



Parent Reference Guide

Please retain for future reference

Updated November 2020

SOUTH HILLS *Child Development Center Inc.*

3808 Caughey Rd. Erie, PA 16506

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WELCOME TO SOUTH HILLS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER INC.

Now that your child will be participating in our program, this Reference Guide will familiarize you with our policies and other information you will need to know to make your child's experience with us a positive one. If you have any questions or concerns, the director, Connie Kerr Vogt, ("Ms Connie") is available to discuss them with you. Connie has been the administrator and owner of South Hills since its founding in 1975.

South Hills is licensed as a private Preschool and Kindergarten through the Pennsylvania Department of Education and a child care center through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services during the after-school hours. In addition, we are proud to have been awarded and retain national accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Please check our website, www.shills.info, at least monthly and follow us on Twitter [@SouthHillsInc](https://twitter.com/SouthHillsInc) for quick emergency notices from the school. After creating your Dropbox account (separate directions included in your registration packet), please allow push notifications on your mobile device, which will provide notices each time we send correspondence, photos, assessments, or emergency information for your viewing! You will also enjoy our photos and stories on Instagram [@southhillsinc](https://www.instagram.com/southhillsinc)

South Hills is a happy and peaceful environment, and we welcome your family into our family!



Connie

ABOUT OUR STAFF

All of the staff members at South Hills have a Bachelors degree and teaching certification in Early Childhood and/or Elementary Education. In compliance with our license as a private school and child care center through the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Department of Human Services/OCDEL, all staff members have all required clearances as well as FBI fingerprinting security. All teachers are trained in pediatric first aid and CPR and attend annual fire safety and medication administration training. Every five years teachers are trained in Mandatory Reporting responsibilities for the reporting of suspected child abuse. During orientation, all teachers are trained to comply with our Bloodborne Pathogen Plan and our Emergency Crisis Plan, which are reviewed annually. Our Emergency Crisis Plan is approved by Millcreek Township and Erie County via their Emergency Management Agencies, and is included in their database system. Teachers are also required to complete additional course work of at least 12 hours pertaining to Early Childhood Education and Special Education on an annual basis.

Expectations of the staff are very high, and teachers are frequently evaluated using professional positioning that includes goal setting and self-evaluation. Along with Connie, teachers evaluate themselves and set professional goals to meet within a specific time frame. The staff has exemplary collaboration skills and works as a team; teachers are very supportive of each other. Staff members are also thoroughly trained in communicating frequently with parents; our communication is a priority here!

PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is a child centered approach. The school implements emergent curriculum focusing on Project Approach and many of the components of Reggio Emilia. Teachers are observers; they document the topics that children discuss within the classroom, the materials they use, the questions they ask, and the areas in the classroom that are of interest to them. The teacher and students frequently meet to discuss their areas of interest and “brainstorm” regarding project work they would like to develop. This project work includes activities for each area of intelligence, based on Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences. The curriculum is developmentally appropriate according to NAEYC criteria and includes reading and math readiness, science, art, music, language, handwriting, geography, multiculturalism, history, large and fine motor work, technology, Spanish and Sign Language. All work at

South Hills reflects true child ownership. Children are free to create their own interpretations and choose from a variety of materials to work with, but teachers do provide photographs, models, or “real experiences” to guide their work and the learning process. Children create observational and representational art as the projects emerge. This process of children’s learning is valued as much as the final product. The children’s art work is displayed throughout the room and in the hallways, foyer, and even outdoors! The children are immersed in print as they listen and “read along” to stories and poems, as they see environmental print throughout the room and school environment, as their stories and descriptions of their art work are written by dictation or invented spelling and displayed alongside their photographs and projects, and as their dialogues with their friends are displayed. The teachers spend much time observing the children and documenting what they say and do, which will later be used for assessment and for new ideas for the direction the curriculum will take. Throughout the projects, documentation takes many forms. Teachers photograph various stages of each project; the children or teacher journal the development of a project and may add illustrations. The project can then be documented from beginning to end by the creation of a binder which is displayed in the classroom. This creates a sense of history, and an opportunity for children to “revisit” their projects over time.

The first five years of life are the most critical in terms of brain development. All activities at South Hills are play based and have a neurological purpose, with the intention that every child will experience success, build positive self-esteem, and will increase attention and observational skills while learning core academic skills that are developmentally appropriate for young learners.

Our outdoor Nature Based play area is approximately one quarter acre and is designed to promote nature based play as well as support our Action Based Learning curriculum. ABL activities are introduced on a daily basis to connect cognitive, kinesthetic and neurological skills. Children balance, hop, skip, jump, cross midline, and run while learning key concepts of reading, math, science, geography and other subjects. During inclement weather, the ABL grids that are painted throughout our playground on paved areas are duplicated on carpets used in the classrooms. Movement and exercise is a daily focus, and connects with our learning environment.

Nature based play allows the children the freedom to explore and observe insects; birds; plants; flower gardens; vegetable garden; herb garden; small animals and other aspects of the natural world. The children tend all the

gardens, from planting to watering, weeding and harvesting. The boardwalks in this outdoor area are a way for the children to roam and freely explore the natural world and enjoy times of creative play within nature. The children are engaged in composting—tumbler composter and vermi-composters are on site. Parents are encouraged to donate vegetable scraps, grass to our composters. The children search the vermi-composter for worm eggs, and watch them eat their way through the 'garbage' and turn it into rich dirt that they return to the vegetable, herb and flower garden. Environmental studies are incorporated in the classroom recycling bins, using loose parts and recycled materials in art projects and as the basis for provocations and for engineering studies, and much more.

The mud kitchen is a favorite place for exploration and imagination.

The school collects rain water via our rain barrel; the children have access to this and can independently turn on/off the spigot and fill watering cans to water plants during their outdoor time.

Parents are welcome to our herbs at any time! We always have more than we can use!

More details regarding this aspect of our curriculum can be found on our website home page (www.shills.info) under "About Us".

Connie is a certified KAY yoga teacher (www.kiddingaroundyoga.com) and also a certified meditation/mindfulness teacher; yoga, breathing exercises and mindfulness are incorporated into the program so that children can calm and self-regulate themselves when feeling anxious, sad, over-stimulated or overly active! We promote good health through safe exercising. These asanas (postures) also promote increased attention and focusing skills, which are critical for effective learning!

State and national standards are currently the basis for education in our country. We are pleased that the Pennsylvania Department of Education has recognized that Early Childhood educators serve an important role in implementing these standards. All elementary students are first tested in third grade on the standards. However, the PA Department of Education has developed the Early Learning Core Curriculum Standards for children beginning at birth.

The teachers of South Hills implement these standards throughout their daily/ weekly lesson plans, and your child's quarterly assessment is directly linked to these standards as well. Because of the great length of the standards, we are unable to furnish a copy to each family, so have placed one in a wall rack in each wing of the school. Please look for them near the back outside doors and use them often! These standards can also be accessed through our website. Simply click on our home page, and click again on the PA Department of Education, which is highlighted on that page. Then please scroll down the page to the Infant/Toddler, Pre-Kindergarten, and Kindergarten standards, near the bottom of the page.

Parents may be interested in viewing the standards to see what types of skills might further enhance a child's educational experience on the home level.

In addition, South Hills provides home activities for parents to enjoy with their children that will also strengthen their skills. Please access this page through our website and then click on "Home Work". Then select the area of development you would like to focus upon, such as Literacy, Math, Fine Motor, etc.

ASSESSMENT BASED ON OBSERVATION

South Hills implements authentic assessments to document and provide evidence of your child's growth, efforts, progress, achievements and goals during his/her time with us. This developmental assessment is an important tool for us in our work with your child, and we know you will come to value it as well. The results of the documentation in the assessment are used to align the curriculum to your child's unique developmental stages.

For most parents, assessment is a new term. Please do not feel intimidated by it! South Hills' staff strives for a positive partnership with parents in our joint efforts to create the best educational program for your child, and any staff members will be happy to answer any questions you might have regarding this process at any time. Assessment is an on-going process; they are updated continually through your child's time at South Hills so you can track your child's development.

We will be requesting for parents to administer a brief developmental assessment called ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) and submit the result to us when your child enrolls at South Hills. This will give us a base score for your child's development upon which we will build as we work with your child

and assess his/her growth. Details to access this assessment will be included with your welcome packet.

Assessments are confidential and received by parents through Dropbox. Only the staff and parents can view them without written permission from parents as confidentiality is a priority. We can only release assessments to parents unless written permission is provided by the parent, and an email address is provided. Assessments are sent to parents through a secure Dropbox account. Instructions for setting up this Dropbox account are included in the parent registration packet, and your email address is required for us to have you accept an invitation to your child's assessment folder.

There is a day set aside in mid-December, mid-May, and mid-August for parents to receive their child's assessment via Dropbox, although photos are sent throughout each week. During this time each quarter, your child's monthly Writing Journal and Self Portrait Journal will be available for viewing in the classroom as well, although we do provide a copy of each month's entry through Dropbox. A "Parent Response Record" is also included in each assessment after Assessment Viewing Day for you to record your thoughts/concerns; we are required to have you complete this form each time you view the assessment. Your responses are addressed by the teacher within one week if there are any concerns or questions, and conferences can be arranged at any time.

A Verification Form is also required by the state and will be included in each take home folder during Portfolio Assessment viewings. Parent's signatures on this form verifies to the state that South Hills offers parents the opportunity to view their child's progress via assessment (Ours is the Observation Assessment Approach, which is much more detailed, and we believe it is more thorough). The Verification Form also documents that parents were given activities to implement at home to further support their child's developmental skills. Those activities are on our website home page and can be accessed by clicking on "Home Work".

In addition, the DHS requires their own assessment (CSR) to be completed, even though it is not nearly as extensive as ours. Parents will be asked to view the CSR after each Assessment Viewing Day as well, and we are required to have parents sign and date it as verification it was received and viewed.

South Hills' staff will not compare your child with others in the classroom; in a multi-age classroom we view each child working at their own stage of development and at their own pace. However, parents will be able to view their child's goals within the classroom, and can also track their child's progress via the Early Learning Standards as they compare to the child's assessment. (The standards can be accessed through our website by clicking on the PA Department of Education highlight on the home page) Our goal is that the children of South Hills attending for at least two years will exceed the benchmarks of the state standards by the time they leave our program. You will be well informed if specific benchmarks are not being met and what plan will be implemented to support your child's success.

The paper components of the original portfolio (Writing and Self-Portrait Journals) are sent home when a child withdraws, in June (half day students and Kindergartners) or August (full day students). Copies are made for our records, and to pass along to elementary schools upon parental request. We encourage parents to retain the assessment in the Dropbox folder for future reference.

All teachers are trained in the use of assessment during their college/university coursework, and in our specific assessment during their initial employment orientation. Each teacher will be able to explain the assessment purpose, means and use to parents if requested. South Hills' teachers are strong observers and complete documentation throughout the day on their students. Here is a summary of authentic observation and portfolio assessment for your reference:

PURPOSE: A collection of documentation samples and observations/interactions over time, which positively exhibit/document a child's efforts, progress, and achievements in several specific areas. This assessment is used by the staff to design the most appropriate educational program for your child.

TYPE: South Hills prefers the Authentic Assessment based on observation and real life/time experiences. There is no check list; only actual observation and documentation of skills are included.

CONTENTS: These components include:

Skill assessment—All skills included in the Pa Early Learning Standards are documented in detail and dated, along with the strengths and future goals for

each individual child. Additional skills may also be included under pertinent topics.

Writing samples—At least one sample each month from the **guided** Writing Journal is included in the assessment via Dropbox.

Self Portraits—Each child has a book that contains space for monthly **guided** self portrait drawings. This should be an automatic monthly activity.

Project work—Photos of journals, drawings, graphs, science projects, water play, engineering feats, artwork, gross motor work, etc, is placed in the assessment to cross reference documentation.

Book reports—Forms are included to encourage children to reflect on books read to them throughout the day and determine comprehension skills and reading interest among other skills.

Reading logs—Teachers are required to list books on a monthly reading record. This record is copied each month and included in the portfolio. Since books are typically read more than once, please note repeated readings.

Photos—Photos are effective cross references to support the assessment process.

Response sheet—This documentation is completed by parents after reviewing the portfolio so that parents may also contribute to the assessment process. The response sheet is viewed by DHS, so please make every effort to have this completed and signed within a week after the assessment viewing, and document your efforts in the event it is questioned by DHS during our inspections. If a parental concern is noted, teachers are responsible for addressing that concern and documenting how it was addressed. The response sheets are to be returned to the office staff for verification that it was received, and it is then placed in the child's permanent file.

CSR- A Child Service Report is also required for all students attending PA preschool programs. This is an abbreviated assessment as compared to South Hills' in-depth assessment and both will teachers must complete both and deposit in the parent's Dropbox folder on Assessment dates.

Sign Language and Spanish-Skills in these studies are documented based on observation as well.

This assessment is sent to parents via Dropbox to each child's private Assessment Folder and is secure and confidential.

OWNERSHIP: The portfolio and all of its contents belong to the child and his/her family/legal guardian, and paper components will be sent home annually, dependent upon the child's enrollment date.

VIEWING: Assessment Viewing Days are regularly scheduled for December, January,(half day), May, and August (See School Calendar). These are the days when your child's assessment will be available to you via the Dropbox Assessment folder unique to each child. NO ONE other than the staff of South Hills and the parents who have accepted their child's Dropbox folder will have access to their child's file, with the exception of DHS during their annual inspection. Assessments are kept confidential and no part of the portfolios can be released without written permission by the parent. Elementary schools do request these valuable assessments upon Kindergarten/First Grade enrollment; parents must request copies in writing at least one week in advance and sign a release form. Copies will securely be sent to schools electronically as a pdf file when possible. (Some schools still request hard copies.)

CONFERENCES

Parents are welcome to schedule conferences at any time. We encourage all parents to schedule a conference at least annually. Please call or talk to someone in our office for scheduling any conferences and classroom coverage will be arranged during conference time. We also offer Zoom conferences for your convenience. Half day preschool parents are scheduled for conferences during the month of January and at year's end in late May/early June. Full day students will have parent conferences scheduled every June and upon request.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Early intervention is a major part of our work and commitment as Early Childhood educators. The Director and many staff members are certified in Special Education. The staff is trained to note signs of learning, speech, communication, visual, auditory, motor, neurological, psychological,

developmental and behavior problems, and they document, then make referrals as quickly as possible.

If we do note any areas of concern regarding your child, we will share our concerns as well as our strategies to address our concerns. If the concern persists, we will meet with the family as a team (teachers and Director) We present details of our experiences and concerns, share our documentation, then help the family make an appropriate decision regarding course of action. We work closely with the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5 and Erie School District Early Intervention Departments and frequently have therapists and educational consultants working in our classrooms. We do implement IEPs (Individual Education Programs) designed by the consultants as part of a child's individualized program and meet frequently with parents and support staff for the child's benefit. Many children are referred to South Hills by the Tri-County Unit and other agencies because of the structure of the program, curriculum, qualifications of the staff, and our small class size. We take great pride in our success with our children with special needs and Early Intervention requirements.

If your child enrolls with an IEP already in place, your child's teacher and the Director will meet with you early in enrollment, if not prior to, in order to review the IEP and discuss our approach to meeting the requirements. Early Intervention services will be arranged to be transferred to South Hills.

If at any time you have a concern regarding your child's development, please feel free to consult with us.

Important Considerations Regarding Your Child's Suitability for Our Program

TOILET TRAINING

Students are required to be fully toilet trained and independent in order to attend South Hills. We are not licensed as an infant/toddler program and we do not have any sanitizing equipment that is required for children who are not trained. Toilet training is not part of our curriculum here and children cannot wear diapers or pull-ups as an alternative. Children must be able to go into the bathroom independently, manage their clothing, sit on the toilet without a training seat, clean themselves, flush, pull their clothing up again, and

independently wash their hands before rejoining their group. Bathrooms are located in the classrooms. Teachers cannot leave their groups to go into the bathroom with a single child, as teachers must be able to see their students at all times. It is often difficult for an office person to immediately be available to assist.

Please: If your child is not yet independent in the bathroom, do not enroll at this time and place unnecessary stress on your child. Our program focuses on learning activities and developmental benchmarks. Your child will be ready for our program when s/he is fully trained, confident and independent in bathroom routines.

BEHAVIORS

We are proud to support children who require Early Intervention services. The Erie School District and Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit #5 have educational consultants assigned to South Hills who assist with a variety of developmental concerns including speech and language; fine and large motor skills; and developmental delays. If your child is currently receiving services for Early Intervention, please notify Connie immediately so that services can be transitioned to South Hills in a timely fashion.

We do not discriminate among children or families due to race, ethnicity, religion or any other reason. However, there are some developmental concerns that South Hills simply does not have the resources to address. Behavioral issues are one. We have high expectations for the children here regarding their behavior, since the main focus is educational. Children who are aggressive or continually disruptive to the learning of the other students cannot remain at South Hills. It does typically take two or, in the case of Tuesday/Thursday students, even four weeks for children to comply with and settle into our structured educational routine, and we have many positive means to assist them in this transition. Connie is trained to write and support teachers and parents to follow behavioral modification plans, which will always be considered first, along with positive reinforcement strategies. However, if a child's behavior is continually aggressive or disruptive and a teacher's energy is too centered upon one child and his/her behavioral issues, it would not be appropriate for that child to continue at South Hills. Many other supportive schools with staff trained specifically in behavioral disorders would be much more appropriate and will be suggested. We commit to work with you to find the best services available for your child. Our major goal is for ALL of the

children in our school to succeed, and if your child will achieve success in a more supportive school, we will guide you through that transition. We are blessed to live in a community with such support for children of all needs!

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

South Hills has a positive reinforcement program implemented into our curriculum. The staff is trained to ignore negative or inappropriate behavior and continually reward positive and appropriate behavior. We all respond to praise and encouragement! Each child earns stickers throughout the day for their hard work and good choices, and children can earn prizes, bookmarks, large stickers, awards, etc. This teaches children about economic systems—hard work brings rewards to purchase items one might need/want.

Each teacher reinforces good manners, appropriate behavior, and we give much verbal and physical attention (hugs!) to each child. For aggression or repeated inappropriate behavior that disrupts the educational climate of the classroom, the child is gently removed from the classroom and brought to the Activity room/office until s/he is calm and able to rejoin the group. Yogic breathing is calming and positive. This removal is NOT considered punishment! We firmly believe children should not be further embarrassed by 'losing control' in front of their peers. The child will sit with a teacher or Ms Connie and will be guided through breathing practices to help self-calming. The labyrinth can also be used for such purposes, as well as yoga asanas or soft music. Ms Connie's office is described to children as "a quiet and private place where we can talk together about important things". Classes are often invited in to resolve classroom issues so they are reassured this is not a place of which to be frightened or intimidated.

Children will NEVER be physically punished, humiliated, or embarrassed at South Hills!! We do not use 'Time Out' areas in the classroom, although the school supports Time Out for home use. Respect of each individual child is most important! (How can we teach our children to be respectful if we are not respectful of them?) Parents will always be notified when their child has been removed from the classroom; on occasion we may request a conference with the parents to assist in dealing with inappropriate behavior through the means of a Behavior Modification Plan. This Plan is for minor/mild behavioral problems and is a plan to link home and school as we work together toward a child's success. Several children each year are typically on behavioral plans. We

cannot discuss these plans with anyone other than the parent of the child who is the focus of the plan. **Confidentiality is critical for our program.** If you are concerned about the behavior of another child, or our response to it (we often must ignore behaviors that are not aggressive), please do share your concerns, but understand that we cannot discuss the behavior of other children. Trust that we have positive, effective plans in place, and that our first responsibility is for the safety and health of ALL our children. Therefore, children are never placed in compromising situations. Behaviors that negatively affect the classroom are positively resolved with a myriad of positive and affirming strategies, including discussions among the children regarding good/poor choices, appropriate and inappropriate actions.

Continued aggression or behavior that disrupts the educational environment of the classroom cannot be tolerated. A child who does not respond to positive behavior modification plans or who requires Early Intervention related to behavioral issues beyond the scope of our program will not be able to remain at South Hills. We will assist the family and child with a transition to a more appropriate setting. To neglect referring a child to other appropriate schools would do a great disservice to children who require a more intense personal plan managed by behavioral specialists to resolve these types of behavioral issues. The Northwest Intermediate Unit 5 assists in these rare circumstances.

As a Special Education certified teacher (birth through grade 12) since 1972, Ms. Connie has a strong commitment to children with any Early Intervention needs. But even she must sometimes admit a child would benefit from another placement. Our goal is for every child here to succeed. If we have done all we can, with the assistance of Early Intervention specialists, and the child is not succeeding, we must find the appropriate school for that child.

The children at South Hills are well behaved, and we do have high expectations regarding behavior and manners. Children are required to be respectful of their peers and teachers, but to stand up for their rights or express their opinions respectfully. They are encouraged to 'use your words' when they are upset, angry, frustrated, etc., and to talk about their problems and conflicts. There are specific rules for indoor and outdoor conduct that are designed for the health and safety of all of the children. Children are given meaningful activities in which to participate; the structure of the day gives them a focus of expectations, and they learn through our work with them what is expected in terms of behavior. Each teacher has the responsibility of creating a strong

sense of community in the classroom, where children are part of a special group who cares for one another. Children support each other, understand that their peers are all learning different skills according to their development, and cheer each other along as they reach their goals! This sense of community assists the children in their efforts to model each other positively and contribute to their class.

WE HUG HERE!

The vast majority of our students spend 45-50 hours each week with us. In an age when most schools are making rules and regulations regarding a “hands off” policy towards students, our philosophy is that young children need the physical attention and tactile reinforcement of hugs and cuddling. Psychologically, children need to know they are special to their teachers, and that we care about them. All of the teachers show great respect and affection toward their students; we do hug and hold our students, cuddle with them and allow them to sit in our laps. If parents are uncomfortable with this, we would encourage them to consider other schools.

SENSITIVE SUBJECTS

There are many subjects that are not appropriate for us to discuss in depth with your child, as we at South Hills strongly feel that parents should be the primary source when dealing with sensitive subjects. All families want to present their own personal beliefs and thoughts to their child, and we have no right to take on that role. We will not be discussing disturbing news events, politics, existential questions such as what happens at death, sexuality, adoption, etc. although we firmly support diversity in families! We will direct your child’s questions/concerns regarding those sensitive topics to you, however!. We will certainly acknowledge those questions respectfully and will inform you regarding them, giving you time to expect them! (For example: “Thank you for sharing that with me—it shows me what a deep thinker you are! Families have their own special way of answering a question like that, and I think it is important that I let your family know that you would like to discuss that with them. I know they will make time to answer that very important question.”)

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

The South Hills staff spends 30-50 hours each week with the majority of our students here. Often we notice drastic changes in behavior, and attempt various strategies to deal positively with each child. We do not pry into your

personal family life, but if there has been a recent death, separation, illness, move, etc in your family, this information is very helpful for us in our relationship with your child. Even an ill pet creates enormous anxiety for children! Supporting your child through stressful situations is a major part of our work! The staff is well trained to help children handle stress and maintain a secure consistent environment. The Caring Place provides us with workshops on grief support, for example. Any family information shared will be kept strictly confidential.

PAYMENTS AND INVOICING

All monthly invoices, receipts, and annual statements will be emailed to the email address(es) you've provided for South Hills Dropbox access. Monthly invoices will provide details on the payment due for the given month, regardless of program. Invoices can be paid online (directions will be provided on your emailed invoice) or by check. For security reasons, we prefer to have no cash in the building. Checks can be written to "South Hills Child Development Center Inc.". Please drop your payment in the box located outside Ms Connie's office.

Regardless of program, payments for each monthly invoice will be due on the first of the following month. Late charges are added to any payments not made after 5 days following the first of the month. Please refer to your emailed invoices for your monthly tuition balance and due dates.

Please contact our Business Manager, Dylan J.K. Vogt, at dylanjkvogtshills@gmail.com with any questions regarding your payments.

FOR CHILD CARE CREDIT, SOUTH HILLS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER INC.'S FEDERAL TAX NUMBER IS: 20-8087978.

FEES FOR HALF AND FULL DAY PRESCHOOL

Your child is considered a HALF DAY PRESCHOOL student if you pay on monthly basis for a nine month program. Half day preschool students attend only MWF or T/TH from 9:00-11:30 or daily from 12:30-3:10.

Your child is considered a FULL DAY PRESCHOOL student if you are billed weekly (within your monthly invoice) and your child attends the full day educational program year round. Please keep your child's status in mind when

reading the monthly newsletter, as some things pertain only to full day preschool, others to half day preschool. If there is no specification, assume that the notice applies to both groups. If in doubt, don't hesitate to ask!

FEES FOR KINDERGARTEN

A deposit is required at the time of enrollment. This deposit is equal to one week's fee and will be credited to the child's last week of enrollment, provided that all payments have been up to date and that two weeks advance notice has been given before withdrawal or any schedule changes. A non-refundable registration fee is also required, as included in the annual price list on the brochure. Kindergarten enrollment requires an additional non-refundable materials fee.

Parents are responsible for payment for all days registered on the contract agreement to be completed before enrollment. All days must be paid for regardless of attendance, as our annual budget is based on our enrollment, similar to all private schools. Parents are not responsible for tuition for days that the center is closed for holidays. Those days will be noted in the monthly newsletter. The center does remain open between Christmas and New Year's Day. **WE DO NOT FOLLOW THE MILLCREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHEDULE!** Please check your monthly newsletter for any dates we close. Parents receive a copy of the annual calendar upon enrollment; the calendar is also available via our website's Google calendar.

All schedule changes and withdrawals require a two week notice. Payment is required until the withdrawal date. All payments must be paid in full by your child's last day in order to receive a refund of deposit and avoid late fees.

There is a fee for checks returned for any reason. The current rate is posted on the Parent Bulletin Board in the foyer.

Fees for half day preschool:

Preschool payments are based on the nine month school year. Discounted annual tuition may be made in full by July 1, or may be paid monthly over a period of nine months. The first payment for September is due by July 10. Tuition (monthly at minimum) not paid by this date means forfeiture of placement and all fees. No students will be accepted in the fall class without this first payment. A non-refundable registration fee is required when registering for the preschool classes, as noted on the price sheet in the annual

brochure. Refunds for half day preschool fees are based on the unused portion of fees collected. Attending any part of a month requires a full month's payment. All schedule changes and withdrawals require a two week written notice.

There is a fee for checks returned for any reason. The current rate is posted on the Parent Bulletin Board in the foyer.

LATE CHARGES/ADDITIONAL CARE

For Full Day Students:

The center closes at 5:30. Our staff members also have families who need their attention, and the staff is not paid beyond that time. Many of our staff members attend evening classes or work evening jobs. Others have children at other centers that must be picked up. Parents picking up their children after 5:30 will be charged \$10 for every 15 minute increment after 5:30 to compensate for staff overtime payment. The regulations require that two teachers must stay with a child whose parents have not arrived, and the teachers must document their time. South Hills Child Development Center Inc. reserves the right to deny enrollment to any family neglecting this closing time.

On occasion, additional care may be needed beyond the days already reserved. Please note that the DAYS CANNOT BE TRADED! As a state licensed school, South Hills must always be in compliance with ratio requirements. Extra days can be scheduled if an opening is available. If additional care is required, please see Connie or Beth for a request form. Please note that once additional services have been scheduled, there are no cancellations and the time requested must be paid for. Many times an opening is held for a child who cancels, after we have turned down others for the same opening.

For Half Day Students:

Parents whose child is enrolled in the half day preschool program should bring their children at 8:55 for the morning session, and 12:25 for the afternoon session. The half day preschool teachers have responsibilities for our school age program prior to the beginning of the preschool portion of their day, but will have the classroom doors open at those times.

However, parents whose children attend the a.m. class may need care for their children prior to those times, and can contact the school office in advance to make those arrangements. Reservations must be made in advance at current rates. Please contact Connie to make reservations. Children can arrive as early as 7:15.

Half day preschool students can attend lunch from 11:30-12:25 without a reservation on their preschool days. Current charges apply, and can be added to tuition or paid that day. Please just notify the classroom teacher that your child will be staying for lunch when you arrive and have your child bring his/her lunch to enjoy with friends! We will make arrangements to maintain the appropriate teacher arrangements for ratios at lunchtime. The afternoon preschool session begins at 12:30 and all students from the a.m. session staying for lunch must be picked up by 12:25.

If your child is not remaining for lunch, parents must arrive within five minutes of the class' ending time (11:30 or 3:10 depending on your child's class time) as we must always be in ratio according to DHS regulations. A late charge of \$5 will be billed to parents who are late, (11:35-11:45; 3:15-3:30) and an additional \$5 will be: charged for each additional 15 minutes of late time (for example, 11:45-12:00/3:30-3:45) This fee has been agreed to in your enrollment contract. At the end of the morning session, the teachers must move full day students into the classroom for lunch and our Pre-Kindergarten Enrichment program, as well as prepare for the afternoon class. At the end of the afternoon sessions, the teacher must be at the bus stop to meet our children for our school age program. If you are late to pick up your child from the morning/afternoon class, s/he may be moved to another classroom or to the office to wait for you. Please respect our attempts to always comply with state regulations by arriving on time to pick up your child.

WITHDRAWAL/SCHEDULE CHANGES

Two weeks written notice is required for withdrawal or any schedule changes. Please see Connie to obtain the proper form for these changes. Deposits are not refundable unless two weeks notice is given and all payments are current.

VACATION/SICK DAYS

Vacations and sick days cannot be granted. South Hills is a private school and a business; we base our budget on the students we have enrolled. Most private

schools do not refund tuition for vacations or illness, and we are also not able to do this. However, unlike other area schools, you do not pay for services on the days we close (holidays, for example). If taking a vacation, the options are to pay for the time missed or withdraw from the program. Your child's name is to be placed on the waiting list and when an opening is available, you will be notified.

Placement for students withdrawing for the summer cannot be reserved for the fall. Parents are responsible for payment for at least one half of their child's regular weekly enrollment fee in the summer to guarantee fall placement. Exceptions: Half day preschool student and Elementary students in grades 1-5 will not be scheduled in the summer unless placement is desired and openings are available.

MEDICAL NEEDS

The staff members of South Hills are trained every two years in Pediatric First Aid and CPR; there is no medical support (i.e. a nurse) on staff. Teachers are unable to administer injections, suppositories, or other medically related treatments except for dispensing liquid or pill form medications and using nebulizers and epipens as needed.

We can administer ear and eye drops, and are all trained in the use of nebulizers. All staff are trained in administering over-the-counter or prescribed medications, which must be accompanied by a physician order, and must follow all the specific guidelines listed in the Parent Reference Guide in the Illness and Medication section. If your child has a medical condition requiring extensive monitoring and intervention, South Hills would not be a suitable choice. However, we will make suggestions regarding alternative care, resources and education.

PLEASE NOTE: It would be a serious disservice to your child if s/he cannot fully participate in the South Hills curriculum due to any of the above concerns. South Hills is strongly committed to all children, and while Early Intervention is a major part of our work, there are times when parents and staff must recognize that this is simply not the best placement.

If you have a concern regarding your child's development or behavior, please discuss it with Connie so an appropriate evaluation can be scheduled, if needed. **Before committing to enrollment at South Hills, please seriously consider these criteria to ensure your child's success in our program.**

ILLNESS AND MEDICATION

If you are called because your child is ill and needs your attention, you must make arrangements to have your child picked up within one hour of our call. Please do not wait until your child is sick to make arrangements for someone to pick him/her up for you. It is important that you have someone available in the event you cannot leave work to care for your child. This is for the protection of all the children. We pride ourselves on keeping illness to a minimum at South Hills, and it can only be done with the cooperation of all parents. Until you arrive for your child, s/he will be isolated, with the supervision of a staff member.

We are permitted to administer medication that parents send in ONLY when a medical form has been completed and signed by the parent. Please see any staff member for one of these forms. The staff has been trained in the administration of medication. The parent is responsible for bringing the medication for the child; we do not provide any medication here at the school. Prescription medication AND over-the-counter medication must clearly state physician's name, date, dosage, name of medication, times to be administered, expiration date, and your child's name. Over-The-Counter medications must be accompanied with specific directions and signature from your physician. We cannot give prescription medication that has another person's name on it. Our staff can also not exceed the dosage written on the bottle, even with parental permission. State regulations do not permit us to administer even cough drops without a complete medication form and physician's signature with specific directions so PLEASE do not send them in your child's book bag or lunch box. All medication must be locked in our cabinet or in a locked box in our main kitchen refrigerator; a medication permission form must be completed upon arrival. Two staff members are required by regulation to log the administration of any medication, so parents can always determine when medication was administered.

If your child has an allergy to foods such as peanuts, or a chronic illness such as Celiac, Diabetes, Asthma--you will be asked to have a Medical Plan or Food Plan on file, created with your doctor, so the staff has very specific instructions regarding your child's care. Please make Connie aware immediately if your child has a medical requirement. A meeting with parents, Connie and the

Assistant Director is required prior to the child's first day to review the entire plan, and ensure we fully understand the requirements.

Hand sanitizers is used upon entrance to the school; children may not have hand sanitizer in their book bags or on their person. We use soap and water for cleaning hands/face in the school except for this entrance policy. Lotions and chapsticks require a permission form that must be completed, and are required to be locked in the cupboard as medication.

Parents will be given a sunscreen permission form each May to complete when bringing your child's specific brand with the expiration date clearly marked. Spray sunscreen is not permitted. We ask that you apply sunscreen daily prior to school to save us valuable time, as well as over 800 gloves/week; we will reapply in the afternoon.

Over-the-Counter medication ordered by your doctor must state weight or age of child and dosage on the container, as well as the expiration date. If your child has asthma, there is a separate Asthma Procedure form that must be completed so we have a specific plan designed for your child. All staff members are trained to use nebulizers, but we request individual training with the parents as the nebulizers often differ.

Illnesses in the school are always posted on the front door as you exit for parents' information. Please note that children must be diarrhea, vomiting, and fever free for twenty four hours and children who have been given a prescription antibiotic need to take it for twenty four hours before returning to school. Other rules for ill children returning to school are posted that are specific to each illness.

In order to prevent infestations of head lice in the school, we request that all students use lice preventive shampoos. Organic shampoos such as Fairy Tales are available at area drug stores and salons. See someone in the office for specifics. This rosemary infused shampoo will repel lice, so prevent infestations. We feel a proactive approach to deterring head lice is much more productive than risking children in group settings (as well as their parents!) to the stress of dealing with lice in school and home. Please read the specifics in your Dropbox file.

Grandview Elementary Students: If your child is too sick to attend school, we are not permitted to provide care. It is against the state law for any PA private

school to care for school-age children during school hours if school is in session.

SNOW DAYS

We make every attempt to keep the school open during the winter, as we realize we have many working parents depending on our services. If the school must be closed due to inclement weather, it is announced on WJET, WSEE, WICU, WQLN TV and all the major radio stations. Do not assume that we are closed if Millcreek schools are closed; we make our own decisions regarding the weather. We RARELY close for snow or ice.

GRIEVANCES/NEGOTIATION

Parents who have complaints/grievances or suggestions regarding classroom concerns, should contact the teacher first. As we encourage conflict resolution with our students, and "using your words" to resolve problems, we also encourage this in our parents, as well as in our own professional conduct. After a conference with the teacher regarding personal grievances, parents may ask for the director's or assistant director's mediation if they feel their grievances are not addressed/resolved. At this time, a conference will be held with the parent, teacher, director, and/or the Assistant Director. If the grievance is a serious one, written documentation by the parents is requested prior to the conference so the school attorney and representatives from the Department of Human Services and Pennsylvania Department of Education can be present.

From Connie: I cannot resolve a problem if I don't know there is one! I depend on parents to communicate with me if they have any concern. Please: I always want to solve any concern or problem you may have. Please do not complain to others about South Hills if you haven't spoken with me first! I'm the only one who can begin to solve your problem. And, believe me; I do want to address any concerns you may have!

DISMISSAL

If it is determined that the program at South Hills does not fit your child's needs, you may be asked to withdraw with one week's notice (Please also refer to the section on Early Intervention). Similarly, if parents violate the policies outlined in the parent handbook and/or as stipulated by the Department of Human Services and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, students will be asked to immediately withdraw.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is key to our program. We are committed to relaying any information to parents in SIX or more different ways, so there are many opportunities for you to receive information. These means of communication include but are not limited to: your Dropbox-South Hills account on your electronic device, our monthly newsletter online, our classroom monthly newsletter, Twitter, the parent bulletin board, notices in your child's folder, posting outside or inside the classroom, the foyer dry erase board, and verbally. Please understand that communication is a two way process. We work diligently to communicate in multiple ways, but parents must commit to reading and following through on our communication.

It is a parent's responsibility to read our communication via Dropbox, and our newsletters online, which are published monthly on our website at www.shills.info to keep parents informed of our activities. Please read these newsletters carefully, mark any important dates on your calendar, and keep it for reference throughout the month. The monthly updates include a general newsletter, monthly calendar of events, classroom newsletters, Music/Sign Language/Spanish lesson plans, and a photo gallery of the children's artwork that can be forwarded to loved ones out of town! These newsletters are very important in communicating our activities for your child during the month and our success depends on them in many ways. Please also check the parent bulletin board for any information that occurs during the month that may have missed publication in the newsletter.

Please also follow us on Twitter [@SouthHillsInc](https://twitter.com/SouthHillsInc). This has proven to be a very effective means to communicate quickly with parents. We do not overuse this, but it is extremely helpful during tornado warnings (you will know that we have heard the warnings and have taken appropriate action), and reminders of important events (like hearing screenings requiring permission forms that may have been forgotten). Last minute reminders regarding such events as Sprinkler Day during the summer assist parents as a reminder to send a change of clothes!

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

PLEASE NOTE: Our entire Emergency Operations Plan is located on the Parent Bulletin Board, located across from Ms Connie's office.

Our Emergency Operations Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. EMA for Millcreek Township and Erie County have approved our plan and we are included in their database for any emergencies. Any changes in our plan require a new review by both township and county EMA so data is always accurate.

Depending on the circumstances of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

- Immediate evacuation: Students are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of South Hills in the event of a fire, etc.
- Sheltering in-place: Sudden emergency occurrences (ie terrorist attack), severe weather patterns, or hazardous material spills may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
- Evacuation: Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to the Relocation Facility at McDowell High School.
- Modified Operation: May include cancellation/ postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building problems that make it unsafe for students (such as utility disruptions), but may be necessary in a variety of situations (Note: We do not follow Millcreek's school closings for winter storms).

Our most effective method of contacting parents regarding any emergency or to inform you that the emergency has ended and how to be reunited with your children is our Twitter account [@SouthHillsInc](#) and the local media. Please listen to any major local TV station or radio for announcements relating any of the emergency actions listed above.

We ask that you not call the school during the emergency. This will keep the main line telephone free to make emergency calls and relay information. We will also let you know via radio or television when we've resolved the situation and it's safe for you to pick up your child.

Your child will be released to you or anyone on your Emergency Contact form that you listed under "Person(s) to Whom Child May be Released." We specifically urge you not to attempt to make different arrangements during an emergency. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

South Hills conducts full fire and tornado drills every 60 days at MINIMUM. The West Ridge Fire Department checks our drills, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and emergency lights annually. Our fire extinguisher company checks our fire extinguishers twice annually, replaces regularly, and we personally inspect and document our own fire extinguisher inspection on the first of each month. Windows in our school can easily be accessed as doors in the event of an emergency. We have no basement or second floor, contributing to the safety of our children and staff.

All staff members receive annual training in fire safety by West Ridge Fire Department representatives in the maintenance of smoke detectors, routine during fire drills, and use of fire extinguishers. Carbon monoxide detectors are located in every room and tested monthly.

Tornado and severe weather drills are conducted throughout the year in accordance with emergency plans for the state. Parents will be notified of all drills via the foyer bulletin board.

ROUTINE FOR ENTERING THE SCHOOL

You will enter the school by the front doors into the foyer. Please use hand sanitizer on the table in the foyer, and using the keypad on the door (your code will be given to you at your child's orientation) or ring the bell. Please enter and a staff member will 'check you in' according to whatever mandates exist (temperature taken, sign in, arrival time, etc) There is a bench in the foyer in the winter to remove your child's boots and replace with the required sneakers. Adults must cover shoes /boots with the provided shoe covers in winter weather to keep our classrooms clean and dry, as the children participate in much floor work. Please do not walk beyond the office area with wet footwear! Children's boots and coats should then be taken to your child's classroom. Coats can be placed in his/her assigned cubby; boots can be placed in special bins provided outside the classroom. **Please label all parts of your child's belongings, including boots, hats, mittens, etc.**

If the code needs to be changed for any reason, you will be given it in person. The code is for the protection of your children, but also to give parents immediate access to the building at any time during the day. Your child's teacher may not be in the room when you drop off your child as the teacher's shifts are staggered, but the other teacher of the pod will be there to greet you

and your child, and make note of anything we need to know (medication, for example). The children develop close relationships with all the staff members, not only their individual teacher.

When picking up your child, check in with a staff member posted at the entrance, and go directly to your child's assigned classroom. Depending on what activities may be taking place, s/he may be in another room (nap time, playground, etc). A staff member can direct you to your child. Half day preschool parents are requested to wait in the hall until classes are finished; teachers will then open their doors and call the children over when they see you so we can closely control the children's departure.

All students MUST be walked to their classroom so that the teacher is aware your child has arrived and will note attendance. Teachers count children at intervals throughout the hours of the day so they are always accounted for. Please assist your child with coats, lunch items to be refrigerated before leaving. All children wash their hands before joining the group.

After dropping off your child in his/her classroom, feel free to stop by our kitchen for your morning/afternoon coffee or tea! Bring your favorite mug or use one of ours!

NO SMOKING ON THE PREMISES—INCLUDING OUR PARKING LOT! Small children are fascinated with tiny objects, and it creates an extremely unhealthy situation when children pick up discarded cigarettes! Please assist us in this area by disposing of lit cigarettes before you get out of your car. This is obviously for the health and safety of all the children in the center.

Gum is not permitted on the premises. Please do not dispose of gum on our parking lot.

RELEASING CHILDREN

We are permitted to release your child ONLY to his/her parents, unless given specific permission to do otherwise. You will designate other potential people to whom your child can be released on the Emergency Contact Form, completed at registration. But please understand that we MUST be informed if anyone except the parents are picking up their child, EVEN IF THAT PERSON IS ON THE RELEASE LIST.

In the event that someone else will be picking up your child, you **MUST** complete a written form giving us the details, unless that person is already on the emergency consent form and you have notified us that day. We must be able to validate the identification of any person picking up a child, so a photo ID will be requested. A child will **NOT** be released without validation, so please let anyone picking up your child know this! **IN AN EMERGENCY**, verbal designation is permitted (a phone call). We have a form that must be completed while the parent is on the line, and we must call back to confirm that we spoke with the parent. We prefer **NOT** to do verbal designations; so if you know in the morning that someone else will be picking up your child, please take the time to complete the required form or to notify us. And, please remember, although parents often complain about this procedure, **IT IS FOR YOUR CHILD'S PROTECTION!**

In addition, if we have concerns about release of a child due to the condition of anyone given permission, our legal stand is:

"The first and primary concern of the owner and staff of South Hills Child Development Center Inc. is the child's safety. Under no circumstances will a child be permitted to voluntarily leave South Hills with a parent, custodian, or other parent in loco parentis when said person is obviously intoxicated or otherwise incapable of transporting the child home safely.

In the event that someone does appear at South Hills Child Development Center Inc. to pick up a child while s/he is visibly intoxicated, or otherwise incapable of transporting a child home safely, the Millcreek police will be immediately contacted and it will be requested that the police come immediately to the school. It will be the decision of the police as to whether the child will be handed over to the individual for transportation purposes."

In the event of separation or divorce of parents, the state law states that we must release the child to either parent, unless a court order is on file. If you do not want us to release your child to his/her mother/father, we cannot comply with your wishes, unless a court order of restriction against a parent has been granted, and that court order **MUST** be in our files. If this may create a problem for you, or an unsafe situation for your child, please speak to Connie so that we might be aware of any unusual or complicated situations.

Please also read the most recent policy developed by the school's legal team in response to divorced/separated parents who must give us permission jointly for anyone other than family members to release their child. The full policy is:

DIVORCED/SEPARATED PARENTS AND RELEASE OF CHILDREN

To protect the owner and business of South Hills, and with the assistance of the South Hills' attorney, family law attorney, and our adherence to PA state regulations, we have developed a policy in consideration of the safety of our children, families, and staff in regard to our parents who may be divorced or separated.

It is not the position of South Hills administration or staff to interpret custody court orders other than what is stated (for example, 50/50 custody).

Unless a court order is on file denying the rights of a parent to a child, a child can be released to either parent, with proper and thorough identification made by the staff of South Hills, as required by DHS and PDE state regulations.

In the event of split custody, each parent must be the only ones to whom the child can be released. The only exceptions would be the blood relatives for each parent, whose names/address/phone numbers must be listed on the the Emergency Contact sheet, signed by both parents. There can only be ONE Emergency Contact sheet per child and requests for each parent to complete their own Emergency Contact forms will be denied. For any other persons to be given permission to pick up a child/children, (who are NOT blood relatives), BOTH parents must agree and sign the Emergency Contact sheet or petition the court to grant such permission. A copy of such agreement must be on file at South Hills, and parents must agree to its being reviewed by the South Hills' attorney before it can be enforced.

It is not the position of South Hills to interpret any court order as to who is or is not permitted to pick up a child/children when no familial relationship exists.

Therefore, the only alternatives are that parents can consider other placement than South Hills or that they mutually agree on alternative non-blood people who can pick up the children and sign both names in agreement on the required Emergency Contact form for their child/children.

South Hills realizes that parents may dislike requiring them to proceed in this fashion, but South Hills is not a court room or judge and thus will not be forced into a position of interpreting court orders.

ACCESS TO RECORDS

Parents sign verification in the Registration Packet that they read, understand, and confirm their approval of the Parent Reference Guide's policies/procedures regarding access to their child's records. Parents have access to their child's required Record File, which contains all registration documents, health and safety documentation, communication, assessments and other documentation as may be required in an educational setting. This file is confidential but is also accessible at any time to administrators and teaching staff, and regulatory authorities of Department of Human Services, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and potentially others. Files are stored in a locked file on site and the assessment is stored on Drop Box.

Student files are shredded two years after withdrawal.

Portions of this file can be requested to be forwarded to schools or other entities by signing a required permission form provided by the Assistant Director.

LUNCHES AND SNACK

Every 3-6 weeks, each full day parent will be asked to contribute snack to their child's group. In the morning, the children enjoy fruit, grain, and water. In the afternoon, a fresh vegetable, grain and water is offered. Hummus, yogurt, cheeses are often added as well. An acceptable snack list is included in each registration packet, along with the state regulations for snacks. (no grapes, carrots, popcorn for example) and we ask that you select one of the listed items for your child's scheduled snack day. Your child's snack day will be posted on the wall next to your child's classroom; a reminder notice will be sent home approximately one month before snack is due. Please provide napkins, cups, spoons, bowls, and plates if required for your snack. PLEASE NOTE: BY STATE REGULATION, CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL ARE NOT PERMITTED TO USE ANY CUPS, PLATES, OR BOWLS MADE FROM STYROFOAM OR GLASS! If your child has major food allergies or sensitivities, we request that you provide snack for your child; you will not be placed on the class snack calendar.

If your child eats lunch at the school, please pack your child's lunch at home and sort those items containing milk, cheese, fresh/raw fruit and vegetables, meat and fish (yogurt, meat sandwiches, etc) and place them in a separate labeled gallon Ziploc or mesh produce bag, to be returned to you daily. DHS requires that those items be refrigerated. Each pod has a small refrigerator. When you arrive with your child, please remove those items to be refrigerated and place them in the classroom refrigerator; we will be sure your child has those items at lunch time. Please label all containers, utensils in your child's lunchbox. Please send all utensils required, as well as two napkins—one for a placemat and one for face/hands. Lunchboxes are not permitted on tables due to the excessive germs transmitted from them; they are placed on the children's chairs for opening, and then placed under the child's chair during lunch.

We encourage parents to send utensils that can be washed at home and reused. We also encourage the use of beeswax wraps, and reusable containers, as well as cloth napkins. South Hills' goal is always to reduce packaging waste.

We do not have a microwave available for the children's lunchtime use.

Our lunch "rule" is that dessert should be eaten last, and all food not eaten should be repacked for home. In this way, you can see what your child has eaten during the day. If something in your child's lunch box does not come back home, assume it was eaten. We do encourage children to eat, but never coerce. Mealtimes are pleasant times of socializing and eating together, reinforcing manners and social skills.

The children say a Christian prayer and Jewish blessing before all snacks and meals. It is not required that the children say the prayer. The prayer is said in unison after everyone is served and before eating together.

"God is Great; God is Good; Let us thank Him for our food. Amen."
"Blessed are You, oh Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who brings forth bread
out of the Earth. Amen."

In sign language, the children then thank their parents for providing a beautiful meal...

CELEBRATIONS

We enjoy parties for all the major holidays. Our parents have always been extremely generous during our celebrations and contribute the special snack items and decorative napkins/tablecloths on these occasions. We can use volunteers for these days, and invite all our parents to attend if you can! Please check your newsletter for dates of parties and look for sign-up sheets outside your child's classroom to volunteer your services or contribute items for the festivities. PLEASE NOTE: **We are unable to distribute 'treat bags' or gifts to the children from parents. Although we appreciate the generous spirit of all of our parents, special treats, gifts bags, and other items cannot be accepted and will be sent home if parents do bring them.** We have permitted this in the past, but due to children's allergies and multiple parental concerns, we have had to eliminate this practice. We would appreciate your support of this policy. The focus of the school parties is community—sharing special times together with friends and family, rather than gifts and sweets. We welcome all of our families to our parties! The rooms may be crowded, but we have some memorable celebrations together! South Hills formally celebrates the Harvest, Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Valentines Day, Independence Day, and any other holidays that are important to our students and their families!

Yes; parking is a concern during parties. You will receive specific directions prior to celebrations.

WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL NEED

Each child should have the following at school:

- a complete changes of clothes (underclothes, socks, shirt, pants) in a **labeled gallon Ziploc bag**
- a LARGE clear plastic back pack to carry treasures, creations, notes, etc between school and home. **This backpack MUST be large enough to hold lunch boxes and winter gear (coat, gloves, scarf, hat, etc)**
- IF YOUR CHILD NAPS, a 18x15 or smaller plastic zipped container, labeled with FIRST and LAST name and a small thin blanket to lay on the mat and wrap over your child.

- A 4 1/2" X 8" plastic pencil box, clearly labeled with your child's first and last name, to hold art supplies listed below. Please do not deviate from this size container, as we will stack them to conserve space! Please place inside this container:

- 1 box of 24 Crayola Crayons
- 1 box of (10) basic colored **WASHABLE** thick markers
- 1 box of (10) **WASHABLE** thin markers
- 1 box of (12) colored pencils
- 1 pair of Fiskars child's scissors
- 1 black, fine dry erase marker
- 2 glue sticks
- 1 eraser

- An old cloth adult t-shirt (for use as a paint shirt) clearly labeled with first and last name. a slumber bag, if your child will nap.
- a lunch box, (full day preschoolers only, although half day preschoolers do have the option of staying for lunch from 11:35-12:25).
- a box of 100- 5 ounce cups (half day preschoolers only)
- a family photo (please send in prior to your child's first day).
- a bike helmet, clearly labeled
- a family sized box of LOTION FREE tissues (twice a year).
- sneakers Sneakers are required to be worn to school daily at the school since our curriculum includes daily action based learning and use of the playground.
- bandaids of various sizes (on a rotating classroom basis; you will be notified if this is a requested for your child)

Once sunny weather arrives, ALL students should have sunscreen applied prior to arrival at school; full day students will need sunscreen to remain here for additional applications.

- The state requires a minimum of 15 protection
- The expiration date must be visible and current.
- We cannot accept spray sunscreen.
- Please apply prior to bringing your child to school; we will reapply in the afternoon for full day students.

Children attending in the summer will also need a change of clothes and a towel for Water Experience Days, and water shoes that have closed toes and heels. A schedule of Water Experience Days will be forwarded to parents in June.

The children learn cognitive skills (sight words, beginning sounds, etc.) via kinesthetic activities on the playground or on carpet grids indoors. Sneakers are required as part of our dress code. Children without sneakers cannot participate in our daily large motor activities or outdoor activities on the playground.

ALL ITEMS MUST BE CLEARLY MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME!! We have MANY similar items and it is often impossible for us to determine which belongs to whom! Marking every item that belongs to your child, including coats, boots, helmets, and food containers/lids, makes a teacher's job much easier!

BRINGING ITEMS FROM HOME

The children should not bring ANY toys, materials, books to school. Money is especially a continuing problem—children have coins in their possession that end up misplaced or lost then are upset. Please, there is no reason for your child to have money at school.

NO TOY GUNS, "WEAPONS" OR ACTION FIGURES ARE PERMITTED! These toys have no place in our program. Children are discouraged from bringing any toys to school--they are easily lost or broken. Our program offers the use of many play materials; toys from home are unnecessary. We cannot be responsible for any broken or lost toys/items belonging to students.

TRANSITIONS

Teachers are required to give two weeks notice before leaving their positions here at South Hills. The vast majority give at least one month notice, although circumstances are always unpredictable and it is always possible that teachers will leave abruptly. When a teacher resigns, a new teacher is hired as soon as possible. Ideally, the two teachers work together for at least two weeks before the teacher leaves, so that the transition is a smooth one. Parents are informed by letter when transitions will be made, and any questions or concerns can be addressed to your child's teacher or to Connie.

South Hills has a low teacher turnover compared to most preschools—our average teacher stays two years, and several of our current staff have been here over eight years. South Hills has been fortunate to attract many

outstanding teachers. Most teachers have a goal to teach in the public schools, however, and their experience at South Hills helps them to achieve their goal.

The children are assigned to a classroom with one head teacher, but work with many teachers throughout the day. In creating a sense of community, the children also develop strong relationships with the Sign Language/Spanish teacher, the Technology teacher, the other teacher in the pod, and the entire staff of South Hills. These close adult relationships are helpful during teacher absences, and teacher breaks throughout the day as well as teacher planning time and meetings. We want the children to be comfortable and secure with all of the staff.

We can only accept 12 children into our Kindergarten program; students are selected from our waiting list, so please ask to be placed on that list if you are interested in our Kindergarten program. When children transfer from the classroom to our Kindergarten class, there is an orientation program for the children to attend prior to the move. The staff is especially sensitive to the difficulties that may arise when children transition from our program to elementary schools. We spend time talking with the children as a group about these transitions and use literature to support their concerns, fears. The teachers will give additional appropriate support to any individual child who seems to be experiencing anxiety or stress due to this anticipated transition, and parents are certainly included in this process. In addition, parents are encouraged to create social stories to assist with transitions. The guidelines for creating social stories are located on our website under "Home Work".

Children who are four before September 1 and attend our full day preschool are also transitioned to a same age classroom through our PreKindergarten Enrichment program. This program is offered approximately one afternoon per week and includes enrichment literacy, math and creative arts activities in the areas of Art and Artists, Music and Musicians, Literature and Authors. This program especially focuses on increasing observation and attention skills. Parents will be contacted in August regarding their child's enrollment in this special program, which has had a positive impact on a child's transition to Kindergarten.

Children transitioning to elementary schools will have the support of the staff as well. Please let us know what school your child will be attending when it is time to leave South Hills. We will have your child's records copied for you to have available for enrollment, and will assist with the transition for your child by

providing programs, discussions, role playing, literature, etc. to help ease the transition for your child. School districts will meet with our teachers for any children with special needs and IEPs who will be transitioning so that they might be offered additional support as they make this important move from our program to elementary school. Parents will be contacted to also attend these meetings.

South Hills has cooperative relationships with all area preschools and elementary schools. If your child is transitioning from our school to another, we will be happy to forward records and most recent portfolio assessments. Please contact us at least a week in advance to sign release forms and arrange for the transfer of records.

SUMMER PROGRAM

Our summer program differs in some ways from our fall and spring terms. The program is a year round program for most of the children attending here, so there is little change in their day to day schedule except that they participate in more outdoor activities. Because we have so many educators whose children attend here, schedules for many students are reduced for some children (parents are required to reserve half of their schedule in the summer to reserve placement for the fall). We also have Water Experience Day on a weekly basis for the children to enjoy throughout the summer (details in the summer newsletters). This is a special 'get wet and cooled' as children engage in a variety of science and water based activities to teach the properties of water while enjoying some summer water play! A change of clothes, towel and closed toe/heel water shoes are required for these days, which are announced in advance. Full day students remain with the same group throughout their time here at South Hills until they enter Kindergarten.

Many South Hills alumni return to us in the summer for a school-age summer educational camp. Those students, grades one through five, enjoy many activities that enhance the learning that takes place during their elementary school time, typically with strong emphasis on math, reading, science and social studies as well as gross motor skills. They also interact with the younger children by reading with them and presenting special programs (chorus, drama, puppet shows, etc). The strong focus of the School Age Summer Camp is community service and the projects that the children have engaged in over the past several years (providing a scholarship for a young girl in Afghanistan, a well drilled in Africa, \$1600 to the NW PA Second Harvest Food Bank to benefit children at Early Connections, and Jared Boxes to be given to children in the

ER at Millcreek Community Hospital are recent projects). The students brainstorm to create a business, business plan, loan to launch their project, and then lots of work to reach their goal! We are quite proud of the success of our alumni who return to us each summer!

Nature based activities are a major focus here; in the summer, all of the children enjoy gardening, bird watching, butterfly composting and vermi-composting activities. We have a vegetable garden, a sensory garden filled with fragrant edible herbs, and a variety of flower pots and gardens. South Hills' playground is certified through the National Wildlife Federation as a Natural Wildlife Habitat.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents are not required to participate in our daily program. However, our door is always open for those who would like to see their child in a classroom setting. Each classroom has one way observation windows; we encourage parents to stop whenever possible throughout the day to watch their child's participation in the day's activities.

If you have an interesting talent or profession, please consider sharing it with our children! Our multicultural program relies heavily on parental input. We do encourage parents to participate as much as possible; feel free to spend lunch with us if your schedule permits! Our program has been greatly enriched by the generosity and talents of our parents!

We encourage parents to volunteer for all celebrations, and to be a Guest Reader periodically throughout the school year. Please contact your child's teacher to volunteer.

Each classroom also has Parent Coordinators who schedule 'field trips' for families during evenings and weekends to link the units of study in the classroom with authentic experiences. This also provides an opportunity for families to get to know and support each other and share in the work of the classroom. Parent Coordinators also arrange for guests within our community to visit the classroom and share their knowledge and experiences with us. In the past, we have welcomed jazz musicians, yoga teachers, airline pilots, zookeepers, dancers, Sudanese refugees, physicians, dentists, origami artists, a descendant of Pocahontas, a Chinese calligrapher and many more guests who

enrich us all! Parents interested in volunteering as a Parent Coordinator are encouraged to speak with their child's teacher.

Parents are asked to participate annually in the decision making process regarding the school through a survey. Responses to the survey are seriously considered when the school's annual plan is created. Parental feedback is extremely important to us.

HOME CUSTOMS AND LANGUAGE

In the enrollment packet, parents are asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their child so that we might have some background knowledge before they begin with us. Our purpose is to include any important holidays/celebrations in our work here at South Hills, and to be aware of a child's home language. Services to support us in our work with children whose home language is not English are available through the International Institute.

This questionnaire is also helpful in assisting children as they transition into our school, especially if they need comforting.

ADDITIONAL PA DEPT. OF EDUCATION/DHS/OCDEL REGULATIONS

* All registration forms, including Child Health Report, and Emergency and Parental Consent form must be COMPLETELY filled out—no student can be admitted without this form or with information missing from this form. All teachers will have a copy of this information in the event of an emergency.

* Financial agreements, emergency consent forms, asthma and food allergy plans MUST be updated every six months. Health assessments MUST be completed ANNUALLY, with no more than 7 days between dates each year or we will be cited and our license held until the parent is in compliance.

* A copy of the regulations governing preschools by DHS are posted on the school bulletin board for your reference. By state regulation, no child can be admitted without current immunizations. If your child has not received all his/her immunizations, you are required to have them administered immediately, unless there are medical or religious reasons for not doing so. In that case, a signed and dated letter from you (for religious reasons) or your doctor (for medical reasons) must be on file with us. Health assessments are current for

one year after "Date of Exam" and a well child physical exam must be scheduled with your doctor to complete a new health assessment each year.

* If your child has an injury here, no matter how minor, we complete an accident report. This will inform you of the accident, how and when it occurred, and what treatment was administered. All staff members are trained every 2 years in pediatric CPR and first aid. A copy of accident reports is placed in your child's file, and another is placed in a separate annual accident file.

If your child is injured here and we need to contact you, we do have to document any emergency room treatment and contact DHS in Pittsburgh within 24 hours with an oral and written report. If your child does require emergency room treatment, please contact us as soon as possible after treatment. We are required to obtain specific details about treatment, diagnosis, etc, for our report.

Any head injuries, however minor they appear, are immediately reported to parents. Concussions can occur with 48 hours with even minor head injuries, so please be aware of the signs if we notify you that your child has been injured.

* A daily schedule and lesson plans are posted in each classroom area.

* NO PETS/ANIMALS ARE PERMITTED IN THE FACILITY! Even walking into the building to pick up your child with a pet in your arms is not permissible. We have many children who are asthmatic and/or allergic to animals. The state also has strict requirements for pets/animals in the building.

* We keep parents notified of any communicable diseases. Please check the main exit door for any current notices.

*The state requires all meat, dairy, egg, fresh fruit and vegetables in lunch boxes be placed in the refrigerator. (Yes; the state requires bananas be refrigerated!) An ice pack is not considered acceptable by the state to keep these foods consistently at 40 degrees or cooler.

A FINAL THOUGHT FROM CONNIE

South Hills does not exist exclusively for children. My staff and I want to support you as a parent in any way that we can. We recognize how difficult it can be to leave your child in the care of others! Here your child will have the support of staff members, develop important friendships, and share many special times, while learning in an engaging educational atmosphere. Your child comes first here, and you as a parent come next. Our partnership with parents is essential to the success of our work with your child. Since 1975, it has been my goal to provide outstanding service to you and your family, to make the transition between home and school as positive as possible, to provide a high quality developmentally appropriate educational experience, and to allow you to feel confident that your child is receiving loving, positive care. There is a real sense of community here between child, parents, and teachers that I personally love. My goal is that your child leaves South Hills for elementary school with confidence and a passion to learn! This is the beginning of a life-long educational experience for your child! It is an honor to be among your child's first teachers. I look forward to having you AND your child join us as part of the South Hills' family and experience!