



PLEASANT VALLEY CHILDREN'S CENTER

Parent Handbook

2025-26

Mission Statement

Our parent co-operative non-profit preschool strives to create a stimulating and nurturing environment where children can grow, learn, and take risks in the safety of a strong, supportive community.

Who we are

The Pleasant Valley Children's Center (PVCC) is a Preschool licensed by the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health. This Center is a warm, familiar place for young children to grow, play, wonder, and learn. It is a preschool where preschool aged children feel safe taking risks and reaching out to make friends. This is a preschool where teachers and other adults respect each child's individual limits, fears, gifts, and abilities. Children learn and develop at their own pace, encouraged by their teachers, classmates, and the enrichment of the structured activities that are part of our everyday routine.

Origins and Board of Directors

PVCC was established in September 1972 as a parent cooperative preschool when several women from surrounding communities envisioned a need for a nurturing environment to serve our children. Then, as now, we are professionally staffed, non-profit and nondenominational. The parents of the center are considered members who own and operate the school and are encouraged to participate in various volunteer capacities including serving on its Board of Directors. Board members are willing to give their time, talents, and enthusiasm to ensure PVCC is fiscally sound and maintains the industry's highest standards. Board meetings are held monthly, and all are welcome. Minutes of these Board meetings are distributed to all PVCC families.

Philosophy

We are a parent co-operative non-profit preschool dedicated to the belief and understanding that children learn best through play. Play is the active engagement by children in building an understanding of the world around them. They work hard to gather information, test ideas, solve problems and become critical thinkers. This learning takes place as they are engaged in the activities made available for them from building with blocks, painting at the easel, putting together a puzzle, constructing things with small manipulatives to organizing cooperative pretend play. The skills and concepts gained through this effort provide the building blocks for future academic success. We strive to ensure that all children gain the early literacy and numeracy skills that are appropriate to their age and development.

PVCC is dedicated to nurturing "The Whole Child" by supporting their language, social, emotional, and physical development. Our curriculum emphasizes social skills, creativity, and positive self-esteem through a variety of loosely structured play and teacher-directed activities such as Circle Time, Music & Movement and Science & Nature. Our teachers have a clear understanding of childhood development and can guide children and counsel parents accordingly. We are small by design, allowing us to maintain a child-to-teacher ratio of never more than 8 to 1. This means children receive lots of individual attention and everyone can get to know each other well.

Our Staff

The quality of the program is due to the quality of the staff. It is vital to attract staff that are experienced and knowledgeable in the field of early childhood.

Each staff person must receive additional hours of continuing education in child development or special education each year. This requirement is over and above what state licensing regulations require and is crucial in maintaining qualified teachers for the ongoing success of the PVCC program. All teachers must have some level of experience with young children and demonstrate a genuine interest in children. All staff

members must have an initial physical, TB test, criminal records check, and a reference inquiry before employment begins.

Current Teachers

Molly Sexton-Read, M.S. Ed. ,(Lead Teacher) has been teaching at PVCC since 1993. She lives in Barkhamsted with her husband, Tom.

Amanda Carrozzo (Assistant Teacher) joined the teaching staff at PVCC in the spring of 2012. She is a PVCC alumni parent, having sent all four of her daughters to PVCC and served as Treasurer for eight years. She lives in New Hartford with her husband and family.

Jen Bednarz, MAT. Early Ed/Special Ed., (Head Teacher) joined the teaching staff in the fall of 2022. She is a PVCC alumni parent and former board member. She lives in Winsted with her husband and two children.

Sydney Dallavalle, (Assistant Teacher, TuTh) is joining our staff in September 2025. She is a PVCC alum and currently pursuing her BA in psychology at CCSU. She lives in Torrington with her family.

Licensing

Our school is state-licensed and regularly inspected to ensure everything meets or exceeds standards, including child-to-teacher ratios and safe facilities. PVCC is subject to inspection by state and local health, fire, licensing, and building agencies. Regulations and inspections pertain to staff qualifications, the facility and playground, nutrition, health and safety matters, record-keeping, and child-to-staff ratios. If you have any questions regarding licensing or regulations, please speak with the director.

Environment and Curriculum

The center has one large main room which we have broken up into smaller cozy spaces to create a variety of play areas, a play kitchen, a block corner, art table, reading area, and a table for using small manipulatives. We try to have a variety of small classroom pets throughout the year such as: fish, butterflies, and visiting frogs and salamanders.

At PVCC, we focus on child-centered teaching, developmentally appropriate practices, and the belief that 'play is a child's work.' Our goal is to develop each child's confidence, creativity, and life-long learning skills in our program.

Each day at school is made up of these components; free play, small group time, books and stories, snack, and outdoor time. While the length of these components and the specific order in which they take place vary between the classes, they reflect our core practice for all children. The majority of a child's time at school is spent engaged in **free play**. Teachers work to present both familiar and new materials for the children to work with. These often include art activities, board games, small manipulative work, and topic related projects. In addition, the classroom environment is open. Children may choose where to work, from the block corner to the dramatic play area. They move freely between activities and areas. Over the course of the year, the teachers ensure that each child spends time not only in their preferred activity but also exploring the wide range of options available. Teachers work alongside the children as they are engaged in this work, asking questions, helping to create challenges, and enriching the play.

Small group time gatherings offer the children the chance to experience a more structured environment and teacher-led activities. We use these times to hold class discussions, to play organized games connected to a skill or concept, engage in music and movement activities, and conduct experiments. The type of activity and its duration are determined by the age and interests of the group. **Books** are always available during the day and children will often self-select them as an option during playtime. Each day the teachers read at least one book to the children. When reading to a group, teachers share information about the structure of stories, ask children questions about the events in the story and build an understanding of the role of print.

Snacks are provided by families on a rotating basis. Each week a family is responsible for bringing food and drink for the class. Children are responsible for setting the table and cleaning up afterwards. Snack time is presented as a community building activity for the children.

We are committed to providing time for **outdoor** play every day, year-round. We believe the outdoor environment provides a rich opportunity for learning. Our outdoor area offers equipment for climbing, tools for digging, balls for throwing and rolling as

well as a full set of large outdoor blocks which can be used to create a wide variety of structures. Experiencing the natural world firsthand throughout the year helps the children develop a deep connection to it and a growing appreciation of its wonders.

The Office of Early Childhood in Connecticut has developed a document, The CT Early Learning and Developmental Standards (CT ELDS), which provides the outline for what young children should know and be able to do. We use this framework as a guide for developing our curriculum, designing our classroom environment, and setting our daily schedule. The teachers work to develop broad topics which are used to focus some of the activities happening during the morning and provide the content for some of the small group activities. These topics cover all domains within the CT Early Learning and Development Standards.

In addition to the learning environment for the children attending our school, as a parent co-operative preschool we are committed to meeting the needs of our families and greater community. We work as a group of families towards a common goal of providing quality and meaningful early childhood education for children while creating a welcoming and inclusive community for our families.

This arrangement creates a safe, relaxed, and enriching environment that is "Family Friendly." In practical terms, this means many small things. We are flexible. For instance, we do not require children to be toilet trained before entering preschool. Experience shows that children achieve developmental milestones with gentle encouragement in a relaxed and supportive environment focusing on success rather than failure.

Assessment

Child assessment is a vital component of all high-quality early childhood programs. Assessment is essential to understand and support young children's development. PVCC uses the CT DOTS (Documentation and Observation for Teaching System) to measure child outcomes. CT DOTS is an ongoing observational assessment tool based upon years of feedback from thousands of educators and significant

research about how children develop and learn. All staff members are trained in the use of CT DOTS which includes the purpose and value of assessment and appropriate assessment tools. PVCC assessment policy adheres to the NAEYC Position Statement: Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation. For more information about CT DOTS :

<https://www.ctoec.org/supporting-child-development/ct-dots/>

Conferences

Family participation is encouraged and welcomed. PVCC uses Family Conferences to offer family support and communication. Family Conferences are designed:

- To guide families and teachers with a way of sharing valuable information about their child.
- To individualize the planning process for each child in the context of their family, culture, and community.
- To explore ways to use a child's family's strengths to promote growth and development.
- To create an ongoing process for recording the growth and development of the child.

We schedule two formal conferences each school year, one late fall and one early spring, but we encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher at any time if you have questions, concerns, or want an update on your child's progress. While conferences are not mandatory, they are encouraged, even for our youngest students, as they allow parents the opportunity to follow the progress that their child is making. During these conferences, you will be provided with a written report about your child's strengths and areas for growth.

Developmental Concerns

If at any point you have developmental concerns for your child, please reach out to your child's teacher to discuss. We are happy to provide strategies, resources, or community programs that may be of support.

Home Language

It is important to PVCC that all families are given the opportunity to fully understand, interpret, and become involved in their child's education. PVCC will work with the family to provide information in the language they are most comfortable with for any family that makes a request.

Programs

For the 2025-2026 school year PVCC will offer:

A mixed age preschool class for three-year-olds and four-year-olds. This class will meet three days a week (Monday, Wednesdays, Fridays) from 9-12:00pm. To be enrolled in this class a child must be three by December 31st of the year.

On Wednesday there is the option for children to stay for an extended day. The children enrolled in this option bring their own lunch and pick up is at 1:55 pm.

A mixed age toddler preschool class for two-year-olds and three-year-olds. This class will meet two days a week (Tuesdays, Thursdays) from 9-11:45. To be enrolled in this class a child must be two by December 31st of the year.

Schedule

Class begins with full days after Labor Day. Thereafter, we will follow the Regional School District 7 calendar with our last day in mid-June. Parents should feel free to stay awhile if their child is going through separation anxiety or is very upset. Parents should also be aware that even the children who seem miserable as their parents say good-bye, quickly recuperate. Parents need not feel guilty making a quick exit when their child does not want to say good-bye. The teachers are adept at handling these situations. Parents are welcome to telephone during the morning to check on their children.

Daily Routine

Our MWF daily routine usually (with some variation) follows this general pattern:

9:00a.m. Children arrive (drop off at play yard)

9:00a.m – 9:45a.m. Free play outside

9:45a.m. – 10:10a.m. Team time for stories, songs, and discussions

10:10a.m. Handwashing followed by snack time

10:30a.m.- 11:30a.m. Free play inside

11:30 a.m. Group time for listening, songs, and stories

12:00p.m. Parents pick up children

12:00p.m. – 12:30 p.m. Outdoor play (Lunch Bunch Days only)

12:30p.m. – 1:00p.m. Hand washing and Lunch Bunch

1:00p.m. – 1:15p.m. Free choice (books, puzzles, small manipulatives)

1:15p.m. Group time for afternoon activities

1:55p.m. Parents pick up children

Our TTH daily routine usually (with some variation) follows this general pattern:

9:00a.m. Children arrive (drop off at side door)

9:00a.m – 10a.m. Free play inside

10a.m. – 10:15a.m. Clean up

10:15a.m. Handwashing followed by snack time

10:35a.m. – 11a.m. Group time for stories, songs, and discussions

11a.m.- 11:45a.m. Free play outside

11:45a.m. Parents pick up children

Drop Off and Pick Up

School begins at 9:00a.m., be sure to sign your child IN. We like everyone to begin school together. We realize, however, that there are always those last-minute emergencies (someone can't find their favorite hat, or the younger sibling needs a diaper change etc.). We have all been through it.

Pick up time is 11:45 a.m for the TTh class and 12:00 p.m. for the MWF class. Parents should sign their child OUT and wait in the playground or inside the school entrance during bad weather until their child is ready. We are emphatic about releasing children to their parents ONLY, unless other prior and specific arrangements have been made. Parents must give teachers direct notification if their child is to be picked up by someone else. This enables our staff to ensure that children are dismissed only to authorized people. Obviously, we are firm in this policy for the safety of our children. If you are going to be late in picking up your child, for whatever reason, please call the center to tell the teacher. Your child and his/her teacher can then wait without worry.

School calendar & Bad weather

PVCC follows the Regional School District 7 calendar for holidays, vacations, closings, etc. During bad weather when the school may possibly be closed or late opening you should be tuned in to 1060AM, 1080AM or 610AM(WSNG) or channel 3/WFSB TV for these reports.

School Attire

Play clothes are a must. We want children to feel at ease participating in all activities PVCC has to offer, including the messy ones (which we all know are the most fun). We do use smocks for painting and similar activities. We ask that children are dressed appropriately for the weather. The children play outside on our playground daily, weather permitting. Therefore, during the winter months, children need hats,

mittens/gloves, boots, snowpants/snowsuits, and warm coats. Please mark all outdoor clothing with your child's name.

Discipline Policy

The goal of discipline is to help the child develop self-control and move toward appropriate social behavior. Examples of developmentally appropriate methods utilized for resolving conflict are:

- ✓ Positive guidance

When disputes arise among children or between a child and program staff, the program staff will encourage a “talking out” process where the goal is to acknowledge feelings and find solutions using the children’s ideas wherever possible.

- ✓ Setting clear limits

Program staff will encourage and model positive behavior, positive reinforcement, the use of peer support and clearly defined rules.

- ✓ Redirection

A child who may be aggressive or who is disruptive or destructive of other children’s work may be asked to make an activity choice in another area.

Program staff will continuously supervise children during disciplinary actions.

Program shall not be of abusive, neglectful, corporal, humiliating or frightening treatment or punishment including, but not limited to, spanking, slapping, pinching, shaking or striking a child under any circumstances. No child will be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety or health of the child or others, using least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

Parent Involvement

PVCC believes that children thrive when the relationship between the family and the center is a partnership. We have an open-door policy—parents and guardians are always welcome at the center, so just let us know when you’d like to come to say hello! We strongly believe in positive two-way communication. Families are encouraged to communicate with teachers and administration in whatever way is most convenient for them. This may include by phone, notes, email, or in person. Information is shared with families through verbal conversations, the Brightwheel app, flyers, family bulletin

boards, notes, phone calls, conferences, and e-mail. PVCC works to offer many opportunities to be part of your child's early learning experience and connect with other families. Teachers encourage family members who are interested and willing to share a special talent or hobby with the class. Family members are needed as drivers and chaperones on class field trips. We believe the interests of the children are best served by an open and collaborative relationship between families and teachers.

PVCC Policies

Copies of all PVCC operating policies, including but not limited to, personnel, discipline, and abuse & neglect, are available to all parents/guardians upon request.

All student files are kept confidential.

Health Policy

A medical form from the State Department of Public Health must be filled out and signed by a child's physician before school starts. This Health form will reflect an annual physical and up to date immunizations. In addition, each child is required to receive a flu vaccine during each year enrolled at PVCC before Dec. 31. Returning students may use the previous year's form as long as a child has been examined within the last 12 months. Prior to your child having his/her check-up, please pick up a new health form from the teacher or registrar.

We ask parents to inform us of a contagious disease that a child or any family member has contracted upon diagnosis, such as:

Chicken Pox – The child should stay home for at least six days, until the rash has begun to subside, and the child is feeling well enough to attend.

Hepatitis A – The child should stay home until all those who should be protected have received gamma globulin shots.

Impetigo – The child should stay home until treatment starts.

Infectious Conjunctivitis – (Pink Eye) The child should stay home until the day after treatment begins.

Infectious Diarrhea – The child should stay home until diarrhea stays in the diaper or the child can get to the toilet and is feeling well enough to participate.

Lice – The child should stay home until the day after treatment starts.

Ring Worm – The child should stay home until treated for 24 hours.

Scabies – The child should stay home until treatment starts.

Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever – The child should stay home until the day after treatment with antibiotics.

Covid-19 – see current guidelines.

When a child has certain symptoms, he/she should stay home. The child may return when a physician has said that the child does not put other children at risk of becoming ill and the child is well enough to participate fully in the activities.

These symptoms may include:

A fever and the child is feeling or acting ill. The child needs to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Vomiting or upset stomach. If the child vomits in the morning before school, he/she should not attend that day.

Diarrhea.

Too sick to fully participate.

If a child is going to be kept at home, please call the center. If children become sick at school, parents will be called to come pick them up. Our trained staff can administer only emergency medication. A physician's written permission and administration instructions MUST accompany the medication as well as a parent's written permission to administer it in case of an emergency (e.g., bee sting, asthma attack, etc.).

All medication will be stored in a locked box. If the need to administer arises, it must be documented on a State Department of Public Health form posted in our kitchen. Parents will be notified upon administration of medication.

In all cases of medical emergency, staff will call 911 first, administer first aid and then contact parents.

PVCC Social Media Policy

Employees of PVCC shall not use social media, including but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, to network with families of children currently enrolled in a program at PVCC. All employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our school. Because readers of social media networks may view the employee as a representative of the school, the Board requires employees to behave in a professional and ethical manner when referring to the school, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers, and communities on any social networks. Any violation of this expectation may result in disciplinary action, possibly including suspension or dismissal.

It is the Board's policy that the families of children enrolled at PVCC must be thoughtful about any postings on their personal accounts which reference PVCC. While the Board recognizes that networking through these sites provides the opportunity for families to promote our programs it is imperative that the confidentiality of all students be preserved and respected. At the start of every school year, parents will have the opportunity to request that no photographs including their child(ren) be used on social media sites. The school community will be made aware of these requests and asked to honor them. Confidentiality must also be maintained in reference to any statements, behaviors or actions observed during our programs. At no time should an incident which took place at school be shared through social media without permission from the families involved. Any violation of this policy may result in sanctions issued by the Board. All student files are kept confidential.

School Security Policy

The staff at PVCC will work to ensure the safety of all children at all times. This includes planning and preparing for emergencies, and following procedures described in the Emergency Plan. In addition, the staff will continuously monitor the school environment, maintaining an awareness of any person approaching the building. The doors will remain locked at all times. If a person unknown to the staff approaches the building the staff member closest to the rear entrance will meet the person outside the door, closing the door behind them. The staff member remaining in the classroom will get the phone. In the event that the situation becomes confrontational or dangerous, 911 will be called and the children will be gathered together in the front room. Once the authorities have arrived and the situation has been resolved, parents will be notified.

Enrollment Information & Tuition

There is a \$25.00 non-refundable registration fee for enrollment per child for each school year.

Tuition is set for the school year at \$1995 for the 3- and 4-year-old program (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays) with an additional \$30 per month with the extended day Wednesday and \$1520 for the 2- and 3-year-old program (Tuesdays, Thursdays). Tuition may be paid in full or in 9 ½ monthly installments.

The monthly tuition fees (9 ½ installments) are:

\$210 for the 3- and 4-year-old program (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays) or \$240 with extended day Wednesday. Half Tuition in the amount of \$105 due in June.

\$160 for the 2- and 3-year-old program (Tuesdays, Thursdays). Half tuition in the amount of \$80 due in June.

We ask that payments be left in the tuition envelope on the first class day of each month. Payment is required no later than the 10th of the month, since we have a financial commitment to our staff, payments after the 10th should include a \$5.00 surcharge.

Families with 2 or more children enrolled receive a 15 percent discount.

If parents wish to withdraw their child, we ask that you give 15 days notice before the child's final day.

Provisional Enrollment/Withdrawal

PVCC is committed to providing a developmentally appropriate experience for all children. However, if following 1 month of attendance in a class the staff concludes that placement at the center is not appropriate for a child, the Board reserves the right to request that the child be withdrawn from the program within 15 days after the initial 1-month attendance. Every effort will be made to help the parents find a more suitable placement. If parents wish to withdraw their child, we ask that you give a 15-day notice before the child's final day.

Snacks

Being a parent cooperative preschool, we ask parents to bring a snack for their child's class for two or three weeks of the school year. We celebrate birthdays during our snack time on the appropriate day. Parents can make arrangements with their child's teacher to bring in a special snack for that day. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board. A list of suggestions is attached.

Snack Ideas

Any combination of the suggestions below or new ideas you have are most welcome. Please note that we do not want to use "Juice Drinks" or "Kool-Aid", nor any products that contain artificial sweeteners such as Nutrasweet. Please make snacks in advance and allow a half gallon of drink per class per week. We have paper goods.

- 1) Fresh fruit - fruit salad, apples, oranges, grapefruit, pears, pineapple, bananas, green or red seedless grapes, watermelon, dried apricots, raisins, etc.
- 2) Vegetables - carrot sticks, celery, sliced cucumbers, etc.
- 3) Cheese or yogurt dips
- 4) Popcorn (plain or sprinkled with cheese)
- 5) Toast or bagels
- 6) Cheese sticks
- 7) Cottage cheese
- 8) Crackers or pretzels
- 9) Muffins or breads
- 10) Trail mix or Chex mix
- 11) Mini pizzas
- 12) Applesauce
- 13) Jello
- 14) Birthday cake or cupcakes

Drinks: Milk or Chocolate Milk, 100% Fruit Juices, Homemade Soda (Seltzer with juice)