



Elderberry Handbook

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"I love going to Heartberries because my friends are my family."

- Niko, Heartberry

Together We Create!

About Heartberry Playschool

We create a community where children and families **thrive**.

Heartberry Playschool (Heartberry PS) is an outdoor farm-and play-based school for toddlers (ages 2.5 to 5 years old).

We are a **cooperative** of families who through a **spirit of mutual helpfulness** create 'pods' of early learning and care.

A pod creates a small, close-knit group of families (up to 5-6 children). The pods are made up of caring adults (parents, caregivers, teachers, and Elderberries) who work together to support child care and learning needs of the group through a shared commitment to

Heartberry PS Core Values:

-  **Curiosity**
-  **Friendship**
-  **Kindness**
-  **Openness**

In pods, children build their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive capabilities through play. Through play children spark their curiosity and expand their sense of wonder and imagination; learn with and from each other, adults, elders, plants, and nature; and grow in their own agency.

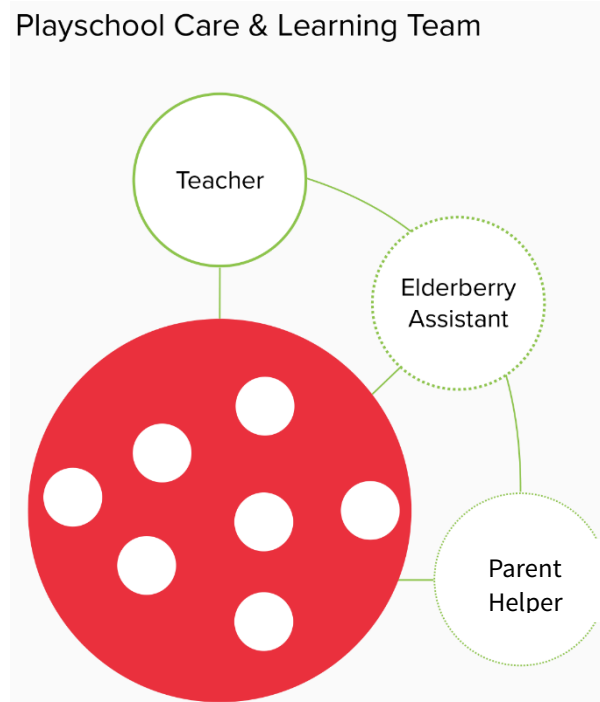
Part of what makes Heartberry PS unique is the intergenerational partnership is **YOU - the Elderberry!**

The Elderberry connection is key in making the cooperative remain affordable and flexible for families. The partnership is centered around a simple idea of **reciprocity: elders and youth bring new energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm to each other**. As an Elderberry, you help seed magical memories by connecting three generations.

We believe (and know) that it takes a village to raise a child (and be a parent). We have much to learn from each other. Thank you for being a part of Heartberry PS community of care.

Together We Give!

Roles & Responsibilities



Heartberry Playschool is unique. Pods are run by the families themselves.

It is not an “*open-your-car-door-drop-your-kid-off*” school. Parents/caregivers serve as active participants in their child’s care and learning from overseeing pod operations and communications to working in the classroom on a rotating basis. This sharing and work-trade-like commitment keeps Playschool costs more affordable while fostering a sense of community of play-based learners (old and young).

While this works great for some families, Heartberry PS recognizes the classroom participation requirement is a barrier for others. We strive to keep the cooperative open and accessible to as many families as possible by providing Elderberry volunteers who serve as classroom assistants.

The Elderberry Patch program offers parents and their toddler-aged children a committed volunteer. As an Elderberry, you get matched with one of the Heartberry pods. Your commitment allows parents to feel supported and gain a sense of normalcy and children to grow in the care of community through healthy peer and adult relationships.

Ways you can be involved:

1. Elderberry Classroom Assistant: Assist the Playschool teacher throughout the day.
This role requires a 3-month commitment of one or two days per week.
2. Parent Patchwork: Assist parents by filling in for their time as the Parent Classroom Helper. This role is a **one-to-two-day commitment each month**, ideally for a year.
This role also requires being available on short notice.
3. Pod Patchwork: Sponsor a pod; provide snacks for snack time; shopping assistance for classroom supplies; other support to families when able. Role and commitment varies based on pod needs.

Responsibilities

Elderberry Classroom Assistant

Commitment: 1 or 2 days a week for 3 months; Tuesdays and/or Friday, 8:45 am-1:15 pm

The teacher and Elderberry Classroom Assist work together to provide the best possible environment for all children to play, grow and learn together. The Responsibilities of a Classroom Assistant:

- Be **proactive** assistant to the Teacher (e.g. Teacher is leading the group or assisting another child and not able to deal with a conflict that arises over a toy, the Elderberry shall step in and help the child)
- **Lead** activity/meal set-up and clean-up (as identified by the teacher)
- **Provide** 1:1 support/attention to children, allowing the teacher to manage the safety and care of the group.
- **Facilitate** potty breaks and help children (this may include diaper changes, helping with clean-up, etc.)
- **Arrive 15 minutes** before class start to help teacher set up and get details about the day.
- Plan to **stay** another **15 minutes** at the end to sweep, wash brushes, tidy up room and have a brief reflection with the Teacher about the day.

Parent Patchwork – Elderberry as Parent Classroom Helper

Commitment: 1 or 2 days a month; Tuesdays and/or Friday, 8:45 am-1:15 pm

The Classroom Helper (parent or elderberry) work together to provide the best possible environment for all children to play, grow and learn together. A distinction of this role, is that the Classroom Helper provides more small group support and is a ‘runner’ for the class. This role requires the ability to move fast/ be physically able to be with the ‘free range’ children while outside. This role can be physically demanding at times, as our toddlers are active and our play area is expansive.

- Be **proactive** assistant to the Teacher (e.g. Teacher is leading the group and not able to deal with a child running out of the Greenhouse, the Helper shall step in and help the child)
- **Be second in command** during outdoor activities – be ready to skip, walk, dig, and be messy.
- **Actively participate** in classroom activities.
- **Provide** 1:1 support/attention to children, allowing the teacher to manage the safety and care of the group.
- **Facilitate** potty breaks and help children (this may include diaper changes, helping with clean-up, etc.)
- **Arrive 15 minutes** before class start to help teacher set up and get details about the day.
- Plan to **stay** another **15 minutes** at the end to sweep, wash brushes, tidy up room and have a brief reflection with the Teacher about the day.

Successful Participation of both Elderberry Classroom Assist and Parent Patchwork

- Arrive 15 minutes before class to help the teacher set up and discuss the day's activities
- Allow the teacher to remain with the children. If preparation needs to be done (e.g. snacks or setting up an activity), do it for the teacher so they can remain with the children.
- Clean up the classroom. This includes putting away toys, wiping off tables, cleaning supplies.
- Remain with the children until the end of class until parents have picked them up
- Stay at least 15 minutes after class to help clean up and debrief with the teacher, reflecting on how the day went so they know if they would like participation to be done differently the next time you are in the classroom
- Find replacement if you cannot participate on your assigned day, inform the [teacher] of the change
- Sit whenever you can. Get down to the child's level and interact with the children
- Be alert to the entire classroom and move to the area where you are most needed

Effective Parent Patchwork/Elderberry Assist – Teacher Relationships

- Effective communication and conflict resolution is key to this partnership.
- Teacher provides leadership and direction in the classroom and is responsible for sharing the plans for the day's program, discussing group and individual goals, and assigning tasks.
- Accept the teacher's guidance and direction. Any concerns or questions that arise must be discussed and acted on in a timely manner, and at an appropriate time (e.g. ask questions to clarify when something is not clear; discuss concerns, offer ideas and suggestions after school)
- Two-way communication with the Teacher and individual parents is important to prevent major conflicts from developing.
- Positive, open, and respectful communication is vital, as outlined in the Heartberry Conflict Resolutions Guidelines.
- The teacher is a valuable resource.
- The parent is valuable resource.
- The Elderberry is a valuable resource.

Personal conflicts that arise can be addressed and resolved with the help of the Heartberry Conflict Resolution Guidelines and/or speaking with your pod leader.