



Parent Policy Handbook 2023-2024

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Welcome to Stepping Stones Children's Center!

Established in 1987, Stepping Stones (formerly Crested Butte Nursery School) is a fulltime, licensed Preschool and Childcare Center, serving children ages 12 weeks to 5 years during the school year. In the summer we serve children 12 weeks to 6 years old for local families. Our website is www.stepsstonescb.com

Thank you for choosing Stepping Stones for your child's first experience in a school environment. We are dedicated to making it a positive and rewarding experience for you and your family.

Governing Body

Stepping Stones Children's Center is a Colorado non-profit corporation. We obtained the Federal 501c3 status in December 1986. Our Federal tax exemption number is: 74-2431066.

Our Board of Directors currently consists of eight people: Audrey Campbell (Board President), Kirsten Oldread, Ashley MacCleod (Treasurer), Brittany Pankey and Jake Beren. The Board approves policy, participates in fundraising, awards scholarships and provides advice and support in the development of the school.

Each board member is trained on the "job" of being a board member when they start their term. The board has monthly meetings from 4:00-5:30 with the Directors and it is open to the public (parents and teachers) for the first 30 minutes.

*If you would like to join the board, please contact Jen Burks and/or Jenny Whitacre.

Jennifer Burks is the Executive Director. She oversees all school operations including curriculum, scheduling, policies, billing, purchasing, staff hiring and training, building maintenance and takes care of the business end of Stepping Stones.

Stepping Stones is a fully licensed childcare facility. We are a member of the Colorado Child Care Association, Colorado Preschool Program, and Colorado Shines. Currently we have a level 4 out of 5 quality care rating through Colorado Shines. We adhere to and are accountable for the Quality Standards set forth by each of these organizations. Staff members attend workshops and conferences put on by these organizations annually. The teaching staff is required to complete 15 hours of ongoing training annually.

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to provide a positive, explorative and child-centered environment that promotes creativity, inner-discipline, independence, problem-solving skills, and positive relationships with peers and caregivers.

Anti-Discrimination Statement

Stepping Stones Children's Center admits students and faculty of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, gender and gender expression, marital status and age to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarships and programs.

We will admit children with special needs if it is determined that Stepping Stones can adequately meet the emotional and physical needs of that child. Stepping Stones is a designated site for children with special needs for the RE1-J school district and can call on their services and expertise at any time.

Philosophy and Goals

Above all else, we strive to encourage the development of self-awareness and self-esteem. We believe this to be the most important ingredient for building a solid personal foundation from which to draw on when meeting the challenges of life. Our mission is to encourage curiosity, a joy for learning and discovery.

We wish not to fill children with facts but to cultivate their own natural desire to learn so that they may achieve their intellectual, social, emotional, and creative capabilities to the fullest potential. We also wish to help the children develop wisdom in the broadest sense, including ethical values and compassion.

The child learns respect from being respected, listened to and accepted. We praise accomplishments, display children's artwork, honor their individuality, and discipline without shame or dominance. We ask parents to be aware of and support these philosophies. We also invite you to become involved in the school: visit when you can, notice and ask questions of your child about what they are doing in school as this supports transitions in your child's life.

We draw from many educational philosophies. We use ideas from Montessori, Piaget, Reggio, and other child development theorists and researchers. We believe that children acquire knowledge about their physical environment through experience and playful interaction with materials and people.

****CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY****

Infant/Toddler Philosophy and Goals

We have a very special responsibility and mission when caring for Infants and Toddlers. Above all else, we will ensure their health and safety while they are in our care. We will strive to provide a home-like environment that is warm and comforting, quiet and stimulating. Our teachers and caregivers are mature and responsible adults who love young children and are committed to providing the best possible care to our youngest students in their first experience away from home. We have a primary caregiver with each age group who will be with your child for the duration of their time in the classroom. This person will be the caregiver for your child to ensure they can form a strong emotional bond with that adult. Stepping Stones believes in the importance of continuity of care, when the schedule allows teachers will move up with their class to the next age group and will continue to be their primary caregiver for a second year.

We, at the Stepping Stones Toddler Center welcome and encourage parent input, involvement and visitations. We will happily schedule meetings to discuss your child's care and development. Most importantly, we want you all to feel comfortable and confident with your choice to enroll your child(ren) in our program.

Our guiding educational philosophy for this age group is to in all ways, support the child's individual natural developmental progression. As the children enter the toddler classroom, our teaching philosophy focuses on a child-based approach. Emphasis is on verbal skills, expression of needs and of their creativity, positive interaction with peers and adults, and gaining more independence.

In both classrooms, you will hear lots of singing, laughing and playing. Your children will go outside, do lots of art projects and gain knowledge through interaction with toys, pictures, books, nature objects and people.

Our ratios are based on the NAEYC Teacher-Child Ratios:

Birth to 15 Months – (1) Teacher per (3) Infants Maximum

12 Months to 28 Months – (1) Teacher for (5) Toddlers Maximum

Preschool Curriculum, Philosophy and Goals

At Stepping Stones Children's Center, we consider children to be strong and proficient members of the learning community. Children and teachers work together to co-create a meaningful learning environment.

Children are seen by what they can do; we see and value them as creative, resourceful, confident, intelligent, curious and capable individuals full of wonder and possibility. We create this atmosphere to encourage children become personally invested in their learning.

Stepping Stones curriculum is an emergent /child- centered curriculum. An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the interests of the children and can change from day to day depending on the direction of the children's play. This approach embraces the unique and individual learning styles of each child. Teachers' roles within this curriculum include asking thoughtful questions, careful observation of play to determine interests and skills, and recording children's progress using various documentation.

Project work is a key component of an emergent curriculum. Projects are in-depth studies of concepts, ideas and interests that are initiated by children, teachers, or even parents. Projects may last for a day, a week or even an entire school year. Teachers must rely on their creativity, intuition, research, observation, and collaboration to determine the course of each unique project.

A desired outcome of this instruction model is to promote the children's "thinking out of the box." Guiding them to be independent and critical problem solvers, and to look at the world from many different points of view. Also, the most important element is for children to simply have FUN!! One of our main goals as educators is to teach children that learning is fun in hopes that they will become lifelong learners.

As educators and caregivers, we can make an impact on the attitudes expressed by children in our center. We also have an obligation to be aware of and guard against biases that create racism, sexism, and other "isms" having to do with age, culture, class, and those with disabilities. Young children can identify racial and skin differences as well as differences in language, accents, dress and physical abilities. Incorporating a multicultural curriculum into our center will help expose the children to the richness of diversity.

We use picture schedules in all classrooms to make transitions during the day go smoothly. We also use social stories to help the children with numerous transitions such as home to school, group time to snack, lunch to outside, etc.

Learning Stations

Every morning there will be learning stations set up around the school. The children are encouraged to choose a station and may move from station to station as he/she wishes. The curriculum areas represented in the learning stations include large and small motor development, math and science activities, tactile and sensory exploration, personal/social development, pre-reading and writing, dramatic play and creative expression.

Learning stations are child/material directed activities. During this time the teachers are monitors and provide encouragement and suggestions to enhance the learning.

Circle Time

All the children sit in a circle with the teachers each morning by 10:00. This is a wonderful time for everyone to get together, greet each other, share stories and songs and hear about the happenings of the day. It is very important that your child arrives **BEFORE** circle time begins to ease his/her transition into school.

Group Time

This is a longer period when the children engage in a more in-depth activity planned and implemented by their teacher. The curriculum is derived from our written goals for each group. Following is a brief summary of the curriculum.

For the pre-kindergarten group, The Coyotes, **ratios are based on the NAEYC Teacher Child Ratios for this age which is 1 teacher for 9 children.** The Coyotes focus on developing social and academic skills including listening and expression, pre-reading, math, and prewriting activities. For kindergarten readiness, we encourage the development of a positive attitude towards school, working in groups with teachers and

classmates, and of course, a strong self-esteem. Daily activities include reading, journal writing, storytelling, science experiments, math games, puzzles, creative movement and art.

The Coyote teachers will meet with the kindergarten teachers to discuss the transition from preschool to elementary school. We will also visit the kindergarten class to meet the teachers and see the environment. This is all very important for this pre-k group to enable a smooth transition from preschool to “the Big School” (kindergarten).

In the 3-4-year-old group, The Marmots, **ratios are based on the NAEYC Teacher Child Ratios for this age which is 1 teacher for 7 children.** Emphasis in the Marmots classroom is placed on social skills, development of fine muscle control and hand-eye coordination, beginning concepts of categorizing and sequencing, following directions, recognition of shapes and colors, and lots of art and tactile experiences.

The 2-3-year-old group, The Bluebirds, **ratios are based on the NAEYC Teacher Child Ratios for this age which is 1 teacher for 6 children.** The Bluebirds will be introduced to stories, tactile experiences, sharing, playing in a group and discovering that school is a fun and safe place to be. Emphasis is on language development, social skills, and becoming more independent.

**With the floater, directors and special programs, the child/teacher ratio is always less than specified. Each afternoon, the director will assess the ratios needed for the following day and adjust staffing based on the scheduled number of children for the given day. All teachers work a minimum of 6 hours per day with a staggered start/finish for each teacher based on the needs in the classroom. All ratios attained will be based on the standards set by the NAEYC.*

Creative Movement and Music

Bobbie Reinhardt has been our music and movement teacher for over 30 years! She has a wonderful program that introduces coordination skills that will generate successful experiences in music, rhythm, and dance. Her curriculum also inspires language development, spatial relationships, creative expression, and confidence. This program culminates in the Art Show production presented every spring!

Yoga and Mindfulness with Miss Jessica.

Miss Jessica comes to Stepping Stones every Monday morning and teaches the kids (ages 13 months-Pre-K) basic yoga moves while incorporating mindfulness and calm down skills.

Afternoon Program

Our afternoon childcare program is a bit less structured and more centered around outdoor play, inside free play, open-ended art projects, rest and relaxation. While some of the children are napping, the others have what we call “Quiet Time”. During this time, children are expected to rest their bodies for 20 minutes independently while listening to stories on tape. From there they are free to choose from math activities, puzzles, books or art. The child: teacher ratio for this program is always 8:1 with at least 2 teachers on the premises at all times.

Curriculum Plans and Daily Reports

Please check the cubby area or talk with your child’s teacher to see what is happening in their classroom. We welcome any input or expertise on any of the subjects we explore, and even those we do not. Also, teachers strive to send home daily reports via Brighwheel (our communication app), to give you an idea about what your child did that day. Knowing the specifics about your child’s experiences at school will help you and your child establish a dialogue about the day when you’re at home. It is much easier for a child to elaborate on questions like, “What did you like about making mobiles?” rather than, “What did you do at school today?”

Stepping Stones 2023-2024 Rates (subject to change)

Hours of Operation Monday-Friday 7:30-5:30

Summer hours of Operation 8:00-5:30

**4:00 pick-ups will be charged \$5 extra per day **

Daily Rates 2023-24	
Half day	\$57
¾ day	\$67
Full day	\$79
Toddlers (Hummingbirds)	
Half day	\$54
¾ day	\$64
Full day	\$76
2-3 (Bluebirds)	
Half day	\$49
¾ day	\$59
Full day	\$71
3-4 (Marmots)	
Half day	\$47
¾ day	\$57
Full day	\$69
4-5 (Coyotes)	
Half day	\$45
¾ day	\$55
Full day	\$67
Summer Adventure Club (ages 5 and 6)	
¾ day 8:00-4:00 (local price)	\$66
Full day 8:00-5:30	\$81

Registration Fee:

- \$100 registration fee per year (\$50 for the school year, \$50 for the summer)
- There will be a 5% discount for anyone signed up for 5 full days
- We also offer a 10% sibling discount
- ***Discounts are not available for drop-in or short-term enrollment***

Registration/Billing Policies

You will register annually with your child's schedule. Summer and school year Registration occurs every April. There is a \$50 registration fee for the summer and a \$50 registration fee for the school year. This fee can be paid by check at the time that you register in April, or it will be added to your June 1st invoice and your September 1st invoice.

- We request a two-week notice for schedule changes, extended absences and dropouts. If changes are not given 2 weeks prior, a \$100 fee will be assessed.
- Invoices will be created and sent via Brightwheel on the 1st of the month; **payments are due no later than the 10th of each month.**
- \$50 finance charge assessed for late payments.
- You will receive an invoice on the 1st day of each month. We count all the days in the month that your child is signed up for and the days we are open and we bill accordingly.
- If you have added days and you are out of makeup days, those additional days will be added to your next month's bill.
- **If you are more than 60 days past due on a payment, you are subject to be withdrawn from the program. If withdrawal occurs, in order to re-enroll, any past due balance must be paid in full along with a \$50 reinstatement fee per child.**
- \$25 returned check fee

Collections Policy: If Stepping Stones Children's Center would need to pursue a client to collect delinquent tuition payments, that client will assume all costs associated with the collection process including all attorney fees.

Make up Day Policy

To receive an absence as a make-up day, you must notify us via email, phone or Brightwheel App at least 24 hours in advance. If due to illness, please contact us prior to 8:30 a.m the morning of. Regardless of the reason for the absence, if not notified by 8:30 a.m on the day of the absence, it will not be eligible for a makeup day. All students are eligible to receive no more than 20 make up days per fiscal year. Please understand that make ups are often difficult to schedule given the size of our classes. ****We offer them as a courtesy, not a guarantee****

No credits or refunds are offered; make-up days are allowed on a space available basis.

Our Summer Program: 12 weeks-6 years old (offered to our year-round families)

Bumblebees/Hummingbirds

For children 12 weeks – 2+ years

We will support the child's individual natural developmental progression, ensure their health and safety, and provide a warm, comforting, stimulating environment. As the children grow, our teaching philosophy focuses on a child-based approach. Emphasis is on verbal skills, expression of needs and of their creativity, positive interaction with peers and adults, and gaining more independence. Babies will take lots of stroller rides and toddlers will enjoy a variety of outdoor activities.

The Bluebirds

For 2-3 year-old children.

The 2-3-year-old group will be introduced to stories, tactile experiences, sharing, playing in a group and discovering that school is a fun and safe place to be. Emphasis is on language development, social skills, and becoming more independent and lots of outdoor and water play.

Marmot Camp

For 3–4-year-old children. Marmot camp children do lots of outdoor art, water play and more. In addition, this group may venture on short field trips and other areas within the Town Park. They will typically eat lunch back at the school but may have a picnic as well.

Coyote Camp

For children ages 4-5 years old. Coyote Campers spend some time away from the school and park areas taking short walks and picnic lunches. At the school, kids participate in daily arts and crafts, nature activities, group

games and sports in the park, gardening, picnics and more! Some activities may require transportation by Town Bus.

Your Child Should Bring:

- Appropriate clothing: play clothes, rain gear, sweater or sweatshirt, comfortable and durable shoes.
- A brimmed hat.
- A packed lunch and lots of snacks and a water bottle.
- Backpack for all of the above.

Please apply sunscreen to your child before bringing them to Stepping Stones. We reapply after lunch.

Adventure Club

For the older, more adventurous children ages 5 –6 (going into Kindergarten- going into 1st grade). Activities include hiking, water play, exploring, group games, arts and crafts, and nature awareness activities. Special excursions include trips to Blue Mesa, Lake Irwin, hikes to upper and lower loop, and much more. Adventure Club leaves at 9:30 a.m. and returns at 4:00 p.m. Transportation to trailheads is provided by Stepping Stones. ***Adventure Club activities are subject to change due to weather and vehicle availability.***

Adventure Club children should also bring:

- Water Shoes!
- Extra shorts and/or water clothes or extra clothes
- Bug repellent (optional)

Medication Policy

The Social Service guidelines require that all prescription and non-prescription medications are maintained with the child's name and date and are stored in the original bottle. Faculty can only administer medication in accordance to the instructions on the bottle with the written approval from the child's physician and parent. Please have a medication form filled out by your child's doctor and give the medication and the form directly to the teacher on duty. Medications will be kept in a locked box in the refrigerator. **THEY MAY NOT BE STORED IN A CHILD'S LUNCHBOX OR CUBBY.** Only faculty members or the director on duty that have completed training in the Medication Administration class, and are delegated by a nurse, can give the medication to the child.

Health and Safety

Enrollment Requirements

The health and safety of your children is extremely important. The State of Colorado requires that all children have an immunization record and physical evaluation to enroll. By law, these forms must be turned into the office on or before child's first day of school. We are required to inform all Stepping Stones families when a child is enrolled with a personal or religious exemption from immunizations.

When Children Are Sick

Please review our enclosed illness policy from the Children's Hospital of Colorado. Here are some steps we/you can take if your child is sick:

- Call or email the school in the morning to let us know of your child's absence.
- Children are ready to return to school if none of the below guidelines are true, or a doctor has determined the child is ready to return.
- When children become sick at school, we will contact you or the person you have indicated on your emergency form as soon as possible. **Please understand we cannot have a sick child at school to protect the others from infection and to ensure your child's quick recovery.**

Stepping Stones Children’s Center ILLNESS POLICY

If a child is picked up from school due to illness, we ask that you pick up within 1 hour, if you are unable to pick up in that time frame, we ask that you have a local approved pick up in the area that can come pick them up.

There are three main reasons to keep sick children at home:

1. The child doesn’t feel well enough to take part in normal activities, (such as; overly tired, fussy or won’t stop crying).
2. The child needs more care than teachers and staff can give, and still care for the other children.
3. The illness is on this list and staying home is required.

Remember, the best way to prevent the spread of infection is through good hand washing.

SYMPTOMS	CHILD MUST STAY HOME?
<p>DIARRHEA Frequent, loose or watery stools compared to child’s normal ones that are not caused by food or medicine.</p>	<p>Yes - if child looks or acts sick; if child has diarrhea with fever and isn’t acting normally; if child has diarrhea with vomiting; if child has diarrhea that overflows the diaper or the toilet. Child will be sent home from school after 2 loose stools and must stay home for 24 hours.</p>
<p>FEVER With behavior change or other illness A fever of 100°F or above needs immediate medical attention.</p>	<p>Yes - When the child also has a rash, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, behavior changes, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, etc. Child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.</p>
<p>“FLU-LIKE” SYMPTOMS Fever over 100°F with a cough or sore throat. Other flu symptoms can include tiredness, body aches, vomiting and diarrhea.</p>	<p>Yes - for at least 24 hrs after the fever is gone, without the use of medicine that reduces the fever.</p>
<p>COUGHING Note: Children with asthma may go to school with a written health care plan and the school is allowed to give them medicine and treatment.</p>	<p>Yes - if severe, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, rapid or difficulty breathing and medical attention is necessary. Note: Children with asthma may go to school with a written health care plan and the school is allowed to give them medicine and treatment.</p>
<p>MILD RESPIRATORY OR COLD SYMPTOMS stuffy nose with clear drainage, sneezing, mild cough.</p>	<p>No - may attend if able to take part in school activities. Keep home if symptoms are severe. This includes fever and the child is not acting normally and/or has trouble breathing.</p>
<p>RASH WITH FEVER Note: Body rash without fever or behavior changes usually does not need to stay home from school.</p>	<p>Yes – Call the doctor. Any rash that spreads quickly, has open, weeping wounds and/or is not healing should be evaluated.</p>
<p>PINK EYE Redness or swelling of the white of the eye or inside the eyelids. Increased amount of tears. Eye discharge which may be clear, yellow, white or green. Itchy, irritate or burning eyes.</p>	<p>Yes – Children may return to school 24 hrs. after starting prescription eye drops or antibiotics.</p>

LICE Either of 2 small wingless parasitic insects that live on the skin.	Yes- Children may return to school 24 hours after they have completed 2 hair treatments and the eggs and insects are completely gone.
RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) Infection of the respiratory tract. Symptoms include coughing/wheezing, runny nose and fever.	Yes- Call the Dr. Children may return 72 hours after the onset of their symptoms. They must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of medicine. They can return if the cough is still present but must stay home if the cough is uncontrollable.
Vomiting/Throwing up	Yes- until 48 hours after throwing up stops. If a child has a recent head injury, watch for signs of illness and dehydration.
Hand/Foot/Mouth A common children's virus causing sores in the mouth and a rash on the hands and feet. The condition is spread by direct contact of saliva or mucus.	Yes- for a minimum of 5 days. Children may return when they have been fever free for 24 hours and there are no more sores in the mouth for 24 hours.

Health and Nutrition

Here at Stepping Stones Health and Nutrition for our students is a priority. We have indoor and outdoor gardens, where we plant fresh vegetables to serve to our children for snack times. The children help plant and take care of our gardens all spring, summer and fall. In the winter we plant herbs and spices inside. We ask parents to pack healthy lunches and snacks for their children, including a protein, grain, milk fruit/vegetable and limited sugar treats. We believe a healthy balanced diet will only add to the positive daily success of your child.

Biting Policy

Our program recognizes that as a part of normal child development children may bite their peers. Although this behavior is not acceptable, we understand that young children bite for a variety of reasons ranging from self-expression to exploration. However, to ensure the safety of all children in our care our staff will take the following actions if biting occurs:

- Staff will express to the child that bit that his/her actions are not okay.
- Staff will help the child that bit care for the child who was bitten.
- Staff will complete an incident report for the child that bit.
- Staff will complete an accident report for the injured child.
- Staff will **confidentially** speak to both families about the situation.

If a child bites, at the discretion of the staff, they may call his/her parents and ask them to remove them from the center for the rest of that day for the safety of the other children. The child may return to the center after the program coordinator involves the family in an action planning meeting. We understand that this is a very difficult situation for all involved and we will do our best to resolve the situation as quickly and effectively as we can. Please do not hesitate to voice any questions or concerns. We will inform the biting child's family who was bitten.

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

As childcare providers and concerned citizens we are required by the Child Protection Act to report any known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services or the Marshall's Office. In the event one of our staff suspects abuse, she/he will contact the appropriate agency immediately followed by a written report.

Child Abuse and Complaint Reporting Procedures

State law requires that licensed providers report all suspected child abuse to the county department of social services or the local enforcement agency. In Gunnison County, reports will be made to the Crested Butte Marshall's office or:

Gunnison Department of Human Services
Child Protection
225 N. Pine St. Suite A
Gunnison, CO 81230
(970)-641-3244

If Parents/Guardians suspect abuse occurred while in the provider's care, a report may be made to the Crested Butte Marshall's Office or:

Gunnison Department of Human Services
Child Protection
225 N. Pine St. Suite A
Gunnison, CO 81230
(970)-641-3244

Parents/Guardians have the right to file a formal complaint on a provider for suspected licensing violations. A complaint may be made either by telephone or in writing to:

Colorado Department of Human Services
Child Care Division 1575
Sherman Street, 1st Floor
Denver, CO 80203-1714
(800)-799-5876

We make a referral or provide referral information to your family as appropriate for any child for whom a developmental concern has been identified. Please see below for screening options in our valley.

Screenings for Children:

Hearing - Child Find Coordinator-Carie Mitchell (info below)

- Gunnison Hearing Center at Gunnison Valley Hospital 970-641-2814
- South West Hearing Services at Gunnison Valley Hospital 970-249-3971
- Newborn Screening at Gunnison Valley Hospital 970-641-1456

Vision –

- Family Vision Center-641-2422 and ABBA Eye Care 641-2020
- Infant See Program (free screenings for infants) at Family Vision Center and ABBA Eye Care
- Child Find Coordinator-Carie Mitchell (info below)

Dental – Depending on the age of the child

- Crested Butte Family Dental 349-5880
- Pediatric Dentist in Montrose 249-8595

Medical Insurance –

- Department of Health and Human Services for Medicaid and CHP+ eligibility
- Connect for Health Navigation assistance 970-641-3244
- Connect for Health Colorado 408-713-6139
- Numerous local insurance brokers

Developmental Screening –

- Primary Care Offices and Child Find Coordinator: Carie Mitchell

Work: 970-641-7770 ext. 2909, Cell: 832-671-9180

Emergency Procedures

Blizzard: In the event you are unable to pick up your child due to road conditions, contact the school to make appropriate arrangements.

Inclement and Excessively Hot Weather: In the event of excessively hot weather, the children will remain inside and be given plenty of fluids.

Identifying Where Children Are/ Lost Child: In the event a child becomes separated from the group, we will first contact the Marshall's Office, followed immediately by a call to the parents. Our staff is trained to check the master log often to make sure that the children have signed in and are accounted for, they also do head counts throughout the day and each teacher has a list of their children they are responsible for each day.

Fire: In the event of a fire, children will be evacuated as practiced in periodic drills and sheltered in a neighboring house. Procedure: one teacher from the preschool exits the building through the front door (back door, if side is blocked) holding the door and checking children off the Master Log as the children file out. Children and 2nd teacher go to the gate and fill out. Third teacher (or 1st teacher, if only two on duty) sweeps the school, using Master Log. All children and teachers meet near the curb and cross the street.

Evacuation Procedures:

In the event of an emergency due to fire, smoke, gas leak etc. all children and faculty will immediately exit the building in an orderly fashion, as practiced in our quarterly fire drills. There are labeled fire exits in the front and back of both buildings and each classroom has two exiting options. Each teacher is responsible for counting the children in their own class and the director on duty will have a copy of all sign in sheets to do a final verbal roll-call once everyone has safely exited across the street to the designated meeting place. There will be an emergency book with all the contact information for each child stored at the entrance. This information will also be stored digitally in case the book is inaccessible.

Evacuation of Children with Disabilities or Special Needs:

The classroom teacher or aide assigned daily to work with any child with disabilities or Special Needs will follow the school evacuation procedures. That faculty member will be responsible for the full care of the child; helping them to evacuate safely and staying with them until they have been picked up by their parents.

Reunification with Families Procedure:

If we are unable to go back into school after an evacuation, the director on duty will send out a mass email/text message to all families of children who are in our care. If parents are unable to be contacted, then the designated emergency contact given by the parents at registration will be contacted. ONLY the parents or named contact will be able to pick up the child. Child will remain with a faculty member until one of these is available. If an evacuation occurs during inclement weather, then we will safely escort children to the Center for the Arts (located across the field) where we have permission to wait until children are picked up. If the weather is nice then faculty will escort children to town park and faculty will remain with the children until they are picked up by parents. The information of the meeting place and reason for evacuation will be sent immediately to parents and caregivers by director after any emergency.

Accident/Injury: In the event of an accident or injury, a trained staff person will administer first aid. If necessary 911 will be summoned and parents contacted. An accident/Injury report will also be filled out and sent to parents via Brightwheel.

School Safety Plan:

In the rare case that the Crested Butte Community School (CBCS) is in a lockdown, we will follow the same procedures as CBCS. The children will be kept safely indoors until we have received communication from CBCS that it is safe and secure to unlock our doors. We also ask that no one comes in or out of the building whilst a lockdown is in session. Stepping Stones is on the call list for the delivery of emergency messages. As soon as we receive a call, an email or Brightwheel blast will be generated to all families and faculty. Please understand that we will give parents updated information as it is received. The fewer calls we have coming in during an emergency the easier it is for us to focus on the safety of the children and school. For more information regarding emergencies, evacuation plans, lockdown and active shooter on Premises Plans, please ask to see our "Emergency Plan Documentation" packet.

Field Trips/Transporting Children/Emergency Procedures on the road: We will notify parents of any field trips that involve transporting children by vehicle. A signed permission will be necessary.

Late arrivals to school if class is on field trip:

If a child arrives for drop off and their class has already left for a scheduled field trip, parents should have the director on duty call the teachers to find out the location of the class. The parent can then either sign their child in and take them to the class location or sign child in and drop off child in the director's office to have the director transport the child to join their class.

All safety rules and seat belt laws will be followed for personal vehicles and public transportation. For all field trips that do not require transport but involve leaving school grounds-teacher will notify director and any parents that have requested being informed prior to child leaving school grounds.

All student/teacher ratios will be upheld during field trips and all necessary supplies and a cell phone for contact will be taken. If there is an emergency that occurs while on the road, necessary authorities will be contacted as well as director. Director will then contact parents.

Diapering and Accidents: Children in need of changing will be treated kindly and with dignity. The teacher will wear protective gloves and use a sterilized surface for changing. Soiled cloths will be placed in a sealed bag in the child's cubby. Extra clothes will be provided if necessary, please wash and return them.

Communicable Diseases: When children have been diagnosed with a communicable disease such as Measles, Mumps, RSV, Chicken Pox, Hepatitis, Meningitis, Rubella, Salmonella, TB, Giardia or Shigella; We will notify the local health department, all staff members, and all parents and guardians of children in our care. Children's confidentiality will be maintained.

Pick Up Policy

Parents, guardians and those indicated on your intake record are the only ones authorized to remove your child from the school. If a friend or relative other than those indicated on your record will be picking up your child, you must contact us in person or by phone before they will be allowed to do so and they **MUST** be at least 16 years old and listed on the approved pick up list.

- At the end of each day the closing teacher will make sure all children have been signed out and ensure that all children have left the building.
- If your child has not been picked up by the end of our normal business hours (5:30), the teacher will stay with him/her until picked up. However, a late fee of \$15.00 per every 15 minutes will be charged.
- In the case that a child is not picked up at all, and the parents/guardians cannot be contacted, the Crested Butte Marshall's office will be notified, and they will take the proper steps.
- If your child is scheduled for a ½ day, pick up time is 1pm. For Coyote families only, we provide a 30-min grace period/pick up window, but if picked up after 1:30, you will be charged for a ¾ day. For infant, toddler and Bluebird and Marmot rooms, the half day pick up time is no later than 1:00 because of nap time.
- If your child is scheduled for a ¾ day, pick up time is 3:30. We provide a 15-min grace period/pick up window, but if picked up after 3:45, you will be charged for a full day.

Arrival and Pick Up Times

Arrival time is between 7:30am and 9:00am. (We open at 8:00 during the summer) Early drop-offs (before 7:30) are difficult for the opening teacher. A \$15.00 fee will be charged for any early drop offs or late drop offs. We have implemented a 9:00 am cutoff for drop offs. Cutoff times bring a sense of order to our program, and it helps the children to have consistency in their day. Having your children to school by 9:00 am is a courtesy to the other children and teachers who are disturbed by children entering late. Please notify us for approval of an excused late arrival (Dr's appointment). Be sure to touch base with a teacher before leaving your child at school.

Pick up time is anytime between 1:00 pm and 5:30 pm. If you know you are going to be later than you expected, please call, email or message us on the Brightwheel app, so we can reassure your child that you are coming.

We use the Brightwheel app, which allows us to keep track of your children, please be sure to check your child in and out on the app every day. The teachers check this often to ensure all children are present and accounted for. ***We appreciate your promptness in arrival and pick up!***

Intoxicated Parents at Pick Up

If there is suspicion that a parent or approved pick up is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, it is our responsibility as mandated reporters to not allow the parent/approved pick up to leave

with your child. We will ask if there is someone else who can pick up. If the parent does not obey this policy, we are required to call the police.

We ask all parents to please clean out your child(ren)'s cubby each week!!

Visitor Policy

Visitors to the school are welcome. However, all visitors must sign in at the office before entering the classrooms. There is a visitor's sign in sheet where they will be expected to provide their name, address, and proof of identification.

Withdrawal Policy

If for any reason Stepping Stones can no longer provide care for an enrolled child, a conference will be scheduled with his/her parents, teacher and director. A two-week notice will be given except in the most extreme disciplinary cases. In the event a family needs to withdraw their child, two weeks' notice is required. Discretion will be used in emergency situations.

Grievances and Comments

Please feel free to contact any of the staff members or directors whenever you need. You are welcome to schedule a meeting at any time during the school day and coverage for teachers will be provided. Directors are always available by phone or email and if needed can help schedule a meeting with your child's teacher. You are welcome and encouraged to speak to a director about any issues or concerns or write your comments down and submit to the Directors box.

How Parents Can Help

Parent Involvement Program (PIP)

This is set up to help encourage families to participate as volunteers in our school program. We are a non-profit organization, which means we rely on a fair amount of fundraising dollars. Asking our families to donate money is not the direction we want to take. Asking our families to donate time is the direction to take. During the year, we ask that each family volunteer at least 10 hours of their time to help make Stepping Stones a better place for our children. Single parent families are required to donate a minimum of 5 hours.

Just about anything that you do to help will qualify as involvement. From odd jobs, heading up committees, bringing food to events, helping at parties, volunteering in the classroom or field trips, to fixing a fence. We find that the families who are more involved get more out of the program and so do their children.

First Days

Entering school is a new experience for most children, and often their first regular contact with children and adults outside their family and neighborhood. Apprehension is normal, as is fear of separation. The most important thing for the parent to do is to be encouraging and enthusiastic and to let the child know you will return. Help your child put her/his stuff in her cubby and accompany her to a station or to her teacher.

Stay for no more than a few minutes to help with the transition. Your confidence in our ability to support your child's feelings/behavior will help in making this transition positive.

Transitions

First time students- Children beginning school for the first time can be difficult for both parents and child, but we have a qualified staff who can help make this transition smooth. If it's the child's first time in care, we like the child's first day to be a half day to help ease them into our program. We will spend extra time with this child until they are feeling comfortable and will check in with the parents often throughout their first couple days to communicate with them on how they are doing.

Registration meetings- Every spring (late April, early May) we hold registration appointments with each family. This a great opportunity to meet individually to discuss your child's transition into our school, the next group at Stepping Stones or to the elementary school (and any other questions or concerns).

Transitioning to the next class- Children will transition up to the next class with the class they will be going to Kindergarten with. This transition will happen at the beginning of our summer program in June. With a few exceptions:
-Infants will move up to the toddler class when they are at least 13 months old, walking, feeding self and down to one afternoon nap. But will only move up if there is space in the toddler room.
-Toddlers moving up to the Bluebird room must be 2 years old at the start of our summer session and Bluebirds moving up to the Marmot room on the preschool side must be 3 years old at the start of the summer. Some younger children will have to remain in their class for the summer until they are old enough and will move up at the start of the school year.

The Kindergarten cutoff as off August 2021 will be August 1st. (The student must turn 5 by August 1st to enter Kindergarten.)

What Children Need to Bring

Children will have a cubby to store their personal belongings.

Please send your child with the following:

- A change of clothing
- Diapers and wipes if needed
- A blanket or other comforting stuffy that calms them (if necessary)
- A nutritious lunch and at least two snacks
- Any outdoor clothing needed for the season
- A hat and appropriate and comfortable footwear
- A water bottle
- The first layer of sunscreen applied in the a.m.

Please Label All Clothing, Lunches, ETC!

Dress

Please dress children in comfortable clothes that won't be ruined during art activities or outside play. Also, children should wear toe closed shoes that are appropriate for running and playing. Please send your child with **ALL** the needed outdoor playwear (snow pants, boots, hat, mittens, and jacket for winter and a sunhat, water clothes and shoes for summer). Your child should wear clothes that are easy to take on and off (pants with elastic waist, slip-on shoes, etc.). Please ensure that you provide extra clothing for your child each day.

Cell Phone Usage

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with you about your child. To make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

Snack

We ask each child to bring a healthy snack from home to have in the morning and afternoon. During the school year, we will email each family to have a turn to bring a healthy snack to share with the preschool classes. This is a very special thing for your child and we encourage you to include them in the choice of what to bring for snack.

Lunches

Proper nutrition is vital for young bodies! We encourage healthy eating by requiring children to eat their healthy things first, such as protein, fruits/veggies. Please take care in preparing your child's lunch. Sugary and highly refined foods are appealing to children and cause problems when directed to eat nutritious things first. For this reason, we ask that you eliminate them from their lunches. We have a microwave to reheat things if necessary.

Videos

We refrain from watching videos during the school year except in special circumstances: Educationally based or for a special holiday treat.

Holidays, Birthdays and Special Events

We typically celebrate birthdays after lunch (12:30-1). We invite you to bring cupcakes or muffins and to join us in the celebration.

Holidays and birthdays are joyous events. We believe in studying and celebrating various traditions and welcome your participation and suggestions about different cultural practices.

During the year, we have several celebrations: The Back to School Night, The Halloween Party, Holiday party, Spring Performance, Graduation and various fundraisers. We will send emails concerning upcoming events and hope you will join us! We will include the toddlers as much as we can in these events. All special events will be staffed according to ratios as well as parent volunteers when needed.

Special Needs Policy:

We will admit children with special needs if it is determined that Stepping Stones can adequately meet the emotional and physical needs of that child.

Stepping Stones will work with all families to attempt to devise a plan that will enable us to meet the individual needs of each child. We will make reasonable accommodations to provide a fully inclusive early childhood program for any children with special needs.

When the participation of a child requires a level of staffing or resources that goes above and beyond "reasonable accommodations", we will invite the family to help identify any additional resources of support before determining that we cannot accept or continue the enrollment of the child.

Positive Behavior and Pro-Social Interaction

Providing and reinforcing positive social and emotional skills, behaviors and interactions is a priority at our school and a foundation we foster for each child to ensure immediate, and future, academic, social and emotional success.

If we notice a child needs some extra support socially and/or emotionally we have multiple Early Childhood Professionals that work with us. These collaborations include coaching from the Pyramid Plus Model (a social/emotional program), Colorado Shines Coaches, as well as support from the Gunnison Valley Center for Mental Health. We will work with each individual child and their families to ensure that they have the support, information and tools needed to succeed to the best of their ability.

Trauma Informed Care Policy

We support children who have experienced trauma in their early years by focusing on self-regulation, problem-solving, and other social emotional skills. We also include increasing the reinforcement of those skills and building adult and peer relationships in the school.

Hearing, Vision and Dental Screening

Upon enrollment to our program, we ask that all children receive a hearing, vision and Dental screening. To set up an appointment for your screening, contact Carie Mitchell cariemitchell@gunnisonschools.net

Contact information for Early Childhood Professionals:

-**Corrine Jaeger**- Pyramid Plus Coach and Colorado Shines Coach for the Gunnison Valley; ☰

-**Carie Mitchell**- Child Find Coordinator and ECSE for the Gunnison Valley; cariemitchell@gunnisonschools.net

-**Lucia Di Prima**- Early Childhood Specialist for the Center for Mental Health in Gunnison, CO; ldiprima@centermh.org

-Exploration Kids Therapy- Gunnison CO.

www.explorationtherapy.com

-**Jennifer Moore**-Speech Language Pathologist for Gunnison Valley Health; jmoore@gvh-colorado.org

*We refer families to the above Early Childhood Professionals if we feel your child needs some extra support. These professionals are here to help support families, staff and children. With permission from the parents, these professionals can also provide support for your children here at our Center, they will also assist our Staff in the implementation of a Behavior Support Plan and an I.E.P.

Discipline

No form of corporal punishment is used at Stepping Stones Children's Center. Our approach to discipline is to redirect negative behavior while setting clear, reasonable limits and providing children with tools and words to problem solve. We provide constructive solutions such as giving choices, cooperative problem solving, calm down techniques and explanations of logical and reasonable consequences and positive choices. We acknowledge, encourage and praise positive behavior. We strive to not dominate and control situations, but to act as mediators, encouraging children to find their own solutions and/or make better choices.

We work individually with each child to find solutions and alternatives to responding physically or with high emotion in a conflict or stressful situation. We strive to make the school a safe place where aggressive physical and verbal behavior are unacceptable.

Open communication with parents is encouraged to support the child's behavior at home and at school. If an event has occurred with a child involving extreme negative behavior, we will contact

parents immediately. Ongoing discipline problems will be discussed in a private meeting with parents. When the participation of a child requires a level of staffing or resources that goes above and beyond “reasonable accommodations”, we will invite the family to help identify any additional resources of support before determining that we cannot accept or continue the enrollment of the child.

Bringing Money to School

Students attending Stepping Stones are not permitted to bring money into school of any kind. This includes coins and dollars. If we find that they have brought money to school, we will confiscate it, put in an envelope with the family name on it and contact the parents to pick it up from the office.

Potty Training

Once a child has been successfully and consistently using the toilet at home and is ready to use the toilet at school as well, our faculty will happily support and encourage this transition. Please let your child’s teacher know any words or phrases you would like to be used for toilet training and be sure to pack multiple changes of clothing for your child. If your child refuses to use the toilet at school and continues to have multiple accidents in a day, we will request the child wear a diaper until child shows readiness and willingness to use the toilet at school. Faculty are willing to continue to work anew with child each day to continue supporting their transition to underwear.

Toys and Costumes from Home

Except for toys that are needed in the first few weeks of school to help with the transition, we ask that you leave your child’s toys at home or in your car. If an item or costume is brought to school, it might be lost, broken or become the cause of many conflicts. If a toy helps you get your child out the door, we will give them a short time to have the toy and then will have them put it away for the remainder of the day. We prefer that costumes stay at home unless we are having a costume day. If you have a book or item that may be of interest to all children, we would love to see it but please give it directly to a teacher. We will schedule Show and Tell days to incorporate these things as well.

Breastfeeding Friendly Childcare

We provide an atmosphere that welcomes breastfeeding families. We support mothers who continue to breastfeed their infants/children as they begin childcare and continue to work.

Nursing mothers are always welcome to come to the center to feed their baby. There is a private, comfortable space for nursing or pumping breast milk in our infant building. Breast milk can be stored in the classroom freezer or refrigerator. The infant program staff will work with families to help facilitate feeding routines, communication is encouraged between family and caregivers to adapt to the infant’s needs. Formula and breast milk will be stored, served, and discarded according to safety guidelines.

For breastfed babies, backup bottles and breast milk must be provided for the center’s use. Expressed breast milk should be labeled with the infant’s full name, the date and time the milk was pumped.

STAFF Breastfeeding Friendly Childcare Policy

Supportive Environment

- We provide an atmosphere that welcomes breastfeeding families. We support mothers who continue to breastfeed their infants/children as they return and continue to work.
- We have a private, designated space (other than the bathroom) for mothers to breastfeed their children. We welcome mothers to breastfeed in the classroom as well.
- We maintain a breastfeeding supportive environment through posting and providing culturally appropriate breastfeeding support materials (e.g. pictures, posters, etc.), not including those produced or supplied by commercial entities and/or manufactures of infant formula.
- We “check-in” with mothers for feedback and ways to continue providing support.
- Staff communicates the infant’s changing schedule (i.e., feeding, napping, etc.) so a mother can adjust her schedule for pumping and/or visiting to feed her infant.

Initial Contact

- We discuss breastfeeding support with all potential new families and share this policy and breastfeeding resources with them. The policy is included in parent handbook.

Feeding and Handling Milk

- Staff follows storage and handling of breast milk as defined by Colorado Department of Human Services regulations and Colorado Rules and Regulations Governing the Health and Sanitation of Child Care Facilities.
- We discuss with all families how expressed milk is handled at our center/home.
- Freezer space is available for milk storage.
- Staff informs families on written procedures on the proper way to label and handle breast milk.
- Staff coordinates with parents about the quantity of milk remaining in containers to avoid waste.
- Staff fills bottles with less breast milk than necessary for a feeding. Staff will have additional breastmilk available to add to the bottle as needed.
- We develop a sustainable feeding plan with each family including feeding infants on demand as we observe hunger cues and coordinating the last feeding of the day to meet the mother’s feeding needs (either to feed or await mother’s feeding).

Staff Training

Newly hired employees will be encouraged to attend the breastfeeding friendly training as it is available and be informed of the breastfeeding friendly policy.

***NO GUNS, WEAPONS OR OTHER TOYS OF DESTRUCTION ALLOWED AT SCHOOL!**

COMMUNICATION

Importance

Communication during your years at Stepping Stones is vital for your child’s wellbeing, for our mutual learning and partnerships, and for the future of the school. Let’s make it a rich and rewarding experience and keep the lines of communication open. You know your child best and we would appreciate your insights, suggestions and support to help us better care for your child. E-mail is our main form of communication.

Messages

For information on events and happenings within your child’s class or the school, we will send messages and reminders via email or Brightwheel, a note at your child’s cubby or at the sign-in sheets, and/or flyers/sign-up sheets on the front door or window of the entry way. Please be aware of these things and look for these notices **EACH DAY**. It is your responsibility to keep yourself informed.

English Language Learners (Home Language)

We are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of the students and their families. We are open to the best ways to educate children from homes in which a language other than English is spoken and to prepare these English learners for their transition into kindergarten. If a child registers at Stepping Stones, we will support, encourage, and honor their home language. We feel that having a fluent bilingual teacher (when there is a dominant second language used by the enrolled child) in the child's classroom is the most developmentally appropriate course of action we can take. We will also communicate with the families to help facilitate this learning in the home. We will have all written materials interpreted to the family's home language as well as be in contact with an interpreter for verbal communication when necessary.

Back to School Night and Conferences

We will schedule a Parents Night in September. Bring the whole family! Your child will guide you through his/her day at school. This is a wonderful way of sharing your child's experiences at Stepping Stones. All the teachers will attend and will talk about their classes. They will also answer any questions that you may have. It is a fun night and we really encourage you to join us.

We will also schedule parent-teacher conferences in Oct/Nov and in April/May. These are private conferences with your child's teacher to learn about your child's progress at school. Every family is also encouraged to participate in at least one of these conferences a year.

School Readiness

For our Preschool children, ages 3-5, we use an online Assessment tool called GOLD Teaching Strategies; <https://gold.teachingstrategies.com/login.cfm>. This assessment tool helps us gauge where your child is developmentally. This assessment will be shared with the families during the parent/teacher conference meetings.

FUNDRAISERS

Stepping Stones appreciates and depends on the generous support of this community through fundraisers and contributions and on the support from public and private foundations to meet our operating needs, in fact, a percentage of our operating budget comes from fundraising. We hold many fundraisers during the year. We thank you in advance for attending those events and showing your support. We can always use help planning the fundraisers and welcome any new ideas.

As a member of the City Market Cares program, Stepping Stones receives a donation percentage of your purchases. Please sign up today by writing down the number from the back of your value card (Bring 2 other numbers from friends and get 1 hour of P.I.P credit!)

We also apply for grants and have received generous support from these entities:

The Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation
Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley
Anschutz Foundation
Colorado Shines
Rotary Club
The Town of Crested Butte
City Market Cares Program
Early Childhood Council

Individuals like you and other members of our community have offered generous donations of money, equipment, and services, which we receive graciously! As a non-profit, all of these donations are recognized as tax write-offs.

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Tuition Assistance Program is designed to meet the varying financial needs of our families. We understand that childcare costs constitute a large percentage of families' monthly expenses and that in a resort community, monthly incomes can be unpredictable.

1.The Scholarship Fund - Eligible families (including employees with children enrolled in our program) apply for and receive either full or partial scholarship money to apply towards tuition costs. Applications are available at registration and will be reviewed by the Board in August. Money awarded is for the 9 months' school year with an exception being made for employees which may receive monies for the full calendar year.

2.Work for Trade Scholarship Fund- We often have odd jobs to be done, such as shoveling, maintenance, small carpentry projects and repairs, sewing, etc.

We also hire families to perform janitorial services. Families who commit to these kinds of jobs (and who have fulfilled their 10 hours of required service) can apply for funds to apply towards trading childcare costs. The Directors review applications.

3.Emergency Fund- This fund assures that an enrolled child whose family suffers a sudden loss of income due to death, disability or other circumstance, can continue attending Stepping Stones. Financial assistance is awarded on a case-by-case basis.

4.Public Funding- We are happy to admit children with childcare support through Social Services, Special Education and the Colorado Preschool Program. For more information about these programs please ask a director or contact Social Services in Gunnison.

A sincere note of thanks to each and every person who has helped us become the school we are and encourages us to continue to develop

