted to your account for pick-up after 6:00 pm.

## Separation

It is usually easier on the child *and parent* if the parent does not linger when it is time to separate at the start of the child's school day. Please say your goodbyes and leave on a positive note. We encourage you to contact us upon your arrival at home or work if you are concerned about a difficult separation.

## Safety and Security

Parents must use their Identification Code in order to enter the CAST premises and children must be signed in and out using one of the computer terminals located at our main entrance. Instructions for use of the computer, as well as a personal Identification Code, will be provided to all parents. Please be certain that any adult who has your authority to drop off or pick up your child from preschool or kidcare has your ID code and is aware of our procedure for signing your child in and out. No child will be allowed to leave the school with a person other than a parent without written permission.

Any person who does not possess an ID Code must ring the doorbell and a member of our faculty will answer the door and check ID. Please do not open the door for anyone you do not recognize.

Once you have signed your child out at the computer, he/she is no longer the responsibility of CAST. It is imperative that you hold your child's hand in our busy parking lot.

Call CAST if you are delayed for any reason.

## Health Guide

The CAST Health Guide was created with careful consideration for the children in our care as well as for our faculty. We do not pretend to be doctors. Our only interest is the health and welfare of our children. Dr. Diane Fountas, pediatrician from Waterbury, Connecticut, was consulted in the development of these policies.

We understand that many of our parents are working and we will not bother you at your place of work unless we believe that your child is at risk. A sick child who may have a contagious disease is **at risk to develop further complications, or may develop a longer term illness**. It is in your child's best interest that he/she not attend CAST with compromised health.

The following are our strict guidelines:

**FEVER (100.5 or greater)** - Children must be fever-free (without the use of a fever-reducing medication) for 24 hours before returning to CAST. This means that a child who is running a fever at 6:00 p.m. the night before is not fever-free until 6:00 p.m. the following day. (Infants who are teething will not run a fever greater than 100.5)

**VOMITING** - A child who has vomited may not return to CAST until 24 hours have passed since the last incident and the child is fever-free and able to consume food and liquids.

**DIARRHEA** - A child with diarrhea, alone, will not necessarily be asked to leave CAST unless diarrhea is accompanied by fever or obvious illness and vomiting.

**CONJUNCTIVITIS** - There are two forms of infectious conjunctivitis; bacterial and viral. All children are treated with medication, but this medication is only effective on the bacterial form of pink eye. Children who have been treated with medication and who are symptom-free may return to CAST after 48 hours. Children who have been treated with medication, but who still show signs of redness or discharge from the eye(s), must not return to CAST until they are symptom-free, which may be 3 or 4 days.

**STREP THROAT** - Children may return to CAST 48 hours after initiation of antibiotics, providing the child is no longer ill.

**EAR INFECTION** - Children may return to CAST immediately after initiation of antibiotics, providing ear infection is not accompanied by fever or other signs of illness.

**COXSACKIE** - Children may return to CAST when the lesions are gone, student is fever free for 24 hours and has no other symptoms.

**CROUP** - Children may return to CAST 48 hours after initiation of treatment and providing they are symptom-free.

**HEAD LICE** - Children may return to CAST after effective therapy.

*\*\*\*\*\*For prevention purposes, please inform CAST if you need to treat your child. Any information will be kept confidential.\*\*\*\*\**

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## **SKIN CONDITIONS**

**RINGWORM** - Children may return to CAST after 2 days of therapy.

**HERPES SIMPLEX** - Children with active lesions may not attend CAST. Children may return to CAST when lesions have dried up.

**IMPETIGO** - Children may return to CAST 48 hours after effective therapy.

It is not always necessary for you to keep your children home with a cold or cough, and we will attempt to be conservative in our evaluations. If, however, you do receive a phone call from our office regarding illness or injury to your child, we expect you or your emergency contact to pick up your child within the hour.

Please note: CAST faculty are certified by the American Heart Association to administer First Aid and Infant/Child CPR. A small number of faculty members are also certified to administer medication. In the event of an emergency, these individuals may administer an Epipen. If your child has a life threatening allergy, CAST must be notified and an Epipen must be provided to CAST prior to your child attending.

## Medications

Our staff will dispense medication with the proper paperwork which must be approved by the CAST School Nurse. If your child needs an Eipenn, it must be in its **original container**. *Your pharmacist will give you an extra labeled epipen to send to school.* Antibiotics now come in a form that can be administered only twice a day. We prefer that you ask your doctor for this type of antibiotic to be administered at home.

**Tylenol or other medications approved by the CAST School Nurse will be administered by staff who are licensed to dispense medication only in the following circumstances:**

1. A doctor's written authorization is in your child's file.
2. The Tylenol/medication is provided by the parent in exactly the same form as it is authorized by the doctor.
3. Your child requires Tylenol to reduce pain brought on by teething.
4. Your child requires Tylenol to temporarily reduce fever. In such cases you will be asked to pick your child up from CAST. For the health and safety of all children, sick children belong at home.

**CAST reserves the right to call 911 for emergency medical treatment.**

# Rules

The CAST Rules of Respect have been developed in order to provide a safe environment for every child. Rules will be posted and discussed with parents and children as needed. The CAST faculty will work with any child who may have trouble conforming to these rules. CAST, however, reserves the right to dismiss a child due to inappropriate behavior.

## CAST Rules of Respect

Octopus	keep your hands to yourself
Elephant	use your listening ears
Shark	do no bite your friends
Kangaroo	put your toys away
Turtle	walk, don't run
Mouse	use your inside voice
Worm	take care of your books
Raccoon	wash before eating
Parrot	use nice words
Dog	be a good friend

## We are a friendly school because:

we share our toys  
we use nice words  
we let other friends play  
we wait for our turn  
we listen to each other  
we say "please" and "thank you"  
we don't hurt each other  
we don't hurt each other's feelings  
we use our words to tell people how we feel

## Positive Intervention

Our Reggio inspired programs view the goal of discipline as a means of supporting children as they develop the ability to self-regulate their emotions, impulses, and attention. Our disciplinary interactions are always respectful of the child and promote self-esteem and confidence. Behaviors are not labeled in a way that might reflect on the integrity of the child, e.g. "babyish", "naughty", "selfish", or "bad". Children's feelings are acknowledged, e.g. "you look very sad" rather than telling the child "there's no reason to cry."

**Teachers establish routines and set limits as a way to provide boundaries that are reassuring for children. Below are some of the techniques that teachers use to define the boundaries and set limits on behavior:**

- Limits are stated clearly - "The blocks are ONLY for building, but the balls may be thrown outside."
- Expectations are stated in a positive way - "Please keep your feet on the floor" rather than "Don't climb on the table."
- Redirection is used - "Let's go see what John is doing at the sensory table."
- Teachers support children's efforts to problem solve and negotiate with each other, e.g. "How can you tell John that you would like to have a turn with the truck?"
- There are logical consequences for behavior - "You are having a hard time playing with the blocks without throwing. Please make another choice."
- Children are presented with choices - "Would you like to work with clay or would you rather paint at the easel?"
- Teachers model appropriate and effective ways to express feelings and emotions - "I do not like when you grab the book from my hands. What can you say to me to let me know that you would like to have the book?"

## CAST will take the following steps to address on-going challenging behaviors:

1. Head Teacher will meet with an Administrator.
2. A meeting will be arranged between Head Teacher, Parent & Administrator to share information and strategies. CAST will obtain permission from parents to proceed with in-house and outside observations of the child.
3. Head Teacher will follow the CAST "Child Study Procedure".
4. Observations will be conducted and documented.
5. An individualized Behavior Plan will be implemented.
6. A meeting will be arranged between Head Teacher, Parent & Administrator to assess the success of the Behavior Plan.
7. Recommendations will be made to continue with Behavior Plan or parents will be advised to contact developmental specialists. If necessary for the purposes of the health and safety of the child, parents will be asked to provide a one-on-one aide for their child.
8. CAST will confer with specialists to support outside programs and/or therapies.
9. If child continues to present behavior that endangers him/herself or others, child will be dismissed. A certified letter will be sent to parents to advise parents of the dismissal.

## These behaviors will not be tolerated:

Talking back to faculty members

Abusing or destroying property

Physical aggression towards other children or faculty

Inappropriate language

# General Policies

## Potty Training

- Children are not ready for underpants at school until they no longer have accidents in their pull-ups. Please keep in mind that two teachers are responsible for as many as 10 children. Accidents are not only embarrassing for the child, but may cause a health hazard to everyone in the room.
- When your child is really ready to train, please speak to his/her teachers. They will be happy to gently remind your child to use the potty and will accompany them to the bathroom, providing help, encouragement, and applause. Also, please remember that at home you are training only one child at a time (or possibly two with our twins). Your child's teachers may be training seven or eight children at once. Please dress your children in clothes that are easy to pull up and down and on and off. Tights and patent leather shoes may have to wait until after our training process has progressed quite a bit.
- Please always pack extra pull-ups and extra clothes in your child's backpack. Accidents happen, even with children who are "trained".
- Remember that your attitude greatly influences your child's self esteem. Your child can feel a sense of pride and accomplishment or guilt and frustration. You are a determining factor here. We are too. Let's work together!

## Clothing and Personal Effects

Weather permitting; **children will play outdoors every day**. Please be sure your child has proper clothing. Whenever possible, children should be dressed comfortably in clothing that they can manage themselves. In cold weather, please send gloves, hat, boots, etc. In warmer weather, make sure your child has a sweater or sweatshirt, an extra pair of shorts, and a T-shirt. For safety's sake, please send children in sturdy shoes or sneakers—**no clogs or flip-flops**. **Children will not be allowed on playground equipment if they are wearing flip flops.** Also, keep in mind that many projects are messy, so dress your child accordingly.

All children may have occasional accidents. **Please send an extra set of clothing in your child's backpack**. If your child wears diapers or pull-ups, please send in extra, as well as wipes. **CAST does not provide diapers or pull-ups**.

All backpacks, jackets, coats, hats, mittens, rainwear, boots, lunchboxes, etc.—anything your child brings to CAST—must be clearly **MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME**. CAST has a lost & found box. Please inquire in the Office.

## Toys

**Please do not bring toys from home**. They tend to get lost or broken. If children come to school with toys from home, they will be asked to keep them in their backpacks. CAST is not responsible for toys brought from home.

## Special Events & Field Trips

Many special events are held throughout the year. Reminders will be sent home to notify parents of special events. Special events and field trips will be scheduled throughout the year so that all children will have an opportunity to take part. Bus transportation for field trips is provided by the same transportation service that is used by Region #14. Students will be charged for transportation and/or any fees that are related to the field trip.

## Birthdays

We love to celebrate birthdays and encourage parents to send in a healthy snack to share. Please speak to your child's teacher in advance. Birthday invitations may be distributed at CAST if all children in the class (or all boys/all girls) are included.

## Show and Tell

Show and Tell is a part of the classroom curriculum and, as such, is scheduled at the teacher's discretion. The teacher will advise you of the Show and Tell Schedule in your child's classroom.

## Snacks and Lunches

Snacks should be healthy and reflect good dietary habits. For children who do bring snack or lunch to school, please include an ice pack when necessary. **In our Upper School, we do not keep snacks or lunches in the refrigerator.** Many children have the same lunch box and thermos. Please label them clearly to avoid confusion. **CAST has a NO NUTS POLICY.** Please observe this when packing lunch and snacks for your child.

### **Please help CAST go GREEN!**

- Please purchase a plastic plate, bowl, cup, fork & spoon - that can be washed at home and reused - for your child's lunchbox. We throw away far too many paper and plastic products each day!
- Please purchase a thermos for your child's hot meals. If you go to <http://www.thermos.com> - click on lunch kits. There you can find "funtainers" for your child that are decorated with sports figures and princesses! This will benefit your child and Mother Earth - the less time your child's teacher spends "in the kitchen" heating up lunches, the more time she spends with your child!
- Please make sure that the Office has your proper e-mail address. We will be sending notices home via e-mail.
- CAST is recycling & composting. Leftover veggies from lunch and snacks will help to keep our new worm composter in top form!

## Food Allergies (see Medications)

Please make sure that CAST is fully aware of any allergies that your child may have. The CAST School Nurse will contact all parents whose child has allergies. If your child's pediatrician has advised that an epipen is necessary, then one must be kept at CAST at all times. Special provisions may be made for children who have food allergies. Please speak to your child's teacher.

Due to allergies, CAST has a "NO NUTS" POLICY. Please refer to the information contained in your Preschool Packet or inquire at the office or with the school nurse for additional information about our NO NUTS POLICY.

Please note: All CAST faculty members are certified in Infant/Child First Aid and CPR.

## Naps

All children not involved in our afternoon Odyssey program will be required to have a quiet time for resting or sleeping. CAST provides a "napping kit" at a nominal charge.

## Biting

- We are vigilant and try to catch the biting before it happens. Sometimes an incident can be prevented if we spot a situation or a "look" that tells us there is about to be a disagreement over a toy or play activity.
- If the biting does occur, we firmly tell the biter "NO BITE" and remove the child to another place in the classroom. If we are aware of the biting incident we will always send home an OUCH Report. We apply ice to a bite, if warranted, and if a bite has broken the skin, we immediately call the parent of the child who was bitten.
- We give all of the children reminders during the course of the day to USE NICE HANDS and to TREAT EACH OTHER NICELY.
- We always speak to the parent of the biting child to find out if there is something going on at home that may help us to understand why the child is biting. A change in routine or a change in family dynamics sometimes throws a young child off.
- Biting does not usually last long and disappears when a child develops more language skills.

## School Calendar, Holidays and Closings

Our school year closely parallels the Region 14 School System Calendar with regard to holidays and vacation periods. An updated calendar is sent every year in an Orientation Packet. There is also a calendar posted on our website.

CAST parents may elect to send their child to CAST for 44 to 50 weeks during the school year. You may design your own calendar of personal vacation weeks.

CAST will make an independent evaluation of the weather when Region #14 closes for snow. Closings for CAST Preschool, Kindergarten, and KidKare/Toddler Care Programs due to inclement weather will be posted on wfsb - television Channel 3 and on the Channel 3 website: [www.wfsb.com](http://www.wfsb.com). CLOSINGS WILL ALSO BE NOTED ON OUR WEBSITE [www.castkidz.com](http://www.castkidz.com). Please use the above listed sources to check for delays and closings due to snow. All preschool programs will be delayed when Region 14 announces a delayed opening. Children are welcome to come to CAST on these days as soon as parents can deliver them safely.

Children who are regularly scheduled to attend preschool on snow days may attend KidKare or Toddler Care with no extra charge during their contracted hours. Please use the above listed sources to make sure that we are open.

## Registration/Enrollment

Advance registration in preschool programs for the following school year will be accepted at any time; however, we reach our maximum enrollment quickly and, therefore, recommend early registration. Forms for this purpose will be distributed prior to December 1<sup>st</sup> and places for all children currently enrolled are reserved until January 15<sup>th</sup>. Siblings of children who have attended the school are given preference. Enrollment is open to the public as of January 15<sup>th</sup>.

For new families, tours are provided upon request. Please call for an appointment. CAST accepts new enrollees throughout the year depending on availability.

## Required Forms

Upon acceptance of your child into our Preschool or KidKare program, **5 forms must be completed and returned to us:**

- Registration Form, along with a non-refundable registration fee for the school year.
- Physician's Health Form
- Emergency Information Form **with a minimum of two (2) emergency contacts other than parents**
- Emergency Card
- A Sunscreen Permission Form

**These forms must be returned to the Creative Arts Studio (CAST) prior to the first day of school.** As a State licensed and accredited child care facility, Connecticut law requires that these forms be in our files for your child's protection. If you have lost or misplaced these forms, you may print them off of our website: [www.castkidz.com](http://www.castkidz.com), or contact us so that new copies can be sent. **Please note that a yearly physical is mandated by the State for all preschoolers. *Children without updated medical forms will not be allowed to attend CAST until the required forms have been submitted to our office.***

## Payment of Tuition

A non-refundable registration fee must be paid at the time of your child's first enrollment in our program. A subsequent renewal fee will be charged at the time of re-enrollment.

For budgeting purposes, school tuition is divided into twelve (12) equal payments.

Statements **WILL** be mailed to you on a monthly basis.

No allowance will be made for personal family vacations or sickness when your child is not present.

CAST reserves the right to determine whether, for health or safety reasons, a child requires an aide. Parents will be held responsible for this additional expense.

Tuition Express is our required method of collecting tuition payments. This allows us to process tuition and fee payments safely, quickly and efficiently. Once enrolled in Tuition Express, your tuition, Kidkare and other fee payments will be paid automatically on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. You can receive instant email notification that your payment has been received by signing up at [www.tuitionexpress.com](http://www.tuitionexpress.com). We will provide you with your Tuition Express ID number. Forms can be found on our website or they are available in the Office.

Our Procure attendance/billing system does not allow us to swap preschool days. Should you require an occasional additional day of preschool, you may check in the Office for availability. We will check with the classroom teacher and bill you for the single day.

#### **NOTE:**

**CAST WILL NOT ACCEPT CASH PAYMENTS.** Acceptable forms of payment are personal checks, bank checks, money orders or TuitionExpress.com.

#### **PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO CREATIVE ARTS STUDIO (CAST).**

Contact our office immediately if there will be a delay in payment or if you have any questions regarding billing.

Receipts for payments are available upon request.

CAST may dismiss a child due to lack of payment.

## Address Change

Please let us know immediately if your address, telephone number or email address changes. **Two emergency telephone numbers must be kept current at all times for each child enrolled.**

## Withdrawal

In the event your family must move during the school year and your child must be withdrawn from the program, we require written notification at least 30 days in advance of the withdrawal date. Tuition deposit and any other tuition paid in advance will not be refunded.

## NO WAY—THE HUNDRED IS THERE

### The Child is Made of One Hundred

The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts

A hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking.

A hundred, always a hundred ways of listening, of marveling, of loving.

A hundred joys for singing and understanding,

A hundred worlds to discover, a hundred worlds to invent,

A hundred worlds to dream.

The child has a hundred languages (and a hundred hundred more).

But they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture separate the head from the body.

They tell the child to think without hands, to do without head,

To listen and not to speak.

To understand without joy,

to love and to marvel only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child to discover the world already there

And of the hundred, they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child that work and play, reality and fantasy, science and imagination,

Sky and earth, reason and dream are things that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child that the hundred is not there.

The child says

"No way—the hundred is there"

Professor Luis Malaguzzi