



# PARENT HANDBOOK 2010-2011

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## **History and Philosophy of Spring Knolls**

For sixty years, Spring Knolls Cooperative Early Learning Center has been providing high-quality preschool experiences for children living in upper Northwest Washington and the surrounding Maryland areas of Silver Spring, Takoma Park and Rosemary Hills. The school has changed names several times (Garden Co-op, Rock Creek Gardens Co-op). The name Spring Knolls came from an apartment building where the school was housed at one time. Although the names and locations changed, the school has maintained the same philosophy of education and the same high standards of instruction and guidance.

Spring Knolls is a not-for-profit, parent-led cooperative nursery school. This means that it is operated and administered by the parents of the children who are enrolled. Parents determine the policies and procedures that govern the school's operations and hire trained teachers to carry out the educational policy.

Parents' involvement includes having a close working relationship with their children's teachers. They participate in their child's classroom experience as teachers' assistants by serving snacks, cleaning up, reading stories and sharing their own talents with the class. In this way, parents have a unique opportunity to observe how their children interact with peers as well as with other adults. They also get an opportunity to observe how other adults handle classroom situations.

Spring Knolls is a "workshop" for children, where they are encouraged to use their own initiative and work things out for themselves as much as possible. With subtle guidance, the children are encouraged to make decisions, solve problems and develop a positive set of values.

The basic philosophy of the school is learning through play. This approach fosters the development of the whole child, with emphasis on social, intellectual, physical and emotional growth. This is in keeping with the philosophy that it is through play, not academic preparation, that a child best develops the mental, physical, and social abilities for future learning readiness.

The children come to understand their own self-worth and to appreciate and respect the uniqueness of others. With a sense of self, children are more capable of handling life and are more receptive to others.

Another tenet of the Spring Knolls philosophy is the goal of a racial, cultural and economic mixture in the enrollment. This goal was strengthened in 1970 when Spring Knolls joined Washington Preschools, Inc., an organization specifically dedicated to the goals of full integration. The curriculum at Spring Knolls, therefore, involves an ongoing cultural enrichment program that is incorporated

into the classroom activity. There is a continuous sharing of ethnic, racial and religious cultures reflecting the diversity of the school.

## **Parent Commitment**

As stated in the “History and Philosophy” section, parents have a substantial responsibility to keep the school running smoothly. It is only with your regular participation that the school can thrive. The essence of a “parent-run co-op” is that every place the word “we” is used in this Handbook, it includes you!

The involvement of parents in each of the following areas is critical to the operation of the school.

## **Required Meetings**

Parent meetings are fundamental to the concept of a parent-run school. There are two required parent meetings during the school year (fall and spring). There is also a mid-year meeting that will be held in February. Although our parent board votes on general policy issues, other issues (such as tuition and changes to the bylaws) need to be discussed and approved by the entire parent body. There is also mandatory co-op training for all parents, relatives, au pairs and babysitters who will be co-opping.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

Throughout the year, we have activities that require parental participation. For instance, we promote our school at the Takoma Park Street Festival and the Takoma Park Folk Festival, and need parents to work in shifts to hand out brochures and tell folks about our school. Another event is our annual SK Pajama Party for the kids and run by parents, and the annual open house. The committees in charge of the various events will put out a call for volunteers; please help out.

## **Housekeeping**

Each family is required to participate in the maintenance of the school, as follows:

- One big clean-up
- Two small clean-ups
- Daily cleanup of classrooms and bathrooms by co-opping parents

## **Big Clean-ups**

Each family is required to sign up for one of the three big clean-up sessions -- fall, mid-winter, or end-of-year. Each Big Clean occurs on a Saturday, from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. You will be working with about a dozen other families to either set-up the school for the new year, get it back in shape in January, or close it up for the summer. If you cannot make it, you are expected to switch with another family or arrange for a

substitute. The penalty for missing a big clean-up and not finding a sub or swap is \$100.

### **Small Clean-ups**

Families may "opt out" of their two Saturday morning small clean-ups for a fee of \$185. If you do not opt out, you must sign up for two Saturdays on which to clean (one in the fall, one in the spring). Weekly clean-up of the school begins at 9:00 sharp every Saturday morning and lasts about 3 hours. If you cannot make it on your scheduled Saturday, you are expected to switch with another family. The penalty for not showing up and not getting a substitute is \$75 and reassignment to another cleanup day. Should a family fail to show up or find a substitute a *second* time, they will be considered to be "opting out" and will be charged a total of \$185, just like other families who "opt out" of Saturday morning clean-up.

Sign-up sheets for all Spring Knolls clean-ups are available at both parent meetings and posted on the hall bulletin board thereafter.

### **Telephone Tree**

Everyone is responsible for passing messages along their class telephone tree, if it is activated for urgent communications.

### **Committees and Fundraising**

All members contribute to the running of Spring Knolls by participating in fundraising activities and serving on a parent committee.

Like most independent schools, Spring Knolls' operating expenses often exceed the revenue from tuition and fees. As a non-profit school, we depend on our parents, alumni and other friends in the community for voluntary support. All families are asked to participate in various fundraisers throughout the year.

Our most profitable fundraiser and biggest social event of the year is the annual silent auction. It is a wonderful opportunity for Spring Knolls to celebrate its community and bid on a wide range of donated items with the school benefiting directly from the proceeds. All families are required to contribute an auction fee, in lieu of individual ticket sales.

### **Classroom Co-opping**

If you choose the co-opping option, someone (either you or a substitute) must appear on the dates assigned. If your child is absent on your co-op day, you must either co-op or find a substitute.

#### *When You Co-op*

On your co-op day, you might perform the following tasks:

- Work with groups of children or individual children in activities
- Perform housekeeping duties (pick up toys, clean bathroom, wipe tables) while the teacher is directing an activity
- Take a regular headcount of children during any classroom transition (going from inside to outside, outside to inside, arriving or leaving the playground, etc.)
- Help children take care of themselves (wash hands, go to the bathroom, put on boots)
- Change diapers
- Go on field trips with the class
- Guide children with suggestions for working out problems with each other

The co-opping parent must work in class to serve the interests of all the children, not just his/her own child. Siblings are not permitted to come with you except in emergencies. If the co-op responsibilities of a given family are not being fulfilled, your co-op status may be reviewed and changed.

The following table indicates how often each parent should expect to co-op:

<u>Days child in school</u>	<u>Full Co-op</u>	<u>Limited Co-op</u>
5 days/week	1 day every week	1 day every 2 weeks
3 days/week	1 day every 2 weeks	N/A
2 days/week	1 day every 2 weeks	N/A

The schedule of assigned co-op days will be given out ahead of time so that parents can plan ahead. A parent is expected to co-op on the assigned day or find a substitute, even if his/her child is not in school -- otherwise the whole class misses out on sufficient staffing. *It is also essential that you be on time, which means **arriving 10 minutes** before the beginning of class.*

On occasion, a parent might need to permanently switch his or her scheduled co-opping day. When this occurs, the parent should notify the co-op schedule coordinator, who will assist in finding another parent to swap co-opping days with that parent. If two families independently agree to permanently swap their co-op days, the teacher and scheduler must approve the arrangement.

#### *When You Cannot Co-op*

If you cannot co-op as scheduled (due to sickness, vacation, etc.) you can either find another co-opper who is willing to trade days with you or find someone -- either another co-opper or an approved substitute (from the sub list) -- who will co-op for you. Pay that individual directly, \$35. The sub list will be available shortly after school starts.

*We strongly* encourage you to find another parent with whom you can swap during the year as the need arises, however. The sub list is a last-resort

resource. Also remember that anyone who has been through the co-opper training may sub in any class; i.e., a 2s parent can sub in the Pre-K class. Alternatively, consider bringing a relative to the co-opper training (and fill out the necessary paperwork) so that they can sub for you if the need arises.

It is your responsibility to find a sub. The co-op schedule coordinator only assists with permanent co-op schedule changes. The penalty for failing to appear on your scheduled co-op day is \$45. Parents who miss two co-op duties without prior notice may be removed from co-opping status at the discretion of the board.

Due to the MCPS schedule, we cannot choose which days we have "off." As a result, some families will co-op more than others, depending on the day of the week and when the holidays happen to fall. This is just the way it goes. Your flexibility is appreciated!

### *Non-Co-op Families*

All Spring Knolls parents share the responsibilities outlined in the commitment section, but non-co-op parents choose to pay a higher tuition rate to have the school find someone to assume their co-op duty in the classroom. The non-co-op parent is not responsible for finding or paying a substitute. The school handles all of these arrangements.

### **Snacks**

Each family must provide snacks on assigned days for their child's class. Snack assignments will occur two to five times during the school year for each family, depending on the number of families in the class. (Parents of siblings in one class should expect to double the snack assignments.)

### *What to Bring*

Spring Knolls tries to encourage the children to avoid junk food and eat food that is nutritious as well as tasty. The snack-bringing family should provide a snack consisting of two of the following three things:

1. A protein source (such as cheese or peanut butter)
2. A grain (such as crackers or bread)
3. A fruit or vegetable

In addition, the family should bring a gallon of water and milk or juice.

### *Food suggestions:*

dried fruit	yogurt
whole grain bread	cheese
finger vegetables	raisins, seeds
fruit (no whole grapes for 2s)	rice crackers
nutritious crackers, muffins	peanut butter and crackers

cream cheese on whole grain bagels 100% juice (4-6 ounces per child)

- Bring fresh, unopened packages and containers. Partially used packages are unacceptable for health reasons.
- Bring only pasteurized apple juice or cider.
- Do NOT bring gum, candy, doughnuts, pastries, ice cream, chips, hot dogs, sugary drinks, or yogurt-covered nuts or raisins.
- Do NOT bring popcorn, raisins, peanuts, carrot sticks, whole grapes, or seeds **for 2s**.

Teachers are encouraged to give feedback about snack items. They will let you know if a particular snack item is very popular with the class or not well received.

### *Food Allergies*

Spring Knolls is aware that students who attend the school may have particular dietary sensitivities or allergies. Spring Knolls is not a peanut-free school. The Spring Knolls Board of Directors decided that parents hold the primary responsibility of meeting their children's dietary needs, and have developed this policy so that parents know how the school will handle food allergies.

- Spring Knolls will collect information about food allergies on the school application.
- A list of students and their food allergies will be posted in the classroom. Coopers will be reminded to check the list daily.
- Families are encouraged to be aware of allergies in their child's classroom and to provide snacks that accommodate allergies. This is considered to be a matter of community, not a mandate.
- As a general policy set out in the Parent Handbook, snacks at Spring Knolls draw from multiple food groups. If an allergen is served as part of a snack, teachers and co-oppers will give the allergic student as much of the snack that is not an allergen, and also provide that part of a snack supplied by the student or, if available, an alternate snack from the room's snack supplies.
- Families of allergic students may choose to regularly provide them with an alternate snack. This does not excuse them from snack duty.

### *Quantity*

Bring enough food to provide snack for your child's class, the teacher, and the co-opping adults. You can usually determine this by counting the number of children on the class roster and adding 3 adults.

### *Missed Snack*

The penalty for not bringing snack on a day assigned to you is \$25.00.

### *Birthdays*

Teachers will recognize each child's birthday and make it special with activities

that emphasize the happiness of the day and the uniqueness of the birthday child. If you wish to provide a special birthday treat on your child's birthday, please try to follow the nutritional suggestions listed above.

**Financial Responsibilities**

All tuition payments are due on the fifth of the month from September through May, with no payment due in June (deposit will be applied). There are eight full monthly tuition payments and one-half payment in May. The one-month tuition deposit that you paid to enroll for this school year (paid with your enrollment/re-enrollment last February) is applied to this school year's last month's tuition. If you leave the school before May, the deposit is nonrefundable. All tuition payments should be made payable to Spring Knolls Cooperative Early Learning Center. Payments may be mailed to the school or dropped in the tuition lockbox located in the hallway leading to the SK Office. Also, due with the September tuition is a one-time \$80 activity/supply fee. The fee pays for various trips and visits such as those to local farms and puppet theaters and materials for class art and activities.

If tuition cannot be paid by the fifth of the month, satisfactory arrangements for payment must be made with the treasurer in advance. Families making payments after the 5th of the month will be assessed a \$5 late fee. Families making payments after the 15th of the month will be assessed a \$25 late fee for that month and \$25 for each additional month. (Separate late fees will be assessed for each tuition payment that is late). If no payment is received by the second month, the Board of directors may request withdrawal of the child from school. These strict procedures are necessary because without tuition payments, Spring Knolls cannot pay its staff's salaries or meet other expenses, such as rent and supplies. Late fees will also be assessed for the Afternoon Enrichment program.

If a check is returned to us unpaid for any reason (including insufficient funds), a bounced check fee of \$25 will be charged in addition to any other applicable fees.

2010-2011 Monthly Tuition Rates

	Full	Non	Limited
3D2s	\$ 242.00	\$ 355.00	\$ -
2D2s	\$ 178.00	\$ 292.00	\$ -
3s	\$ 369.00	\$ 586.00	\$ 476.00
Pre-K	\$ 369.00	\$ 586.00	\$ 476.00

**Scholarships**

Spring Knolls seeks a student body that represents varied economic

backgrounds. Once a student has been accepted for admission, the family may apply to our scholarship program for financial assistance. Aid is determined and renewed each year on the basis of demonstrated financial need without regard to gender, race, religion or national and ethnic origin.

### *Determining Need*

Spring Knolls believes that, to the extent that they are able, parents have an obligation to pay the educational expenses of their children. The purpose of the scholarship program is to fill the gap between the actual cost of a year's tuition and what a family can realistically be expected to pay. To determine a family's contribution, Spring Knolls uses the National Reduced and Free School Lunch Program guidelines and the Bureau of Labor Statistics database of average area household income, which consider your total income and number of dependents. Other factors used in determining need may include cost for all children in fee-charging schools and other extraordinary expenses. The computation tables used reflect need criteria based on a "modest standard of living" as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

When providing scholarships, Spring Knolls considers both the availability of funds and the relative needs of all those who have applied for assistance. Scholarship funds may not be used for any purpose other than tuition, and those who are awarded scholarship funds are not eligible for the Enrichment program.

### *How to Apply*

Parents of applicants for admission should request scholarship information on the admissions application form or re-enrollment form. In February, we will send you a financial aid application which you will need to complete and send to the school along with the requested financial information by March 15, attention of the Treasurer.

Because a family's financial situation can change from year to year, each family is asked to re-apply to the scholarship program annually. A copy of your IRS Form 1040 (all pages) is required each year to verify the information provided on your financial aid application.

### **Tuition Assistance**

Spring Knolls may provide tuition assistance to families who have a demonstrated financial need or other extenuating circumstances. Families may request tuition deferral or tuition forgiveness throughout the school year. Requests should be in the form of a letter to the Treasurer explaining the general circumstances, the amount needed, and how many months' assistance may be needed. The identity of applicants will be kept confidential. The SK Board and Director will make the decision about the proposed plan and will provide written notice back to the family within two weeks. There will be no repayment or extra work required in return for assistance, but the family will not be discouraged from doing so, if they wish.

## **Other Policies**

### **Enrichment**

Enrichment classes are offered in three sessions from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The classes offered will vary each session and may include Spanish, cooking, art, science, dance, music and sports. Enrichment instruction is offered for 45 minutes during the three-hour period. The remaining class time centers on supervised free play, storytelling and art with the SK enrichment supervisor. Outdoor playtime is also included, weather permitting.

These classes are only open to children who are at least three years old and self-sufficient in the bathroom. Lunch should be sent to school with children staying for enrichment. If, after an initial registration period for Spring Knolls families, there are still open enrichment spots available they can be filled by non-Spring Knolls families.

Enrichment tuition costs from \$175 to \$325 depending on the class. Generally, we try to accommodate as many children as possible. Schedules will be distributed before each session, and registration will close prior to the start of the enrichment session so that we can arrange for additional resources as necessary. Only full payment will serve to hold a space in a class. Spaces may be available in some enrichment classes for drop-ins on a week-to-week basis. The drop-in fee is \$30.00 per class, payable to Spring Knolls. Drop-ins must be approved by the Enrichment Coordinator.

Enrichment payments should be made separately from tuition payments and placed in the appropriate lockbox located on the hallway wall. Should you decide to withdraw from an Enrichment session, you should notify the Enrichment Coordinator as soon as possible. Refunds will be given based on the following criteria:

- SK will give a full refund if you withdraw your enrollment registration prior to the start of classes. A full refund less the cost of the first class will be given if your child is removed from the class by the first Monday after classes start. Any class dropped after the first Monday is your responsibility to fill and SK cannot refund any balance. Parents are welcome to swap a class with any willing family, move their child to any open space in another class or find another family to take their space.
- Should you find a parent willing to take your child's spot in an Enrichment class, it is up to you and that family to work out prorated compensation for the balance of classes. SK is not responsible for any financial transactions after the first Monday of the start of classes.

### **Mini Lunch-Bunch**

**In addition to enrichment we offer an additional childcare option from 12 to 1:30pm at the cost of \$15 per day. The time will be spent eating lunch the children bring from home and free play. The first session is available only for children 3 years and older. Mini Lunch-Bunch will be available for all Spring Knolls children starting in the second session of the school year.**

### **Late Pickup**

Fees will be collected from any parents who pick up their children late. Naturally, we will not impose these fees on those with true emergencies or those who make prior arrangements with the staff for a specific occasion. Late-arriving parents will be required to sign in and you will be assessed a penalty of \$5.00 for the first five minutes and \$1/minute after five minutes.

### **Transportation Safety**

The safety of our children while riding in cars is a primary concern to all of us; therefore, Spring Knolls strongly endorses the following safety standards for transportation both on class trips and on routes to and from school:

- Maryland law requires that all children younger than six years of age (regardless of weight), or who weigh 40 pounds or less (regardless of age), must be secured in a federally approved child safety seat.
- Appropriate adult-to-child ratios should be maintained on class trips: 1:5 for 3s and Pre-K; 1:2 for 2s.
- All car doors should be locked. Safety locks are recommended for all 4-door cars and station wagons.
- Carpool drivers should escort children to the appropriate classroom and notify teachers of any absentees.

### **Toys from Home**

Except for toys that your child may need to help them transition from home to school during the first few days of school, we ask that you leave toys at home or in the car. We realize that toys represent home and offer a sense of security for many children, but our experience has been that they eventually become a disruptive influence, particularly toys such as swords, capes, guns, etc. (An exception may be for two-year-olds bringing a toy at the teacher's discretion.) Let your child know that it is a rule at Spring Knolls that toys should not be brought to class. If toys are brought, they will be collected and returned at the end of the day.

If you have books, records or tapes that may be of interest to the other children in the class and/or will enhance the educational or cultural aspects of the

curriculum, sharing of these is welcome.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

Spring Knolls will follow Montgomery County for school closings due to inclement weather, unless the Director determines that all teachers will be able to reach school without difficulty. In that case, an email will be posted to the listserv and the school answering machine message will be changed by 7a.m. to indicate that Spring Knolls will be open. When Montgomery County schools open late, Spring Knolls will open on time.

### **Sibling & Guest Policy**

Families are not permitted to use Spring Knolls as day care for students' siblings or friends. Other children should not accompany you when you co-op -- your child and class need your attention. In case of emergency or extenuating circumstances (e.g., you are co-opping during school vacation of your older child), please speak to your teacher in advance, and an exception may be made. We have a family atmosphere and encourage Spring Knolls alumni to come back to say hi and even to stay a day, but it has to be cleared in advance.

### **Health Policy**

Health forms for children and adults must be submitted prior to the start of classes. Health forms must be on file before any adult (parent or a substitute) can co-op in the child's classroom. TB testing is no longer required for child care centers in Maryland. All health forms and all questions regarding them should be directed to the membership chair or the director.

#### *Medication*

All medicine ordered or prescribed must be clearly labeled as to the child, the medicine, the dosage and the name of the physician. Please alert your child's teacher to any medications that are to be administered during class time.

#### *Illness*

Co-opping parents are subject to the same health rules as the children. If a parent is ill, he/she should make substitute arrangements.

Parents should not send a child to school with fever, cough, sore throat, flushed face, discharging nose, diarrhea or other symptoms of illness. These symptoms may be the beginning of infection. Parents should consult their physician before returning the child to school.

Keep your child home from the beginning of symptoms until she has had no fever for 24 hours.

Chronic respiratory conditions and allergies should be noted on the health record

by the doctor. The parent of a child with these conditions assumes added responsibility for detecting signs of a cold or infection.

Teachers can consult with the director regarding whether a child with symptoms of illness may be sent home.

### **Communicable Disease**

Contagion of communicable disease occurs 48 hours before the appearance of the usual symptoms of rash or swelling, except in the case of measles, when contagion occurs 3-5 days before the rash and 24 hours before the fever. You will be notified if your child is exposed to a communicable disease at school.

Parents are required to notify the director promptly if their child contracts a communicable disease or has been exposed to one. It is recommended that children exposed within their own family who have neither been immunized nor had the disease stay home during the exclusion period, as given in the chart following on the next page.

## Communicable Diseases Chart

Disease	Exclusion (sick child)	Recommended Exclusion of Exposed Child
Chicken Pox	Until lesions dry -- at least 6 days from appearance of rash	11th to 8th day from exposure (Incubation is 10-21 days)
Measles - - Red	7 days after rash appears, no ear or nose discharge, no cough, or until rash fades. WITH CONSENT OF DOCTOR	8th to 15th day from exposure (Incubation is 7-18 days)
Measles - German	5 days after rash appears, same as Red Measles	12th to 21st day from exposure (Incubation is 14-23 days)
Mumps	Minimum of 5 days, or until swelling disappears	12th to 21st day from exposure (Incubation is 12-25 days)
Scarlet Fever	Until recovery, WITH CONSENT OF DOCTOR	(Incubation is 1-3 days)

After any contagious condition, health regulations require that a child have written consent of a doctor to return to school.

### Other Contagious Conditions

Diarrhea, vomiting, or fever: If the child or co-opping parent has diarrhea, vomiting, or fever, he or she should stay home until symptoms have been gone for 24 hours.

Impetigo: Exclusion of the child until all sores have completely healed.

Pink-eye or conjunctivitis: Exclusion until eyes are clear.

Scabies or head lice: Exclusion until the child has been seen by a physician and the prescribed course of treatment has been completed.

Pinworms: Child must be under medical treatment. Exclude only if medication makes child uncomfortable -- not necessary otherwise. While at nursery school, there must be rigid compliance with toilet routines:

- Wash hands after toileting and before eating.
- Keep toilet seats dry.
- Follow disinfectant procedures carefully.

*Parents have an obligation to inform the school of any contagious condition that occurs in the family.*

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Maryland law requires that anyone who SUSPECTS a child is being mistreated report the matter to Protective Services or to the Police. In cases of child neglect anyone may report the suspected neglect, but professionals are required to do so. And any person who in good faith makes a report of abuse or neglect is immune from any civil liability or criminal penalty.

### **Grievances/Complaints**

Our policy is that parents and teachers should communicate directly to resolve issues related to their classrooms and children.

If a parent has a problem with a teacher it is recommended that you first discuss it with that teacher. If you feel it is not possible to do this, or if it is not a successful meeting, you should then go to the director. The director will then give the parent suggestions for the next step, which might involve a three-way meeting or a meeting between the president or director and the teacher.

Conversely, if a teacher has a problem with a co-oping parent, the teacher will first discuss it with that parent. If this discussion is unsuccessful and the problem persists, the teacher will then go to the director. The director will then give the teacher suggestions for the next step, which might include a meeting involving the parent and the teacher with the director and/or the president.

Suggestions or questions about curriculum or planned classroom activities should always be addressed to the teacher first. Our teachers have years of experience and have specific reasons for structuring their classes the way they do. Conversely, parents are a great source for inspiration and constructive criticism. The best time for these discussions is after class or outside of school hours, when the teacher is not under the pressure of the classroom.

Discuss matters of school administration or policy with the director or president, and committee matters with the relevant committee chair, another Board member or the president.

### **E-mail List Policy and Guidelines**

On our e-mail list, as in all things, Spring Knolls seeks to preserve the spirit of collective responsibility and self-moderation. While the listserv is designed for information that pertains directly to the school, parents will often send e-mails on other matters they deem of interest to the community, and this practice is fine in moderation. The Board reserves the final right of decision as to what is and is not appropriate as judged on a case-by-case basis; in general, the following guidelines, along with common sense and community-mindedness, should be used in considering whether to send a particular email:

- For many of us, the Spring Knolls e-mail list is one of many we subscribe

to. Too many messages can be overwhelming. Also, we use our list for official communications, and we don't want official messages to get lost in the clutter. Please keep that in mind as you post and reply.

- Please remember our school's policy for addressing complaints before bringing matters to the e-mail list.
- Experience has shown that the listserv is not a good forum for community discussions. If you feel you must reply to an e-mail that's controversial or a subject of discussion, please do so to individuals instead of the entire listserv.
- Get a sense of the tone of our listserv. If you're sending significantly more "off topic" emails than anyone else, you may want to consider whether they are of interest to our community. It never hurts to consult with a veteran Spring Knolls parent.
- As we strive to maintain a diverse community, please consider that something that's no big deal to you might be offensive or inappropriate to someone of a different background. The common good suggests we defer to the sensibilities of others.
- We generally avoid commercial announcements on our list.
- We ask that you avoid soliciting funds through the SK listserv. Our members are sensitive to our own fundraising burden, and non-SK fundraising messages add to a perception that we overburden our community with fundraising. Most members won't object to a single, direct e-mail from you about your project, but please don't use the Spring Knolls listserv.
- When in doubt, wait a day.

### **Voluntary Resignation of Membership**

Any member shall be allowed to withdraw from the school at any time prior to the end of the term. This member must give **30 days' notice in writing** and will pay tuition through the month during which the thirtieth day of the notice falls. In addition, the deposit made at the beginning of the school year is forfeited upon withdrawal. Where good cause is shown, the board may exercise its discretion and return tuition payments or deposits.

## **Guide for Co-opping Parents**

### **General Attitudes**

The school is the children's workshop. They should be encouraged to use their own initiative and to work things out for themselves as much as possible. This requires patience and self-restraint on the part of the adults.

Assistance, suggested by the teacher, should be primarily for helping a child get started in an activity, for transitions to the next routine in the day's schedule, for helping a child who is in difficulty and for redirecting undesirable behavior. When a child turns to you, give the child an appreciative or encouraging comment.

Handling your own child at school may seem difficult at first. But gradually your participation will become a source of companionship and fun for both of you. Be interested in your child's activities and give reassurance in whatever way is natural for you. Be yourself, and no matter what your child does, do not be embarrassed. Let the child take her time adjusting without hovering over her anxiously or pushing her away. If your child wants to help or to follow you, let her do it. If she does not, accept this also as perfectly normal. When you leave the room or playground, tell your child why and when you will return -- unless she is happily occupied. Gradually, your child will come to understand that you have responsibilities to the other children, just as their parents or caregivers are responsible for her. Remember that the teacher is available for consultation. If you feel unsure or troubled about your child, arrange to talk it over with the teacher after school hours.

Please remember that each teacher has a different style. Try to learn that style and act accordingly. Parents who have previously worked with one teacher will probably need to adjust to the style of another. Adjustment to such a change may require you to consult with the teacher about her expectations.

Although your role as teacher's assistant may be quiet and unobtrusive, it is not a passive one. Alert watchfulness is necessary in recognizing when to give a helping hand or to forestall trouble. Your friendly interest in the children helps create a happy atmosphere. Some suggestions are given below to help parents feel relaxed at school.

### **Important Reminders**

- When a child is in danger of getting hurt, act quickly and calmly to remove the hazard.
- Report all accidents to the teacher.
- Never leave an assigned post unless the teacher or another parent or aide

takes over.

- So that the teacher can concentrate on teaching, co-oppers are expected to change diapers in classes where children are not toilet trained. All diapers should be changed in the changing station, not on the floor of the classroom.
- Please do not bring food or drink into the classroom with you; the children need your full attention and participation.
- Please wash your hands and those of the children after using the bathroom or changing a diaper.

### **Approach to the Children**

- In giving help, aim toward growth in independence and self-reliance. Enjoy the children. Use a quiet voice. Feel responsibility but go slow at first. Try not to interfere in play. The children need time to play together without adults.
- When a child is in difficulty, offer help before he reaches the point of frustration. Give only enough assistance to get him started on his own again. You may have to stay close by to give him moral support and the assurance that you will help him over the rough spots when he needs you.
- On any climbing equipment, show a child where to put her hands and feet rather than lifting her.
- Be positive -- rather than, "Don't splash water", try, "Let's use water in the basin."
- If a child is having trouble putting something together, show or tell him what he can do, rather than doing it for him.
- Show a child how to spread snow pants on the floor to make dressing easier. Get the zipper started but let her pull it up.
- Give reasons for routine requests: "Let's move this board, because it is not steady."
- Let the child make a choice when either decision is acceptable. "Would you rather go through this door or the other door?"
- When following routine procedure, offer no choice. Avoid saying, "Shall we pick up now?" Simply say: "It is time to pick up now."

- In the use of play materials, let children explore possibilities in their own way. Often they like to paint or manipulate clay with no plan for the end product. That process is an important part of the child's development -- more important than the product.
- Do not put pressure on a new child to conform to routine until he has had ample time to become adjusted to school.
- If a child shows strong resistance to a suggestion, drop the matter if unimportant; otherwise turn the problem over to the teacher. The teacher is better able to understand the child's reaction and moods because they see each other daily.
- State a school rule as your authority rather than asking a child to do something for you. Example: "At Spring Knolls we wash our hands before juice," not, "Won't you come with me to wash your hands?"

### **Relations Between Children**

Learning to live cooperatively with others is a slow and sometimes painful process. It cannot be hurried or forced. We start by protecting the child's right to pursue her own interests, seeing to it that her activities do not interfere with the rights of others. When she is ready, she will make experimental approaches toward other children. Then gradually, as the need arises, she can be shown acceptable ways of getting along socially. Friendly attitudes on the part of the adults will bring out friendly feelings in the children.

The Spring Knolls philosophy is that children have to be taught and allowed to work out their own conflicts. It is not the adult's job to step in and solve all problems. We do not usually separate children; we encourage them to "use their words" to tell each other how they feel and work things out.

When conflicts arise, it is often wise not to get involved unless there is a question of physical safety. Call the situation to the attention of the teacher to determine whether one of the children needs protection or whether to leave them alone to settle their differences. If the teacher is not immediately available and the children are not physically fighting and appear "evenly matched" in the struggle, you may decide to stand by to offer guidance to help them work it out themselves if they need your help. If they are fighting over a possession, often if you say to them, "Can you come up with an idea to settle this?" they will come up with a reasonable plan to share. Sometimes it helps to say that you will set a timer for each of their turns. If one object is the source of continual conflict, it can be removed for a while. Be honest with the children. Do not hide it. Say it is being removed because it is the source of too much conflict.

Encourage cooperation and working together instead of competition. Avoid remarks like, "Who can get through first?" or "Who can jump the highest?" In response to a child's, "Mine is better!" or "Mine is prettier," reply, "Yours is different" or "John preferred a different color." Do not expect adult standards of politeness. Recognize and appreciate good manners, but do not expect them.

### **Conclusion**

Whenever possible, leave difficult situations for the teacher to handle. Observe his or her methods. The way the teacher approaches different children will give you clues to their personalities. The better you come to understand each child, the more confident you will be in relation to them.

Be alert to the teacher's needs. If a child is engaging in distracting behavior during music or story time, find some way to engage her attention. Sit near a child who may be disturbing story time; a smile or a pat on the shoulder may satisfy his attention craving. Be quick to get materials the teacher may need so that his or her time and energies are devoted to the children. Housekeeping chores are second in importance to giving help, as the teacher needs it.

# 2009-2010 SPRING KNOLLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### **About the Spring Knolls Board of Directors**

Spring Knolls is governed by a Board of Directors drawn from the parent body. The Board consists of the officers (president, vice president, secretary and treasurer) and committee chairpersons. The Board is charged by the bylaws of Spring Knolls with running all aspects of the school. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month. All Spring Knolls members are welcome to attend.

#### **Board Member Responsibilities**

- Be familiar with and support the organization's mission, bylaws, strategic plan and annual goals
- Attend monthly Board meetings (or identify an alternate to attend on your behalf) and be prepared to participate
- Prepare for Board meetings, when necessary. This includes submission of monthly committee reports.
- Make sound, informed decisions, acting in good faith and in the best interest of the organization
- Submit committee articles for newsletter (when applicable)
- Fulfill specific position responsibilities of Board officer and/or committee chairperson

#### **Board Officer Responsibilities**

The officers shall have the following duties, which may be amended by a majority vote of the Board of Directors

##### **President**

The president(s) has authority to supervise all of the affairs of the school, and presides at all meetings of the members of the Board of Directors.

The responsibilities of the president(s) include the following:

- Acts with the director and Executive Committee to ensure smooth running of the school
- Chairs parent meetings and presides at all meetings of the members, the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and the Personnel Committee
- Introduces changes or amendments to policies and procedures, to be voted on by the board or the parent body

### **Vice President**

**The Vice President assumes tasks as coordinated with the president. In the past Spring Knolls has had vice Presidents, Co-presidents, or none of the above, depending on the interest, need and availability among the parent body.**

### **Board Secretary**

The Board secretary has the following responsibilities:

- Takes notes at all board and parent meetings
- Keeps correct typewritten (keyed) minutes
- Sees that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of the bylaws
- Keeps the register of the post office addresses of each member which shall be furnished to the secretary by each member
- Performs other duties as assigned by the president and Board of Directors

### **School Treasurer**

The school treasurer has the following responsibilities:

- Manages the funds and securities of the school
- Maintains accurate records of the school's finances
- Reviews and constructs guidelines for yearly expenditures
- At any time, provides the board with a report on the condition of the school's finances
- Submits a full financial report at the spring parent meeting

### **Committee Chair Responsibilities**

- Represent committee at various school meetings (e.g., board and parent meetings)
- Lead monthly meetings with committee members (or as needed to accomplish committee work)
- Work with committee to set goals that support the school's strategic plan and current priorities
- Oversee committee members and delegate tasks
- Facilitate committee activities to meet established deadlines and report setbacks or red flags as they arise
- Identify possible setbacks or barriers to committee operations
- Maintain committee chair toolkit
- Understand and manage committee budget and participate in school's annual budget planning process.

### **Committee Descriptions**

Each committee has a limited number of openings and each family is required to

volunteer on one of the following committees:

### **Communications Committee**

The Communications Committee writes, coordinates, lays out, distributes and solicits information for the Spring Knolls newsletter (which includes updates from the director, board and committees, a list of upcoming events and school calendar updates). The committee also maintains the school wide and class list serve, and generates the School Directory. The committee also coordinates with other relevant committees to maintain and update the school web site.

### **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee consists of the president(s), secretary, treasurer, and one other board member. The director may also attend Executive Committee meetings without a vote. All actions of the Executive Committee are subject to ratification or rescission by majority vote of the Board of Directors at any meeting at which a quorum is present.

### **Facilities & Operations Committee**

The Facilities Committee assists in keeping the school, playground, and grounds safe and in good condition and working order. The committee coordinates toy repair at the request of individual teachers, assembly of classroom equipment at request of individual teachers, and the purchase of large-ticket items associated with the school facilities. The committee also manages the monthly classroom co-op assignments, snack schedules and the small and big clean-ups.

### **Fundraising Committee**

The Fundraising Committee organizes various fundraising activities for Spring Knolls and solicits participation (including donations) from parents. The Fundraising Committee is given an annual fundraising goal, which has been established by the Board of Directors.

#### **Auction sub-committee**

This group is a sub-committee within the Fundraising committee and organizes Spring Knolls' annual silent auction. Major coordination activities include soliciting and obtaining donations, securing an appropriate venue, and organizing food and entertainment.

### **Marketing Committee**

The Marketing Committee helps to increase the visibility of Spring Knolls on a year-round basis. It maintains all marketing logos and materials for

the school and also supports the ventures of the other committees as necessary, including providing marketing strategies and materials for the annual auction and the various fundraising events.

### **Membership Committee**

The Membership Committee provides application materials for interested families and coordinates the annual open house and individual visits. In coordination with the director, the committee manages the acceptance of new families to the school. The committee is responsible for maintaining complete application files—important for the school’s licensing and the students’ safety and wellness.

### **Parent Outreach Committee**

The Parent Outreach Committee consists of room parents who assist teachers and the school with field trips, class parties and other special events (e.g., meetings and picnics). They also assist teachers with curriculum development, gathering materials and communicating with parents.

### **Personnel Committee**

**The personnel committee consists of: the school’s director, the board’s president, the personnel chair, and two other members of the spring knolls parent community. The committee is responsible for (a) overseeing the screening, interviewing, and recommendation of candidates to the Board of Directors when staff positions need to be filled; (b) assisting the school director in preparing for the annual performance reviews of each staff member; (c) making recommendations to the board regarding ongoing personnel management issues, including termination of staff; and (d) working closely with the school director to update and develop streamlined personnel policies, such as standardizing the terms of employment for aides.**

### **Strategic Planning Committee**

The Strategic Planning Committee’s mission is to look at the school’s overall mission and goals and align our activities, procedures, and business plan with the long-term vision for the school and its programs.

## **Appendix**

### **Admissions Priorities Policy**

Maintaining a diverse student population, reasonable age and gender balance, and adequate proportion of co-opping parents at each class level are primary goals of Spring Knolls, as is a commitment to the children of Spring Knolls

parents, alumni and staff. Spring Knolls, therefore, gives priority to applicants whose admission would further one or more of these goals. Because there may be more applicants than available spaces in particular classes, it may not be possible to admit all priority applicants in a given year.

When considering applications for available spaces, siblings of current students will receive priority consideration, followed by siblings of alumni and then external candidates.

### **Age Requirement**

In order to be consistent with the Maryland State Board of Education's birth date entrance requirement for kindergarten, children applying to the Two's program must be two before September 1st in order to enroll.

Placement of students in the three-day class versus the two-day class is based on the following birth date guidelines:

- Three-day Two's Class: September to February
- Two-day Two's Class: March-August

Due to Maryland's child care licensing regulations (COMAR), the 2s classes can start with no more than 6 children under the age of 2 ½ years.

### **Re-enrollment**

In an effort to maintain peer continuity from year to year, admitted students will remain with the class they start with from one year to the next.