

Family Engagement Policy

Red Brick School

2010-2011

Family Engagement at Red Brick

At Red Brick School, we realize that families are the primary caregivers and a child's first teacher. It is the goal of the teachers and staff to work cooperatively with each family to form a partnership to ensure that each child is provided with optimal learning experiences. We take great pride in getting to know each child and their family. This begins with their first visit to Red Brick School. During the visit the family is given a tour of the facility and introduced to the teachers. At this crucial time, families are able to observe the classroom environment, see learning taking place and share their thoughts and concerns about their child's school experience. This is the first step in developing a relationship with a new family. Red Brick has an open door policy and families are invited to the school for observations and visits whenever the school is in operation. We are happy to see you!

Getting to know you and your child:

Home Visits: Preschool teachers like to visit every child either in their home or at school prior to the start of school. Teachers will schedule a convenient time to meet with the child and their family to get to know each other. This is a unique opportunity to meet the child in their home, which can be comforting in the future as the child adjusts to school. At this time parents are encouraged to share any information pertaining to their child. This may include allergies, fear, languages spoken at home or previous school experiences or special services the child may have received. At this time the teacher will try to answer any questions the child or family may have. Some families have multiple children attending Red Brick. The teachers and families work together so that drop off and pick up times can be altered so as not to stress or disrupt the child's daily routine.

School Visitation Day: Each class will meet at the school the day prior to the first day to visit the classroom, meet new and old classmates and families. At this time the families, along with their child, can explore the classroom, and find their cubbies, the bathrooms and the activities the children will be involved in during the school year. Special considerations can be made with the classroom teacher if the time of the visit is not convenient for the family. Some families have multiple children attending Red Brick, so we strive to accommodate everyone as best we can. (Ex. earlier or later in the day or at night)

Welcome Event: Each fall Red Brick families are invited to a Welcome Event to meet the Director and Board of Directors. This allows families to gather while their child is in school to meet and discuss opportunities for involvement at Red Brick, and fill out a short survey. This is also sent home to all families through their child's folder, so that those who were unable to make it to the coffee hour can be informed. The information that is gathered is shared with the Director and Board of Directors. (See section on Board of Directors) They use the information to form committees and staff a variety of planned activities throughout the school year. A very exciting volunteer opportunity is to become a Room Parent. The teacher and Room Parent or Parents meet to discuss ways in which

families can offer to help out with activities in and out of the classroom. Each teacher will outline their individual needs for their classroom.

Student Information Sheet: Each family is sent specific paperwork prior to school opening. The Information Sheet asks for specific details so we may be able to reach you by phone or through the mail. It is imperative that we have updated phone numbers for all those who will be interacting with the child. This includes babysitters, grandparents or other family friends. Please let us know whenever you have a new home phone number or new cell number! The second sheet will help us learn more about your child and family so that we may use that information to guide our curriculum. It asks about members of the child's household, the family's values and cultures, languages spoken at home, and ways to comfort the child as well as any allergies he or she may have. This form is vital to the teachers as they learn. (See attached)

Privileged Information: The staff at Red Brick respects the privacy of each child and family. If there is anything that a family needs to share with the Director concerning a child, please feel free to call her at school (246-2342) between 8:15 and 8:40 before school or after 2:00pm. The teaching staff is also available often providing personal cell and home phone numbers so that they can be reached. Please advise the Director and teaching staff if there is a better way to reach you, email, cell phone or at work. This will help everyone to focus on the child and make sure that he/she has a safe positive experience at our school.

Children with Special Needs: Every child will grow and develop at their own rate. It is the goal of staff to meet the individual needs of all of the students at Red Brick. We are committed to work with each child and their families to ensure that they are developing the skills they will need for future school success. If a child is receiving services to help with their development, it is imperative that the teaching staff know. That may include Child Outreach services, (now or in the past) or are receiving special services at the time of enrollment, through their town or through private practice. This may include attending a Head Start Program, participating in another preschool during the week, Speech and Language Services, Occupational or Physical Therapy services. By sharing this information the teachers can be better prepared and educated about the unique needs of the individual child. This will also help the teacher when developing curriculum, learning centers activities and field trips.

School Transitions: Red Brick School contains a variety of quality programs for children ages 3-6. Our three year old program offers options to attend school 2, 3 or 4 days a week. Our four year old program offers a 4 or 5 day program, while our kindergarten program offers a 5 day program that runs from 8:40 to 1:30 each day. Opportunities are available to all children, through advanced sign up, to attend extended day enrichment programs. The children who attend Red Brick throughout their preschool experience will move from room to room each year with a new teacher. The teaching staff makes every effort to visit each others classrooms all year long, so that they become known to all the children. Teachers will often bring classes together for special programs

or to parade through classrooms to show off costumes or musical instruments the children have made. By exposing the children to all the teaching staff, the transitions seem to be less stressful for the children.

Red Brick has a positive relationship with the public and private schools in the community. Whether a child is moving on to kindergarten in another school, or leaving us to go to first grade, every opportunity is made to provide the child and families with the needed information for registration. At the end of each year or earlier if a child moves away, the teacher will provide copies of evaluations, progress reports or report cards to parents or the designated schools that they have given the school permission to send them to. Any family applying to a school that requires a teacher recommendation must give written permission to request any forms to be filled out.

Red Brick Board of Directors:

The Board of Directors of Red Brick is compiled of a group of parents who act as a supportive, advisory committee to the Director of the school. The Board's responsibilities include administration, finance, publicity, social events, fund raising, community outreach, and grounds and maintenance.

All families have the opportunity to join the Red Brick Board of Directors. As a member of the Board, parents can directly influence school policy, position the school in the greater community, identify and direct activities/events, and contribute to the overall financial and academic success of our school. Each spring the current presidents will advertise position openings through the school newsletter, emails, and notices. If a parent is interested in any position, they can notify the Presidents. New members are voted in at the May board meeting.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Red Brick School offers many opportunities to help out the director and teachers. Family members can volunteer to be a class parent, help plan special events, be a class reader or baker, share hobbies and experiences with their child's class. Classroom teachers plan a variety of activities throughout the year that invite parents to come in and visit the classroom. Family Picnic's, Pizza Parties, Ice Cream Social's and Play Dough Party's are a few of the opportunities to include all members of a child's family to come into school. School wide activities are also planned to allow the child to share their school with those special people in their lives. Some of the favorites are our annual Fall Festival, Halloween Parade, Holiday Story Teller, and Toe Jam Puppet Show.

End of the Year Questionnaires:

At the end of the year each family is sent a questionnaire to fill out and return confidentially to the Director. The Director and Board are interested in gathering feedback from families as to the various school functions, activities and events that occurred throughout the year. The information is then used as a guide to help with the planning for the following year. It is important for all families to share their concerns and comments so that we can better serve the children and families in our community.

Communication:

Communication is vital to success of every preschool child's experience at Red Brick. It is with great care that the teachers make themselves available to families to answer questions, share information about the child, and discuss ideas and concerns. In addition they are available to provide a sympathetic ear and help families find solutions to any problems that involve their child at home or in school.

Due to hectic schedules finding the right time to speak with your child's teacher can be tricky. Drop off and pick up time is usually a busy time that should be used to focus on the child. The teachers try not to speak in front of the child so if there is a need to speak to a parent an alternate time and place will need to be discussed. It is always best to let the teacher know when a good time would be to contact you. Phone calls, notes in the child's folder and emails may work for some, while a conference may work better for others.

In addition to communicating with your child's teacher, you will receive notices, Newsletters, Weekly Classroom Happenings and email Blasts to provide you with additional information from the Director and Board. Our school website also provides information about our school, activities and events planned. Please visit it.

The director is available prior to school and after 2:00pm, by phone (246-2342) or email director@redbrickschoolri.org, if you have any questions or concerns. If families have any questions regarding financial matters, please contact Kathy Lee (246-2342 Monday, Wednesday and Friday's after 10:00am.) The teachers and staff at Red Brick make every opportunity to meet the needs of every child and their family!

Conferences:

The staff at Red Brick uses individual portfolios to document the child's growth and development during the school year. Each teacher gathers a child's work samples, classroom photos, and anecdotal records to provide families and the child with a visual account of the child's accomplishments during the year. The teacher uses the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards 8 domains as a guide when planning and collecting artifacts for the child's portfolio. They include evidence of developmental milestones in the areas of, Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Creativity, and Physical Health and Development.

The portfolio process recognizes and celebrates the individual child and the journey they took throughout the year. Each child develops at their own rate with various strengths. In January, classroom teachers hold individual conferences with families to share the items in the portfolio and discuss the child's progress. This is done during the school day when children will be given the day off. The date will appear on the school calendar that is distributed in September. Arrangements can be made with individual teachers if the date and times are not convenient to a family's schedule.

The child's portfolio is a representation of the child's interests, work and skills throughout the school year. At the end of the year, the portfolio is sent home to be reviewed and treasured!

Red Brick's Home School Connection:

Throughout the school year teachers provide families with information regarding classroom curriculum, daily activities and special events and happenings. A Red Brick School calendar will be sent home in August so that all families will advance notice of special school events, holidays, school vacations, closings. The calendar is a reference that is sent home again in the year so that items that have been changed or added to can be shared with each Red Brick family. In addition to the calendar each family is provided with a copy of the Red Brick School Family Handbook. This document provides each family with the policies and procedures of our school. (See attached) Every effort is made to provide a copy to families in their native language each year.

We love having the ability to see a family member and share information each day at drop off and pick up time! Written details of class happenings and special activities can be done with weekly notices or on a monthly calendar, depending on the class. Many teachers will send home a daily or weekly recap of events listing art activities, books read or a new skill learned or important things to look forward to.

The teachers at Red Brick feel it is important to share with each child's family what the child and class has done at school. In addition to having your child share details of their day, the recap of events will also help the child to remember details and facts. The teachers find that this way you will be able to incorporate a new skill or activity at home. Teachers send out monthly "home" work by way of sharing bags, class books, and ideas for games and activities from The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards "Family Fun Cards". Teachers invite families into school so that they can spend time in the classroom, share in their child's birthday, to see how the children play and learn with their classmates. It is a special time for the child to spend with their family member, showing them all that they are able to do on their own!!