

**Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center**  
**Information Packet**  
**School Address** 21 Carter Street, Lowell, MA  
**Telephone Number** (978)-446-7000

## **WELCOME!**

The staff and administrators of the Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center welcome you and your family to our school community. We look forward to an exciting school year and getting to know you and your child.

Our staff is committed to getting to know all of our students and families and creating a strong school community. Whether attending in-person or remotely, please reach out to our staff if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions. We want to foster two-way communication with all families. Preschool children are curious and eager learners. We welcome families as partners in learning and encourage family engagement throughout the school year. Please take a few moments to review this important information packet and keep it in a safe place for future reference.

**Early Childhood Coordinator:** Lisa Van Thiel 978-674-2051

**Early Childhood Specialist:** Susan LaCroix 978-674-2050

**Social Worker:** Jennifer Williams (978) 446-7000 x46922

**Secretary:** Caitlin Buxton – 978-446-7000

**Nurse:** Hope Desruisseaux (Temporary) 978-674-1069 or 978-446-7000

**Custodian:** Robert Griffin

## **HELPFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

<b>Family Resource Center/151 Merrimack St.</b>	978-674-4321
<b>North Reading Transportation</b>	978-323-0101
<b>Pride Star Sped Transportation</b>	978-856-7401
<b>School Department Transportation</b>	978-674-4321
<b>Food Service</b>	978-674-2077
<b>Special Education Department</b>	978-674-4322

## **Preschool Instructional Staff:**

### **Teachers**

- Lisa Tenzcar – Room 1
- Nicole Thissell – Room 2
- Lisa Hogan – Room 3
- Kathy Martineau – Room 4
- Kristen Morrissey – Room 5
- Kara Aspetti – Room 6
- TBA – Room 7
- Jill Labonte – Room 8

### **Paraprofessionals**

- Samantha Dumais
- Sandra Febo
- Michelle Godfroy
- Wassan Salem
- Donna Kelliher
- Hailey [REDACTED]
- Raghad Al Saadi
- Salyna Wang
- Jessica Butterfield
- Micaelagh Campbell
- Kelly Ash
- Stacey King
- Aida Silva
- Courtney Hastings
- Anindita Datta
- Lynn Stead
- Ashma Hashmi

### **Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Staff**

- Madeline Britto
- Mechna Sarath
- Sokunthea Suy
- Paula Tye-Flagler

## Specialists and Special Education Staff:

Special Education Teacher - Michelle Harvey [maharvey@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:maharvey@lowell.k12.ma.us)

Evaluation Team Chair - Mary Murphy-Porkola [mmurphy-porkola@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:mmurphy-porkola@lowell.k12.ma.us)

Occupational Therapist - Doreen Weber – [dweber@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:dweber@lowell.k12.ma.us) and Monica Eynation, [meynation@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:meynation@lowell.k12.ma.us)

Speech & Language – Lauren Smith, [lsmith@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:lsmith@lowell.k12.ma.us) and Krystal Gratta, [kgratta@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:kgratta@lowell.k12.ma.us)

Social worker – Jennifer Williams [jennifer.williams@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:jennifer.williams@lowell.k12.ma.us)

Psychologist – Martina Schueler [mschueler@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:mschueler@lowell.k12.ma.us)

Board Certified Behavior Analyst BCBA – Megan Staples [mstaples@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:mstaples@lowell.k12.ma.us)

Nurse – Hope Desruisseaux (Temporary)

## School Hours

**Half-day AM Preschool Sessions – 9:10 AM - 11:40 AM**

**Half-day PM Preschool Sessions – 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM**

**Full-day Preschool Sessions – 9:10 AM – 3:30 PM**

## BEYOND THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL

Please help your child “**be the best that they can be.**”

- Get plenty of rest. Most children need **8 full hours of sleep.**
- Come to school **on time, and** attend **every day.**
- Have an **extra set of clothes** in their cubby or backpack.
- Have a **backpack** to carry things to and from school.
- Read **newsletters.**
- Review **On-line Calendars** for both Lowell Public Schools and the Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center. “**Stay in the know.**”
- **Contact us** if you have any information to share, questions, suggestions, or comments.
- **Get involved any way you can.** We are partners in your child’s education.

## CLOTHING

Please make sure that your child comes to school in comfortable clothes. We go outdoors every day (weather permitting) and children should be dressed for the weather. In the winter, please make sure your child has boots, mittens, etc. The temperature in our classrooms is sometimes unpredictable. Dressing your child in layers (t-shirt, sweater) is recommended.

We encourage children to be curious and engaged learners. As children explore sand, water, various art mediums, or nature, their clothes may become wet or soiled, so please send children in play clothes and sneakers, or boots.

**Please label** your child's clothing with their name, especially outerwear. We have a **Lost and Found** in the office, but you can avoid your child's clothes being added to the pile by placing your child's first and last name on their tags!

## **TRANSPORTATION**

North Reading Transportation	978-323-0101
Sped Transportation Pride Star	978-856-7401
School Department Transportation	978-674-4321

*If changes in bus route or address occur, you must make them at Family Resource Center at 151 Merrimack Street and notify the main office at the Cardinal O'Connell Early Learning Center.*

### School bus safety facts

- Closely supervise children under age 10 who must cross the street after exiting the bus
- Pooh's Great Bus Adventure: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF\\_3MrYXDw4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF_3MrYXDw4)

## **SCHOOL CALENDAR**

The school calendar for school year 2020 – 2021 will be sent home on the first day of school and is available on Cardinal O'Connell Early Learning Center's webpage. [Link to School Calendar 2020 -2021](#) please visit our home page for additional information at <https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/Domain/30>

## **ATTENDANCE**

The School Committee, Central Administration, and staff at the Cardinal O'Connell School consider regular attendance essential for success in school. Thus, we adhere to the [attendance policy](#) set forth by the Lowell School Committee. Students are expected to be in school each and every day.

Preschool Attendance: It is the parent(s)/ guardian(s) responsibility to ensure regular attendance. Regular attendance matters. Given that there is limited space available in Lowell Public Schools for preschool age children, the district has established an attendance policy. Children with unexcused absences of more than 10% of the total number of days of school will be provided written notice and may be unenrolled.

We also acknowledge that an absence will be considered an **excused** absence only if it is due to one of the following reasons: a death in the family, a religious holiday, illness, disability, or hospitalization.

**Please make every effort to schedule appointments before or after school or during vacations!**

**When your child is absent, you should:**

1. Call the school to notify the school of your child's absence.
2. Write a note stating the reason for the absence and send it into school when your child returns.
3. Provide a doctor's note where applicable.

**Tardiness** to school is disruptive to the learning process for both your child and his/her peers. Please avoid being late as our staff work hard to create a sense of community. During arrival children and staff often engage in conversations. Arrival and departure routines provide time for children to share information with one another about their lives and introduce family members, peers and adults to one another. ***A student who is late, must be accompanied by an authorized adult into the office and then signed in.***

**Dismissals** during school hours are strongly discouraged and must be kept to a minimum. A change in your child's dismissal plan **must be** made by sending in a note or by placing a phone call **before 2:30PM**. Changes will not be made to dismissal plans after 2:30PM. This is to ensure the safety of all of our students.

**All students must be picked up no later than 3:30PM.**

**\*\*Please note that chronic absences** are detrimental to the learning process and action will be taken by the administration to ensure that all students attend school regularly. Four (4) or more excused or unexcused absences will be followed up by either the Early Childhood Coordinator or the Social Worker.

**Covid-19 - Anyone who comes into close contact with a person known to have tested positive for Covid-19 should remain out of school for 14 days after exposure, and gain clearance from the local board of health before returning to school. To determine if your child should go to school after encountering someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, use the Covid-19 flow chart.**

## NO SCHOOL/DELAY OF SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT

On stormy days, the NO SCHOOL or DELAY OF SCHOOL announcements will be made through a ConnectEd (a call to home) and posted on the Lowell Public Schools website.

Announcements will also be publicized on the local radio station WCAP – 980 AM and televised on Channels 4, 5, 7 and 25.

When there is a *delayed opening, AM/PM Sessions of Preschool are cancelled*.

Do not call police or fire headquarters. It is the responsibility of parents to determine whether conditions during inclement weather are such that their child should not attend. Absences due to weather are not considered excused absences.

## PERFECT ATTENDANCE

We will be working diligently at the Cardinal O’Connell School with families to maintain a very high daily attendance rate. We will establish the **100% Perfect Attendance Club**. The classroom with the highest percentage of perfect attendance days for each month will receive a class gift. Help your child’s class win this award; all you and your child need to do is be in school regularly and on time! Visit the Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning website on a monthly basis to see which classroom has the best attendance.

## CHILD HEALTH AND SAFETY: NUT SENSITIVE/ALLERGY AWARE

We are a **Nut Sensitive School**. Our goal is to keep all of our students safe, so we ask that you **do not** send nut-based food items to school. There are many nut-based substitutes that help to ensure the safety of all of our students. It is **important** for parents to keep the school up to date on any allergies their child may have, so that we can plan accordingly and take the necessary precautions. Please reach out to the School Nurse regarding any nut sensitivity or allergy by calling Hope Desruisseaux 978-674-1069 or 978-446-7000 or emailing [hdesruisseaux@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:hdesruisseaux@lowell.k12.ma.us)

## NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Parents are requested to send snacks and lunches that reflect healthy eating habits. Lunch should include a sandwich, fruit, and milk or water. Please be sure to send in meals that your child enjoys and items that they can easily open and manage. For the safety of children, please do not send any sort of glass bottle for lunch or snack.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Parents and guardians must be responsible for keeping information in our system correct including:

- Change of Address
- Work and home numbers for parents
- Name and contact information for emergency contacts

Please ensure that we have up-to-date information in case of an emergency. Please notify the school as soon as possible if there are any changes in parent/s, guardian/s, student address, or telephone number. It is imperative that the school is able to reach you during school hours. Please call the school secretary, Caitlin Buxton @ 978-446-7000 she will be happy to make any necessary changes. You may also find our emergency form online and download with updates at any time.

If changes are required in bus routes or stops, you must make them at Family Resource Center at 151 Merrimack St.

## EMERGENCY FORMS

Parents must complete an emergency form for each child. The form must include **at least** two emergency contacts. In addition, please note on the emergency form any special instructions regarding your child, i.e. custody circumstances, pick-up specifications etc.

**Note-** We will send this home mid-year for you to update, so that we always have current information. If changes need to be made before or after mid-year please contact our clerk to make any necessary changes.

**Email-** Over the past few years, we have found that many parents have found email communication to be the best way to stay informed. If this is the case for you, please make sure to **add your email address** to the [emergency form](#). Any time-sensitive information will also be relayed with a phone call.

**UPLOAD EMERGENCY FORM**

## **MEDICAL FORMS**

Parents are asked to fill out a medical form for each child as well. Please be sure to list any medical concerns such as allergies, asthma, medications, restrictions etc.

### **UPLOAD MEDICAL FORM**

[Preparing to attend or return to school](#)

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

[Immunization information](#)

### **Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements 2020-2021 UPLOAD**

## **SICK CARE POLICY**

In the event that a child becomes sick during school hours, they will be removed from the classroom and sent to the school nurse or an administrator. Parents will then be called to pick up their child. The Cardinal O'Connell Early Learning Center does not have the facilities to care for sick children, so it is important that children are picked up as soon as possible.

If your child is home with any contagious illness, please let the school nurse or school administrator know so we may make appropriate precautions for other students. While we expect your child to attend school regularly, please do not send a child who shows signs of being ill to school. Colds, fevers, etc. spread very quickly in classrooms.

Your child must remain home if he/she has any of the following (printed with permission by the School Health Unit/Lowell Health Department):

- A contagious illness like chicken pox, flu, or strep throat, until the doctor says it's safe to return
- A rash or skin condition not diagnosed by a doctor
- A fever that causes chills, sweating or muscle aches, or a temperature over 101 degrees within the past 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Red or pink eyes, or drainage from eyes

## **MEDICATION**

In accordance with state law, no medication will be administered to a child unless the school has a completed medication permission form (available from the school nurse). When the school is given permission to administer medication, the medicine must be sent in the original prescription bottle with the child's name, physician name, medication, dosage, and time to be



given. A parent needs to bring in all medications- **under no circumstances** is your child to bring the medication to school.

The school nurse or a trained designee will dispense medications. All medications will be logged in a medication log kept in the nurse's office.

[Elementary and Middle School Handbook](#)

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

We welcome parents to call school and encourage you to keep the lines of communication open at all times. You know your child best and when we work together, great things can happen. Please complete and return a completed [Family Survey](#) to help us get to know more about your child and your families interests.

All visitors (including parents) must report to the Main Office upon entering the building.

If you would like to speak to your child's teacher, please call the office to set up a time or to leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible. If you have questions or concerns about your child, your first step should be to speak with the classroom teacher. If you have further questions, please feel free to speak with school administrators: Lisa Van Thiel, Early Childhood Coordinator or Susan LaCroix, Early Childhood Specialist.

The Early Childhood Curriculum encourages families to be engaged and helps make connections between children's own lives and what is being learned at school. Please review our Preschool Curriculum [School to Home Connections](#) to engage your child in extending learning at home. We encourage families to extend learning at home by talking, reading, or revisiting learning experiences at home during daily routines.

If changes occur in your child's classroom, we will make every effort to let parents know in advance. If changes are going on at home: new baby, moving, etc. please let us know so we can help your child adjust to new situations.

Please hold the following dates for Parent/Teachers Conference 10/27/20 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM and 4/6/2021 from 3:00 – 5:00 PM.

School Site Council meetings to be held via ZOOM at 6:00 PM on 10/6, 11/10, 12/15/2020 and 2/9, 3/9, 4/6, and 5/11/2021. Please email [lvanthiel@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:lvanthiel@lowell.k12.ma.us) for more details. All parents and families are welcome to participate and share ideas.

## FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS

Each month watch for a **monthly calendar and newsletter**. These documents are created in an effort to keep everyone informed! Please take a few minutes to read them and put them in a safe place to refer back to. If you would like to receive the newsletter electronically, please give your email address to your child's teacher. Newsletters can also be found on-line.

The Cardinal O'Connell School offers many activities for parents and children. School calendars with upcoming family events are sent home monthly. Some of the activities we have offered in the past are:

- Open House
- **Bingo for Books**
- We All Have Ideas! Art Show
- Pot Luck Dinners

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or concerns, please call us at 978-446-7000

## FAMILY VOLUNTEERS

Parents are always welcomed to volunteer with our school. Many volunteer opportunities are available in our school both on a regular and a one-time basis. However, all in-school volunteers must have a criminal record check (CORI) before volunteering in our school and **this year will be limited to assisting off campus due to Covid-19**. However, there are many ways for families to volunteer and we look forward to hearing from you.

Families that cannot volunteer during the school day may still contribute to our school community in meaningful ways:

- Donate ("Beautiful junk" or recyclables- egg cartons, yogurt containers, and toilet and paper towel rolls, etc.).
- Help with mailings or phone calls from home.
- Volunteer to support by contributing expertise and talents.

As a school community, we will continue to strive to find a way to involve every family in our school community over the course of the school year. Our school community is full of individuals with a wide range of talents, expertise, and diversity. Collectively, we can create a strong school community for children, families, and staff to build strong relationships that foster a sense of community, and create a safe, nurturing, and rich learning environment for our children. If you are interested in volunteering, you may complete the CORI using the link below and return the form to [ccassella@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:ccassella@lowell.k12.ma.us)

### [LINK TO CORI FORM](#)

## **PARENT CONFERENCES, REPORT CARDS, AND PROGRESS REPORTS**

Parent Conference dates occur twice a year. Please hold the following dates for  
Parent/Teachers Conference 10/27/20 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM and 4/6/2021 from 3:00 – 5:00 PM.

Click here for [dates for progress reports and report cards](#)

## **TAT MEETINGS (Teacher Assistance Team)**

When a teacher or administrator has concerns about a student's behavior and/or progress, families will be asked to attend a TAT meeting to discuss concerns and brainstorm strategies to support success. We welcome and encourage families to make every effort to attend, your input and knowledge of your child is extremely important to the process.

## **MISCELLANEOUS:**

### **TOYS AND VALUABLES**

Toys or valuables from home should be left at home. The Cardinal O'Connell staff priority is to create a safe and nurturing learning environment for children. When children bring toys or valuables to school they can distract from learning, get broken, stolen, or lost. Unless children are asked to bring something to school, please leave all toys and other personal items at home. Given Covid-19 following the above policies is very important.

**Blankets and Pillows:** If your child is enrolled in the full-day program please provide your child with a crib sheet, blanket, and small pillow. All bedding must be brought to school in a plastic container or bag that seals for storage and will be sent home weekly to be laundered.

## **BIRTHDAY PARTIES**

Children's birthdays will be acknowledged as part of community meetings held daily. If you, wish to send in something special for your child's birthday, we ask that you consider healthy alternatives such as fruit or vegetable trays, raisins and chocolate chips, or cheese and crackers. Please send items in original package to ensure it is safe for students with allergies. Please NEVER send anything with nuts to school with your child for snack or to share with others. The Cardinal O'Connell School is a Nut Free Zone/Allergy Aware.

## **HOLIDAYS**

We recognize that some holidays are recognized by sharing of special treats e.g. Halloween and Valentines. Please, if you wish for your child to share with classmates, consider healthy choices and follow our Nut Free Zone/Allergy Aware Policy.

## **Covid-19 Health Protocols**

If a student or staff member is exposed to Covid-19, what is the protocol?

- Parent or staff should notify the principal or nurse immediately
- Individuals with close contact of person who tests positive for Covid-19 must remain out of school for 14 days after last day of exposure and/or clearance from local board of health

## **Social Distancing and Mask Wearing**

Lowell's Health Protocol recommends all staff and students sit at least 6 feet apart and all staff and students wear masks. Exception to documented medical or behavioral concerns. While staff working with preschoolers to grade 1 will aim for the 6 feet of social distancing, there may be times when the minimum of 3 feet is an acceptable minimum when masks are worn by staff and students.

## **Frequent handwashing and scheduled handwashing routines**

We have established regular handwashing schedules for all classrooms and provide sanitizer in all classrooms for before and after use of shared materials.

Children will be washing hands:

- Upon entry to building
- Prior to entering classroom
- After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing
- Before and after using shared equipment or materials
- Prior to and after eating
- After removing PPE equipment
- After using bathroom
- Prior to dismissal
- Before and after recess
- After contact with bodily fluids