

Poker Hill School Family Handbook
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Purpose of Handbook

The Family Handbook is intended to provide families with general information about Poker Hill School. The procedures, policies and practices described are subject to change as organizational needs and structures within Poker Hill School evolve. While it is not possible to foresee or attempt comment on every situation that may occur, we follow the State of Vermont Early

Childhood Program Licensing Regulations. A copy can be reviewed at school or at the following website: http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Docs/Licensing/CBCCPP_Regulations_FINAL.pdf

Mission Statement

- At Poker Hill School we are a circle of families and teachers that support and learn from each other.
- We believe that a rich environment fosters a passion for learning.
- We believe in the innate wisdom of children to choose their own learning path.
- We believe that access to the natural world inspires children's sense of wonder.
- We believe music and art bring children joy and create pathways for self-expression.
- We believe imaginative play is every child's right and is essential to healthy development.
- At Poker Hill School we grow, harvest, prepare, and serve healthy food, and we encourage children to be physically active every day.
- We believe children benefit and grow from having real chores, which contribute to the sustainability of the entire community.
- We encourage children to talk through problems as they arise.
- We believe in helping children realize that they are an important part of an interconnected world and that they can make a difference.

History

Poker Hill School, founded in 1972 by Lucille Ingalls and Ann Crocker, opened in a remodeled old barn in Underhill, Vermont. Lucille and Ann, two experienced educators, shared a commitment to child-directed learning, a philosophy that continues today. In 1978 Beth and David London and Gay Steimle purchased the school from Lu and Ann and continued to evolve the philosophy of child-directed learning in a farm-based setting. In March 1983, a fire destroyed the original school building, a renovated 100-year-old barn. The program relocated to St. Thomas Church while the school was rebuilt. After reopening in our current building in September 1983 the partnership of Steimle and the Londons was dissolved and a non-profit corporation, Poker Hill School, Inc. was established. Gay left in 1984 and Beth and David continued to run the school while the Board of Directors evolved to include parents and teachers. During the next 29 years the school continued to flourish with many dedicated staff members leaving their mark including: Beth London; David London; Bonnie MacLeod; Amy Wise; Scotte Mason; Jo McClellan; Renee Slattery; JoAnne Denez; Mug Tomany; John Pulio; Gayle Massingham; Thule Shartie; Pat Nugent; Rita Clark; Lisa Sweet; Heather Ward-Migner; Emily Carson; Tamara Pless; Cathy DesRoches; Tracey Leavitt; Annie Casswell; Cass Repp; Kim Aueter and Tess Glanville.

During the 2011-2012 school year, the Board of Directors launched a Capital Campaign to purchase the school building and grounds from Beth and David London and leadership transitioned from Beth and David to Katie Amadon. In 2014, Kyle Hibbard took over as Director of the school, and in 2019 Grace Marek became the Director. Katie is now the part-time Administrative Director, and Kyle is a consultant to the school.

Since its inception, Poker Hill School has served more than 1400 children, and today many "second generation" students attend. The State of Vermont has recognized Poker Hill School with awards for early childhood excellence. For the past four years, Poker Hill School has participated in Step

Ahead Recognition System (STARS), Vermont's quality recognition system for childcare, preschool, and afterschool programs. Poker Hill School has maintained a 4-star rating each year.

Philosophy

At Poker Hill School we are a circle of families and teachers that support and learn from each other. We believe that a rich environment fosters a passion for learning. We facilitate children's growth by encouraging the children to make significant decisions that set their own individual paths of learning. We nurture and support each child's learning rather than directing it. Children select their own chores, have large blocks of free playtime, and choose many of their own activities. Teachers reflect the children's interests and needs in both our large and small group curriculum planning and respond to learning opportunities that arise over the course of each day. We support each child's growth as an autonomous individual within a caring and democratic community. We strive to make each child feel respected and valued. We believe in helping children realize that they are an important part of an interconnected world and that they can make a difference. We strive to create for children a sense of responsibility both for their school community and also for the larger world around them. Children have real chores that contribute to the sustainability of the entire community and together with their families and the staff they participate in a number of community service activities. We believe that music, literacy, and the arts bring children joy and create essential pathways for self-expression. Music and art are an integral part of every day at Poker Hill School. We believe that imaginative play is every child's right and is essential to his or her healthy development. Dramatic play is at the core of our curriculum. We believe that access to the natural world inspires children's sense of wonder. We spend a lot of time outdoors in our extensive playground, exploring the rich natural environment of our fields, woods, ponds and stream. Children are also invited and encouraged to help in the gardens. At Poker Hill School we grow, harvest, prepare, and serve healthy food. We also encourage children to be physically active every day and provide many opportunities for large motor play.

Discipline

At Poker Hill School, we focus on preventing discipline problems from arising. This involves setting rules, informing children of consequences, enforcing rules consistently, and redirecting problematic behavior. We encourage children to feel empathy for each other, and we emphasize the Golden Rule: **treat others the way you would like to be treated**. Teachers mediate conflict situations, looking for win/win solutions whenever possible. We support children in talking through problems as they arise and engaging in conflict resolution. During large group meetings, the children help us develop other rules as needed. We aim to teach children to own their behavior and to make good choices.

Curriculum

The emotional and social well-being of each child is of prime importance to all of us at Poker Hill School. Secure and happy children can grow and flourish. Our goal is to help children separate comfortably from their parents and find school a safe and happy place to be. We value sociodramatic play because it stimulates children to play cooperatively together and to develop friendships. This play also allows children to express feelings, anxieties and work through emotional challenges.

The arts are also an integral part of the daily Poker Hill School experience. We value the process

of art for its own sake, because through art the child is able to express his or her inner world of fantasies and feelings and can explore and order his or her perceptions of the world. We provide the time, space and materials for self-initiated art projects throughout the day. Our art projects, whether teacher-directed or child-initiated, are open-ended and allow each child to discover his or her own way without correction, comparison, or interruption. Music fills our days as we sing, play instruments, and dance. We believe that if we awaken the artist and the musician within each child, their lives will be incomparably enriched and fulfilled.

We believe that reading and writing, just like the spoken language skills that precede them, are developmental skills that emerge according to an internal clock within each learner. Our goal is to stimulate that emergence by providing an environment rich in print and in which reading and writing are used in meaningful ways. We read to the children every day, and we attempt to make books come alive through dramatizations and by using books as springboards for many other activities.

Our emphasis in mathematics is on laying the experiential foundation for mathematical concepts and relationships essential for later learning. This foundation is developed through the repeated manipulation, classification, and comparison of a multitude of concrete objects.

We support each child's physical development each day, emphasizing the development of strength, flexibility, balance, and body awareness as well as the development of specific skills. We offer large motor activities and provide large motor play during free time in both the morning and the afternoon. Our outdoor environment, including the playground, driveway for trike, bike and scooter riding, gardens, fields, stream, pond, and woods provide rich learning opportunities for all curriculum areas throughout the seasons. Teachers share responsibility for curriculum. We draw both from emergent curriculum practices as well as from *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* to ensure we are developing and implementing rich curriculum for every child.

The Role of Families at Poker Hill School

Poker Hill School is a community of families: parents, guardians, children, staff, siblings and extended family, all contributing to a vibrant, caring school environment for three to six-year-old children. Families play an essential role by supporting their child's school experience. We invite and encourage parents and guardians to visit whenever they can. Parents and guardians who have a few minutes are welcome to stay and play, read stories, play a game, or join morning meeting. Parents and guardians can also volunteer during activity time to facilitate an activity such as an art, cooking, or any number of projects. Parents and guardians are also invited and encouraged to chaperone field trips. We do ask adult visitors to be mindful of supporting the transition of all children into our program as well as maintaining the flow of the school day. While we welcome you to visit the school and take part in activities and feel at home, we ask that you be mindful of the number of adults present, and keep your visiting with other adults to a minimum while transitioning your child. Feel free to find a space not in the main flow of the school to visit with others, as we know this is an important connection and support! Other family members who are interested in volunteering at PHS should see the director ahead of time.

A few important notes:

- There is a sign-in/out sheet located at the Family Center and **it is very important that children are signed in and out each day.** (*see below for our Pick-Up Policy)

- Families should carefully read the monthly newsletter, known as The Round Window, and keep abreast of all the school activities. This will be posted on the Poker Hill School website and an email notice will be sent to each parent, unless a hard copy is requested.
- Near our daily sign-in sheet we have a whiteboard for daily news, please check this for important news and updates.
- Parents and guardians are invited and encouraged to attend and chaperone field trips or join us for special events like Beach Day. Families are invited to help be involved in the school by participating in Love Your School Week. This typically occurs over February and summer breaks, and families sign up to help with a variety of activities to help maintain the school, such as washing dress up clothes, repairing books, washing windows, and many other chores and activities that help us take care of our school! Throughout the year families can also sign up to take home a load of laundry.
- At Poker Hill School, we support families in many ways. We have a lending library of family resources. We offer a book group throughout the year. We work together to support our community and to care for others. We also take part in other community events throughout the year and families are invited to participate.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures

Many children and families are coming and going each day and Poker Hill School can be very busy and crowded at drop-off and pick-up times. While we encourage parents and guardians (and other family members) to visit and be a part of the day, we also ask that you be respectful and mindful of other children/families and the daily schedule. Having many adults spending time on the floor at once can be distracting and difficult for children as well as teachers, especially during busy times of transition such as when we are transitioning from snack and the end of the school day, to the after-school programming. If you are picking your child up at 3:30, consider arriving earlier so you can talk with teachers, observe some play and help your child transition out of the building by 3:30. This will help children transition as well, as we will begin new activities for those children in after school care, and it may be challenging for children to see new activities become available just as you are asking them to leave. Please help us take care of our environment and community by following these policies:

- No idling vehicles allowed.
- **Road parking must be on the school side of the road.**
- **No parking on the road between November 1 and April 30.** The town will tow at your expense.
- We have a small parking lot so please park respectfully.
- We also have a second parking lot just beyond the barn and garden.
- If you are staying for a longer drop-off or visit, please park in the second parking lot. Drive slowly and cautiously while entering the parking lot.
- Please be respectful and do not leave children before 7:30 a.m. Teachers are here early and working hard to set up the school. If you arrive early to get your child settled and signed in, it is not a problem, but please wait until 7:30 to say goodbye. At the end of the day, if your child is attending after school care, please be at school by 4:30 for pick-up

Pickup Policy

Staff shall release a child only to persons authorized by the parents or guardians. When a person authorized to pick up a child is unknown to staff, his/her identity must be verified prior to releasing the child. Names for all persons authorized to pick the child up should be listed on the medical and emergency form.

Snow Days and Delayed Openings

Snow days and weather related delayed openings are called in conjunction with Chittenden East Supervisory Union. If there is a delayed opening, Poker Hill School will open at 8:30 (no before care). Closings and delays due to other factors will not affect Poker Hill School and we will remain open. We never have early closings and we do not make up snow days in June.

Board of Directors and Board Meetings

The Board is comprised of Poker Hill School community members, including current and former parents and guardians as well as staff. The Board governs Poker Hill School by developing, maintaining, and following policies and objectives, acquiring and approving allocation for sufficient resources, and is accountable to the public for the services of the school. **Board meetings are held once each month throughout the school year, typically the second Tuesday of each month (7-9 p.m. at Poker Hill School). All parents and guardians are invited to attend board meetings at any time throughout the school year.** There are up to nineteen Voting Members on the board at any time and you are eligible to become a Voting Member after attending three board meetings. Being a Voting Member is not a requirement-- parents and guardians are welcome to come to a board meeting at any time.

Grievance Policy

Any Poker Hill School parent or guardian is entitled to bring a grievance before the Executive Committee of the Board. While acknowledging that it is always best to try to resolve problems through informal communications, if a person desires to file a formal grievance, the grievance must be filed in writing to the Board President within thirty days after the person filing had knowledge of the occurrence that gave rise to the grievance. The Executive Committee of the Board will discuss the grievance and determine appropriate actions as necessary. The Board President must provide a written decision/follow-up within one week after the next Executive Committee meeting to the person who filed the grievance. In the event that there is a conflict-of-interest between the grievant and a member of the Executive Committee that member will remove him or herself from the final decision making process.

Child Abuse Reporting

All Poker Hill School employees are required by state law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Vermont Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (DCF, FSD) within 24 hours of the suspected event. Vermont law (33.V.S.A. 49, § 4912) defines an abused or neglected child as one whose physical health, psychological growth and development, or welfare is harmed or is at substantial risk of harm by the acts or omissions of his or her parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare. An abused or neglected child also means a child who is sexually abused or at substantial risk of sexual abuse by any person. (For more information see <http://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/reporting/mandated>). Poker Hill School employees who suspect abuse or neglect must make concerted effort to inform the Director prior to making the report, or as soon after as possible. The employee will provide appropriate documentation to DCF, FSD, and discuss the case with the staff as a whole. The Director will

maintain Specialized Child Care Provider status. Every teacher will receive training regarding Reporting Suspected Abuse & Neglect and will sign a statement of understanding.

Meet the Poker Hill School Staff

Grace Marek, Director

Grace graduated from Oklahoma State University in 2000 with a degree in English Literature. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education Administration. Grace worked as a children's programming assistant at several libraries. She served as the Secretary and President of the Poker Hill Board of Directors. Grace taught at Poker Hill School from 2014 to 2017. She lives in Underhill with her husband, Tony, daughters, Annie and Zoey and dogs, Linus and Luna. She enjoys volunteering in the community, reading, traveling, and camping.

Abby Retzloff, Assistant Director & Monday/Wednesday/Friday Teacher

Abby graduated from the A.P.E.X. program at UVM and earned a degree in Elementary Education. She taught at Poker Hill School from 1984 - 1989 and has over 25 years experience teaching and working with young children and families. Her work has included: Building Bright Futures, literacy programs, early education advocacy with Chittenden East, V.C.P.C., and many summer and after school art and science programs. She lives in Underhill with her husband Phil and two children, Ted and Clara. When not teaching, she loves to garden, cook, and be with her friends and family.

Stephanie Brogle, Full Time Teacher

Stephanie graduated from UVM in 2004 with a degree in Early Childhood Education with a concentration in Psychology. She has been working with children ages birth through kindergarten since graduation from UVM. She has been a licensed teacher since 2006 and continues to work on professional development credits. Stephanie joined Poker Hill School in 2011. She lives in Underhill with her partner Jake, son Tate and dog Kaiya. When not busy with the kids she likes to hike, run, and walk her dog. She also loves spending time with friends, and working on craft and repurpose projects. Family is also very important to her so she travels often throughout New England.

Kat Hamilton, Tuesday/Thursday Teacher & Wednesday Aide

Kat has been teaching at Poker Hill School since 2008. Kat graduated from The University of Vermont in 2007 with a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Special Education. She concentrated her studies in Art and Communication, focusing on American Sign Language. Kat and her family, which includes her husband Jon, 9 year old step-daughter Satori, and daughters Ember and Nova, live in Underhill. Kat and her family enjoy animals, the outdoors, camping, and gardening.

Katina Combs, Tuesday/Thursday Teacher and Monday & Friday Aide

Katina, mother of three former Poker Hill School students, Austin, 19, Mason, 16, and Dylan, 13, has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Johnson State College. Katina joined Poker Hill School as a teacher in 2010. Katina enjoys scrap-booking, biking, and camping with her family.

Katie Gardner, Tuesday/Thursday Teacher

Katie graduated from the University of Vermont in 2016 with a degree in Early Childhood Education and a minor in Communicational Sciences and Disorders. She joined Poker Hill School staff shortly after graduation as a Tuesday/Thursday teacher. Much of Katie's previous work has been with infants and toddlers as well as one year with Kindergarteners. When Katie isn't at

school, she enjoys spending time with her family, playing with her sister's dogs, and doing anything active!

Thea Korczykowski, Monday/Wednesday/Friday Teacher

Thea graduated from Northeastern University with a degree in Psychology in 2000. She moved to Alaska with her husband, Mike, where she taught preschool and studied Early Childhood Education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In 2010 they moved to Richmond, where they currently live with their two daughters, Lily and Charlotte, and their husky Merlin. Thea enjoys sewing, reading, art projects with her girls, restoring old furniture, and being outside.

Kristen Vella, Monday/Wednesday/Friday Teacher

Kristen lives in Essex with her husband, Chuck, and two children, William and Kate. She graduated from Johnson State College with a double major in Elementary Education and Psychology in 2004. After working as a preschool teacher for several years, Kristen decided to stay home with her children as they both attended Poker Hill School. Currently Kristen is pursuing her Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education through Champlain College. She enjoys nature, reading, camping, and traveling the world with her family.

Sandra Soucy, Monday/Wednesday/Friday Teacher

Sandra earned a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from Boston College, earned her Master's in Early Childhood Education at Champlain College in December 2017, and has maintained a teaching license in New England since 1990. She has worked with young children for over thirty years in settings as diverse as a state-run home for children in Bethel, Alaska to a Jewish Community Center preschool in Brookline, MA. But she considers her greatest teaching accomplishment to be home schooling her own four children. Sandra lives in Fairfield with her husband of twenty-seven years, her youngest son, Leo, and their cat, Milo. Sandra's other three children are pursuing college degrees themselves. Sandra spends time outdoors in all seasons, and keeps active by running, skiing, biking, hiking and snowshoeing. She especially treasures time spent with her family.

Meghan Conroy, Tuesday/Thursday Teacher

Meghan graduated from St. Lawrence University in 2004 with a degree in English Literature and a minor in Outdoor Studies. In 2009, she graduated from Oregon State University with a Master of Arts in Teaching with the focus on Early Childhood and Elementary Education. Meghan has worked in a variety of school settings including preschool, elementary school, and high school. Meghan lives in Underhill with her husband, Joe, their three children, River, Eden, and Wilder and their two dogs, Petey and Jakey. She enjoys reading, running, baking, and being outdoors.

Buddy Dubay, Music Teacher and After School Teacher

Buddy graduated from Mount Mansfield Union High School in 1979 and then earned a degree in Elementary Education from the University of Vermont. He has been teaching young children in Vermont since 1984. He has been a teacher at Poker Hill School since 1998. He lives in Huntington with his wife Melissa and his daughter Emma, who attends St. Olaf College in Minnesota. Buddy loves music. He plays several instruments and sings. He has released three CDs of children's music, facilitates a non-profit musical group called the Minor Key Youth Music Programs and runs a musical afterschool program in the Chittenden East District. He likes gardening, swimming, and traveling.

Katie Amadon, Administrative Director

Katie joined Poker Hill School as the director in 2011 after working with children and families for

over 15 years in many different capacities, including teaching preschool. Katie graduated from UVM with a degree in Early Childhood Education and received a Master of Social Work degree from Wheelock College. Katie and her husband Rob live in Cambridge with their daughters Charlotte and Willa, and black lab Calvin. Katie enjoys sharing her love for the outdoors with her family, reading, gardening, and cooking.

Beth & David London, Buildings & Grounds Maintenance

Beth and David both graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with degrees in education. Together they ran Poker Hill School from 1978-2012. They have two daughters and three grandchildren. They continue to live across the street from the school caring for the animals, gardens and grounds. Your children will see them often and work with them in the gardens.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Poker Hill School	899-3716
Grace Marek, Director	777-2983
Abby Retzloff	899-3727
Stephanie Brogle	578-8081
Katina Combs	899-5319
Buddy Dubay	434-7449
Thea Korczykowski	434-5887
Kat Hamilton	585-4632
Kristen Vella	598-2341
Katie Gardner	989-5009
Meghan Conroy	(603)-852-6044
Sandra Soucy	324-7453
Susannah Slabinski (Board President)	355-0929
David London (Buildings & Grounds)	355-9395

Wellness Policy

In order to keep everyone as healthy as possible during the school year, we have a wellness policy. Children should only come to school if they are well enough to participate fully in the day's activities, including outdoor time. If a child needs medication for a fever, they are too sick to come to school even if the medication has brought the fever down. If a child has diarrhea, they are too sick to come to school. If a child has vomited in past 24 hours, they are too sick to come to school even if he appears to feel better. If a child has developed a fresh cold-they should stay home and recover and not come to school and infect everyone else. If a child has a temperature over 100° F, please keep them home. If a child has experienced diarrhea, vomiting, or a temperature they must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning. If a child has been treated with an antibiotic for an infection they may come to school 24 hours after the treatment has begun. We can administer medication but we do need written permission and instructions from a parent or guardian. A teacher can get you a medication permission form and sign-up sheet for medication. Please be sure to talk to a teacher, sign medication in, put the medication in the refrigerator or medication cabinet in the kitchen and pick it up there as well. **Never put medication in a child's lunch box or cubby.** For medications kept at school on an ongoing basis (such as an epi-pen), these are kept in the upper cabinet in the kitchen, and still need to be signed in when they first come to school. These medications also need to be in original prescribed boxes/bottle. In the event of a case of head lice at Poker Hill School, staff will check children for lice and notify families. A general fact sheet will be sent home which includes asking families

to check children's heads for lice daily and assure the environment is free from head lice through such measures as vacuuming carpets and upholstered furniture. If children have head lice, they may return after they receive the first treatment. It is recommended that the child be retreated 7 to 10 days after the first treatment since no product is 100% effective against head lice.

Publicly Funded Pre-Kindergarten (Act 166)

Poker Hill School is a qualified prekindergarten program through the State of Vermont and therefore children enrolled in Poker Hill School are encouraged to apply for and receive publicly funded tuition (10 hours a week, for 35 weeks during the school year). It is important that families apply through their school district in order to receive this funding. The state tuition rate to be paid to community-based private pre-K providers (such as Poker Hill School) on behalf of children attending prekindergarten during the 2019-20 school year is \$3,356.00. If you have any questions regarding Act 166, please visit education.vermont.gov/act-166

Attendance Policy

Poker Hill School has contractual agreements with school districts for the purpose of providing high quality and developmentally appropriate early education services to pre-kindergarten aged children. Under this contract we are required to report daily attendance records to the school districts and notify them if your child has been absent for an average of one pre-k day/week over the course of one month for TTh and an average of 2 pre-k days/week for MWF. We are required to communicate to you in writing that you risk the loss of pre-k funding, and where necessary develop a plan for attendance and tuition payment.

Tuition 2019-20

Annual tuition is set each year by the Board of Directors, and is then split evenly into nine payments after the 10% deposit is paid. Annual tuition covers the Poker Hill School day from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The first payment due is a non-refundable deposit (a payment equal to 10% of your total yearly tuition) to secure your child's spot. The deposit is due for new families on May 10th and for returning families on June 10th. The remaining nine payments are billed September through May. We are providing other payment options for you to choose from to ensure your payment schedule meets your needs as a family. We do have financial assistance through both cleaning barter and scholarship. Please email the director if you would like more information about financial assistance.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Program	Annual Tuition	10% Deposit	State Pre-K Tuition Rate (Act 166 Funding minus \$13)	Remaining Tuition	OPTION 1 Annual (Due Sept 10 th)	OPTION 2 Biannual (Due Sept 10 th & Jan 10 th)	OPTION 3 Monthly (Due 10 th of each month Sept-May)
Tuesday/ Thursday	\$4,880	\$488	\$3,356	\$1036	\$1036	\$518	\$115.11
Monday/ Wednesday/ Friday	\$7320	\$732	\$3,356	\$3232	\$3232	\$1616	\$359.11

- Payments should be placed in the tuition basket above the sign-in sheet, or mailed to school.
- If you make payments in cash, put money in an envelope with your name clearly on it.
- The Tax Identification # for Poker Hill School is 03-0289409

Before and After School Care

Poker Hill School provides before and after school care for children between 7:30-8:30 a.m. and 3:30-4:30. Before and after care is used as needed and is billed separate from tuition at a rate of \$8.00/hour. Before and after school care is calculated at the end of the month, rounding up to the nearest half hour each day. Before and after school care costs will be included in the following monthly invoice.

Financial Assistance

Poker Hill School is committed to ensuring that children and families are not deterred from enrolling in or attending Poker Hill School due to financial barriers. We offer Financial Assistance in the form of scholarship and barter, and also encourage families to seek assistance through the state when eligible. Applications will be due in the spring, for the following year. Applications are reviewed and awards are determined by the Scholarship Committee.

The Lu Ingalls, Brooks Baker, Sam Leonard Memorial Scholarship Fund is in place to help families defray some of the tuition costs if needed. Scholarship funds are raised annually through fundraising efforts and through donations made to the school by families and friends of the school. The Scholarship Committee works hard to distribute available funds as equitably as possible, according to need. We ask families to pursue every means of raising tuition on their own, including additional employment, support from family and accessing other resources, including state financial assistance, before requesting financial assistance from Poker Hill School.

We have cleaning barter positions available each year. In addition, if the school has a need for some other form of work that a family requesting financial assistance is able to give, the director may contract to have the family barter for things like carpentry, painting, or other skills-based work.

For information on **Vermont State Child Care Financial Assistance** eligibility requirements please visit <http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/ccfap>.

Collection of Tuition & Late Payment Policy

- Payment is due the 10th of every month.
- If payment isn't received by the end of the month, Poker Hill School (Director, Administrative Director, or Treasurer) will contact the family to create a payment plan for the full tuition.
- If by the 10th of the following month, payment has not been received and/or a payment plan hasn't been set, a second notice will be sent.
- By the end of the second month, if payment arrangements have not been set, a final notice will be sent and the child's enrollment will be reviewed by the board.
- If no payment plan can be established, the child may be withdrawn from the school as a result of the late tuition.
- Families may apply for (additional) scholarship funding as part of the payment plan, to be reviewed by the Poker Hill School Scholarship Committee.
- Families may contact Poker Hill School at any time to create a payment plan.
- If there is a balance due at the end of the year, the family may not enroll a child or sibling for the following years and their spot will be given to another child.

What happens if my child does not finish the school year?

When families accept a spot at Poker Hill School they are committing to paying tuition through the school year. All families are expected to pay a nonrefundable deposit of 10% of the annual tuition when accepting a spot at Poker Hill School. In the rare case that children leave prior to the end of the school year, 60 days notice is required and you are responsible for paying tuition through those 60 days. During this time Poker Hill School will try to fill your spot. In the case that the spot cannot be filled, you are responsible for paying tuition for the remainder of the school year. You may petition the Finance Committee of the Poker Hill School Board of Directors to waive the tuition cost beyond the initial 60 days. Please see the director with any questions about this policy.

Summer Camp

Poker Hill School Summer Camp is a wonderful introduction to Poker Hill School for children. Families are encouraged to choose one week of summer camp. Camp is not mandatory, though it does provide opportunities for children to learn the routine and meet their teachers and peers. The relationships that are formed at camp, both with teachers and other children, provide valuable support to children as they transition into the school year. After summer camp the transition to school in the fall is much easier for everyone. The staff is able to get to know children and use this as a chance to match children to their small groups, because of this we highly recommend that students attend if they are able.

Poker Hill School holds two sessions of summer camp during the summer. Each week features four days of camp Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Each day will include free play, snack, morning meeting, organized activities, lunch, and stories. Weather permitting, we will spend a lot of time outdoors. Children will interact with, and help care for our animals and will explore our large garden, peeper pond, and hiking trails. Poker Hill School provides snack each day. Families provide lunch in a labeled lunch box/bag for their child. Poker Hill School will decide before the start of each school year if there is a need to be peanut and tree nut free. The Poker Hill School Camp Fee is \$125 for the week. Payment is due the first day of camp. Please email the director if you have a need for camp scholarship.

Home Visits & Conferences

Home visits are a way for children to invite teachers into their world and it gives teachers an opportunity to see children in their natural environment. Home visits typically happen right before the beginning or within the first few weeks of school. Conferences are scheduled with each child's group teacher in the fall and spring. Teachers will contact families to schedule a convenient time. Conferences can also be set up throughout the year to discuss your child's development.

Make-Up Days

Up to **three** make-up days are available to each student as the schedule allows. Make-up days can be used to compensate for days missed due to illness or vacation but are not for snow days. These must be scheduled with a teacher to ensure we have space on the day you are interested in (we are limited to two make-up children per day). Because the end of the school year is busy with the Spring Show and field trips, make-up days need to be used by mid-May.

Clothing for School

Please make sure that children are dressed properly for the weather because we play outside almost every day. We also paint, cook, and get involved with mud and other messy substances so we ask that children wear clothing that allows them to explore and play without worrying about getting their clothes dirty. Also, please choose clothing that children can handle by themselves. Please **label** all clothing. We often hike, run and climb outdoors so everyone needs sneakers or similar shoes so they can fully participate in this part of the program. **NO FLIP-FLOPS AT SCHOOL!** Flip-flops do not keep your child's feet safe while at school. Any sandals should have a back strap to hold them securely on their feet. Shoes are required at all times so when the weather requires boots please also send shoes to wear indoors.

Winter weather clothing is always a challenge for parents, children and teachers alike. Encourage children to be as independent as possible when preparing for winter weather. Provide clothing that s/he can do her/himself like slip on or Velcro shoes and snaps rather than buttons. Please help children practice dressing skills at home. When leaving children at school, set up their cubby so that clothes can be easily accessed by the child without adult assistance. Take everything out of the backpack and hang the snow pants on the outside of the jacket so that the child puts these on first. Check children's extra clothing box regularly and keep clothes that are seasonally appropriate in their box. Please **LABEL** everything.

Toilet Training

Children should be toilet trained prior to beginning the school year. Please encourage independence in this area so they will be ready to begin the year with us.

Snacks and Lunches

Poker Hill School provides snacks and families are responsible for sending lunches. Please get a lunchbox and drink container that children can open. Label and decorate this box so that it is easily recognizable. Write children's name near the handle. We refrigerate lunch boxes so you **do not need a small cooler or ice pack** (these take up too much room). Please **label** all reusable containers as well. We highly recommend reusable containers instead of prepackaged foods. These foods are expensive and contribute to the excessive waste our society generates. Also, prepackaged foods are generally difficult for children to open themselves and have no way to close if the child doesn't finish eating it. We have reusable snack bags for sale. These are easy to

label and all sales benefit Poker Hill School. If you forget to send a lunch to school we will prepare one. We are also able to heat foods in the microwave (send food in a microwave safe container). Please also send a water bottle for children to use throughout the day at school.

Poker Hill School will decide before the start of each school year if there is a need to be peanut and tree nut free. This means that in order for school to be safe for everyone, families must read labels carefully.

If Poker Hill School needs to be peanut/tree nut free, please:

Do not send any foods (packaged or homemade) that have been made with peanuts or tree nuts, OR foods that "may contain" peanuts or tree nuts, OR are "manufactured in a plant with peanut or tree nut foods." With everyone's help we can keep Poker Hill School peanut and tree nut free.

See the following links for information about foods and ingredients to avoid. You may be surprised, this includes pesto and veggie burgers so please read carefully!

<http://www.eatingwithfoodallergies.com/treenutallergy.html>

<http://www.eatingwithfoodallergies.com/peanutallergy.html>

Also, here is a link to safe snacks free of peanuts and tree nuts:

<http://snacksafely.com/snacklist.pdf>

Another resource is <http://www.eatingwithfoodallergies.com>

This information will be available at school too, and we can always offer suggestions. We all have the responsibility for keeping our children safe, and we appreciate your help.

Foods that are round and about the size of a nickel are easy for preschoolers to choke on.

Prevent choking by avoiding these foods or cutting them into small pieces or different shapes.

Pieces of food should not be round or bigger than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. A few common hazards include

grapes, cherry tomatoes, hot dogs, cheese sticks, carrots or baby carrots. If you send these

foods to school, cut them small and lengthwise so they are not round. For more information visit:

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/food-safety/choking-hazards.html>

Emergency Response Plan

The Emergency Response Plan provides basic preparedness and planning information in event of an emergency such as floods, ice storms, toxic spills, etc. It is the responsibility of Poker Hill School, Inc. to communicate changes in the ERP to all Poker Hill School, Inc. Staff and Families.

If you would like to see the Emergency Response Plan, please email or speak with the director.

Emergency Fire Drills and Procedures

Emergency evacuation drills are practiced monthly by PHS students, staff and volunteers. All staff members are educated on the emergency response plan. This includes, locations of all emergency phone numbers, and contacts for students. All teachers are CPR and First Aid certified.

Holidays & Special Events

Holidays, customs, and traditions among Poker Hill School families are diverse and so we do not sponsor or endorse any particular set of holiday practices. We do however enjoy exposing the children to these diverse holiday traditions and so we encourage parents to share their specific

traditions with the group. We recognize the common themes of light and giving that run through the December holidays and so with that in mind we offer a Solstice Celebration for the whole family (see below for more information).

Annual Calendar Events (see the current Poker Hill School Calendar for exact dates)

Play Dates

At the end of the summer there will be a playdate/open-house where families can visit Poker Hill School and meet the director, teachers and other families. Snacks and beverages are provided.

Family Night

Each year the teachers invite families to Family Night. This is an adult night only and is an opportunity to learn more about each child's day, ask questions and learn more about how Poker Hill School operates. Members of the Poker Hill School Board will briefly talk about ways families can join committees or become voting members. There will be a dessert potluck, teacher skits, and time with group teachers. Family Night is also a great way to meet other families and the PHS community.

Harvest Market

Every year Poker Hill School families march in the Harvest Market parade. Children make a special crown, necklace, or flag at school to show their school spirit. In addition to the parade, the Community Building and Fundraising Committee organize a booth set up for face painting and other fundraisers. We are always in need volunteers.

Solstice Celebration

Children, and family members come together and sing songs about light and the holidays. The celebration starts 3:45 and finishes up by 4:30. Children make special lanterns in preparation for the celebration.

Valentine's Day

Teachers will provide many opportunities for children to make Valentines for friends and family at Poker Hill School. If you choose to bring in Valentines for your child's group or for all children, please do not bring in candy, chocolates, lollipops or any edibles. It is a safety concern if children eat these foods when not sitting at a table or being closely monitored by teachers.

Love Your School

Teachers create a list of cleaning and building improvement projects that families help with over February break. A sign-up poster will be displayed and families can choose projects that work for them. Poker Hill School is always unlocked, so families can complete the project they sign up for when it's convenient.

Pokerpalooza

The Community Building Committee plans a dance party at a local elementary school with music by Super Sounds, a local DJ. Pizza is provided and families are asked to bring in a dish to share. This is a wonderful event for the whole family.

The Spring Show

Monday/Wednesday/Friday students put on a spring show for families. Each group prepares a skit or play and children sing their favorite PHS songs. This is the highlight of the year for families, teachers, and children.

End of the Year Celebration

On the last day of school, we will have a family hike to the tipi and an ice cream social. If you would like to join us for the hike, please be at school by 2:45. We will be heading up to the tipi by 3:00 and we will be back at school by 3:45 for ice cream and songs. This is a wonderful way to end our year and to send off children to kindergarten.

Community Building Events

In addition to regular annual events listed above, the PHS Community Building Committee organizes other events to bring the Poker Hill School community together. These may include: Community Breakfast, Fall Family Hike, Leafy Luncheon, book group, teacher appreciation and others!

Poker Hill School Board Fundraising Events

Poker Hill School organizes and runs several fundraisers each year. The purpose is to raise funds for special purchases, school improvements and other financial needs through various events and efforts throughout the school year. These may include: Harvest Market Face Painting Booth, Book Fair, etc. Poker Hill School participates in Box Tops for Education. Box Tops can be put in the box top bin on the sign in shelf.

Birthday Celebrations and Birthday Books

If a child's birthday is during our school year we generally celebrate it on the school day closest to the actual birthday. Summer birthday celebrations are arranged with the child's group teacher. Many families choose the half birthday. At Poker Hill School we celebrate birthdays with special songs, a special card or craft made by the children and a birthday book. **Birthday books** are gifts given by the birthday child's family to the school. These books are inscribed with a special plaque. They are an important part of our library and we are very grateful for them. We will keep a collection of birthday books we would like to receive at school that you may purchase (price is typically on the book) or you may also choose a favorite from home or the bookstore. Please check first with a staff member to see if we already have it. We respectfully ask that birthday cupcakes or other treats **not** be sent to school. If every family sends in cupcakes it means over seventy different school days when sweet treats are served and this seems excessive. Also, we would like to promote the idea that celebrations can occur without sweet treats.

Typical Daily Schedule

7:30 a.m.	School opens for before school care.
8:30 a.m.	Greeting families, free play and a.m. chores. We encourage families to arrive in time to settle in before 9:30.
9:45 a.m.	Clean-Up and morning snack. Teachers sit with their small group.
10:00 a.m.	Morning Meeting. Children and teachers gather for songs and announcements about morning activities.
10:30 a.m.	Morning activities within each curriculum area are offered.
11:45 a.m.	Clean-Up and Lunch Meeting. Children and teachers gather for brief meeting and announcements before lunch.
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
12:30 p.m.	Outdoor play and p.m. chores
2:00 p.m.	Small Group Time- Teachers facilitate developmentally appropriate activities that may include stories, group discussion, calendar work, literacy activities, math activities, art projects and the like.
3:00 p.m.	Afternoon Snack. Families begin to arrive for pick-up.
3:30 p.m.	Small Group Time ends & After School Care begins.
4:30 p.m.	PHS school day ends.

Poker Hill School Calendar (2019-2020)

August 12 th -15 th	Summer Camp 1
August 19 th -22 nd	Summer Camp 2
Tuesday, August 20 th	Board of Directors Meeting (7:00-9:00 pm)
Sunday, August 25 th	Open House/Playdate @ Poker Hill School (10:00-12:00)
Tuesday, September 3 rd	School Opens for T/TH children
Wednesday, September 4 th	School Opens for MWF children
Saturday, September 28 th & 29 th	Harvest Market Parade & Face Painting Booth (9:00 am parade)
Wednesday, October 2 nd	Family Night (7:00-9:00 pm) - Adults only
Thursday, October 3 rd	Picture Day for T/TH children
Friday, October 4 th	Picture Day for MWF children
Tuesday, October 9 th	Board of Directors Meeting (7-8 pm meet & greet, 8-9 mtg)
Friday, October 18 th	Staff Professional Development - School Closed
Tuesday, November 12 th	Board of Directors Meeting (7:00-9:00 pm)
November 16 th -24 th	School Closed - School Recess
Tuesday, December 10 th	Board of Directors Meeting - if needed 7:00-9:00 pm)
Thursday, December 19 th	Solstice Celebration for T/TH families (3:45-4:30 pm)
Friday, December 20 th	Solstice Celebration for MWF families (3:45-4:30 pm)
December 21 st -January 1 st	School Closed - School Recess
Thursday, January 2 nd	School Re-Opens
Tuesday, January 14 th	Board of Directors Meeting (7:00-9:00 pm)
Saturday, January 18 th	PokerPalooza
Monday, January 20 th	School Closed - Staff Professional Development
Tuesday, February 11 th	Board of Directors Meeting (7:00-9:00 pm)
February 20 th & 21 st	Pajama Days
February 22 nd -March 3 rd	Winter Recess & Love Your School Week
Tuesday, March 3 rd	School Closed - Staff Professional Development
Wednesday, March 4 th	School Re-Opens
Tuesday, March 10 th	Board of Directors Meeting (7:00-9:00 pm)
March 26 th & 27 th	Beach Days
Tuesday, April 14 th	Board of Directors Meeting (7:00-9:00 pm)
April 18 th - April 26 th	School Closed - Spring Recess
May 4 th & 5 th	Teacher Appreciation Days
Tuesday, May 12 th	Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors (7:00-9:00 pm)
Wednesday, May 13 th	Spring Show
Friday, May 22 nd	Last Day for Make-Up Days
Monday, May 25 th	School Closed- Memorial Day
Tuesday, June 9 th	Board of Directors Meeting - if needed (7:00-9:00 pm)
Tuesday, June 9 th	Last day for T/TH children
Wednesday, June 10 th	Last day for MWF children
Thursday, June 11 th	Teacher In-Service

Snow days and weather related delayed openings are called in conjunction with MMMUSD-CESU. If there is a delayed opening, Poker Hill School will open at 8:30 (no before care). Closings and delays due to other factors will not affect Poker Hill School and we will remain open. We never have early closings. We do not make up snow days in June.