

STARTING POINT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN
The Atlantic and Pacific School, Inc.

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We start by caring...

Handbook for Families Of
Children Enrolled in a Special Class in an
Integrated Setting (SC/IS)

*Welcome to Starting Point Services for Children
The Atlantic and Pacific School, Inc.*

This handbook has been written to provide you with information about us and about the things we believe are important to students and their families. Please read it and keep it while your child is a student with us so that you can refer back to it. If you have any questions about the information contained here, don't hesitate to ask us!

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Who We Are...

Starting Point Services for Children/The Atlantic and Pacific School, Inc. (“Starting Point”) is a team of educators, therapists, social workers, administrators and support staff dedicated to providing quality programming to young preschool children and their families. All staff are certified and/or licensed as required by law and are cleared through the New York State Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, The New York City Department of Investigation and The New York City Department of Education.

Starting Point is approved by New York State Education Department to provide special education services to children 2.9 to 5.9 years of age. Where applicable, it is licensed by the New York City Department of Health/Bureau of Day Care. All of the specialized programs and services that are provided by Starting Point are paid for by the government through Section 4410 of the New York State Education Law and are, therefore, free-of-charge to families.



What We Do...

Starting Point provides educational and therapeutic programs for young preschool students with developmental problems. We offer an environment that is caring, nurturing and designed to bring each student to his/her fullest potential. Our programs and interventions are based on current best practices and the philosophy that each child is unique and that all children can learn.



Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS):

Your child has been enrolled in what is called a “Special Class in an Integrated Setting” or “SCIS”. In this progressive and innovative format, children with special learning needs and children who learn more typically are educated together by two teachers, one certified in Special Education and the other certified in Early Childhood Education. Class size is as mandated by each child’s Individualized Educational Program (IEP). Speech Therapy,

Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Counseling are provided during the school day in accordance with each student's needs and as specified on his/her IEP.



Student Supervision and Management:

Starting Point students are always under the direct supervision of our staff. Your child's safety and well being are of paramount concern to us. The teachers in our classrooms will never allow children to go anywhere unescorted nor will we release your child to anyone other than persons identified through our established procedures.

We believe that it is our responsibility to structure a learning environment that is stimulating and enjoyable to your child. When learning and having fun, most children are engaging and responding appropriately to adult directions and the structure of an activity. The inability of a child to attend, follow directions, or control himself/herself and/or the need to engage in disruptive behavior are challenges for the professional to meet and are not the "fault" of the child. We believe that good behavior and effort should be acknowledged and rewarded. Inappropriate or non-constructive behaviors are to be re-directed or replaced. The environment must be structured so that children will *want* to comply and are recognized for doing so. All interventions with children who are having behavioral difficulties are handled with respect for the child's dignity and self-esteem.

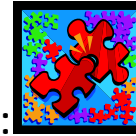
Starting Point maintains written policy on the supervision and management of students which can be given to you at your request.



A Child-Centered Approach to Learning:

Starting Point embraces a "child-centered" approach to learning. We begin where the child is and work with the child's strengths and interests. We believe that children are agents of their own learning and that we as teachers and therapists structure and engineer the learning environment to facilitate children's efforts to explore, organize and make sense of their world. Our approach is developmental. We want preschool children to learn what is appropriate to their age: how to use their senses and move their hands and bodies for learning; how to communicate and get along with others; how to gain control and focus on learning; how to be increasingly independent. We agree with early childhood education experts that a developmentally

appropriate approach that focuses on basic skills will provide the foundation on which to build academic skills later on in childhood. We design the curriculum and classroom activities so that children can work toward mastery of the New York State Learning Standards for all preschool children and the New York City Department of Education's Pre-Kindergarten Performance Indicators. Starting Point wants all of our students to have the skills and knowledge they will need for success in kindergarten and beyond. We also know that young children are active learners; that it is important for them to explore their world through observing, listening, moving, touching, tasting, smelling and making "things" happen. We encourage a lot of movement and activity in our learning opportunities and use play as a primary medium for teaching skills.



Related Services...Another Part of the Puzzle:

In addition to education, your child's IEP may require that other services be given to your child. These are:



Speech Therapy:

This service focuses on a child's ability to communicate. Many children may be slow to learn words, the rules for making sentences, the way to make the sounds of speech or even that talking is something that people can and should do. Sometimes, medical conditions or birth defects impair a child's ability to learn to use language. The speech therapist is specially trained to deal with these problems. S/he can also give special help to children who are having problems learning to eat because of physical deformities or impairment in the processing of sensation in the mouth. S/he can also help children who have problems such as stuttering.



Physical Therapy:

Physical therapists help children learn to use their bodies to move, both for getting around in the environment, and to perform all of the wonderful activities of life. Many children are born with or develop problems with, the growth and strength of their bones, muscles and ligaments and/or have problems, with equilibrium and balance. Some children are slow to develop movement skills. The physical therapist can offer special help to all of these children.



Occupational Therapy: These specialists focus on the "fine" motor movements that children must learn to make in order to perform

the functions of daily life. With pre-school-aged children these therapists often are devoted to the development of hand skills so children can be independent in activities of daily life, such as dressing and eating and also so they can engage in pre-writing and other activities that involve the use of the eyes in coordination with the hands. Occupational therapists also help children gain control over larger muscles and parts of the body or develop balance and equilibrium (like physical therapists) so that they then can learn to use “smaller” muscles and movements more accurately and with precision.

A special area of concern for occupational therapists is what is called sensory impairment. Sometimes children cannot use the information they gain from their five senses to make sense of the world and to learn as we do. The occupational therapist will design a specific program to help develop more normal sensory processing in these children.



Counseling: This is a service that can be provided by an appropriately certified and trained social worker, guidance counselor or psychologist. This service aims to help reduce struggles that the child may be having emotionally, socially or with controlling him/herself. Often these problems are seen in the classroom in the form of “acting-out” behaviors, inability or difficulty paying attention, trouble playing with other children, difficulty in enjoying school and relationships with others. The professional will work closely with families around these difficulties.



How Related Services are Provided:

Children can receive therapy in a number of different ways according to their needs and the requirements of the IEP. Many children are seen on a one-to-one basis with the therapist while others are seen in small groups of two or three children. Some children have a combination of individual time with the therapist and a session in a small group. Depending on what the IEP states and in conjunction with the teacher, a therapist may decide to use the routines and activities of the classroom to help a child build skills during the actual activities in which he/she needs them. Other times, a therapist may work with a child in another area and use different activities than what is occurring in the classroom. The carry-over of skills to “real” routines is then done in conjunction with the classroom teacher.

Therapy is portable. It can be done, for example, on a playground, class trip or a walk in the community as well as in a classroom or special treatment room.



Parents and therapy:

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to get to know their child's therapist and to see their children in therapy. If your child is being seen for therapy at school, remember that visits are always welcomed as are phone calls and notes.

Therapists want to know from you what you would like your child to learn as well as your concerns about your child. Parents and therapists together should decide what will be worked on in therapy and what you can do at home to help.



Social Work:

Members of our social work department are dedicated to facilitating the relationship between you and the other professionals involved with your child. They want to help our staff understand your family's unique situation, needs and values so that the programming your child receives can be integrated with these needs and values and "fit" into your family's life. Social Workers often attend meetings between you and the other professionals on the team. They can help you communicate your needs and concerns to other team members and be a direct channel between you and your child's teachers and therapists.

Our social workers host events and activities for families, including school nights or Open House, parent effectiveness training, workshops on special topics, etc. You will be notified of these events. We encourage you to take part in all of these activities as your situation and interests allow.

Starting Point's social workers also want to help families who may need to access outside services such as medical care, housing, day care, etc. Our social workers are often "system" experts and can help you get the help you need.



School...



What your child needs in school:

The following is a list of items your child will need for school. Please be sure to label all of your child's things by clearly printing his/her name. You can use permanent marker or a commercial name tag. Many children have the same book bags, smocks and even articles of clothing. We try very hard not to lose things but we need your help!

All students need to bring to school:

- Bookbag;
- Hard-cover notebook;
- Complete set of dry clothing, appropriate to the season, to be left at school, including: underwear; socks; shirt; pants;
- Plastic smock or oversized shirt for messy activities;
- Disposable diapers, if the child is not toilet trained.
- A sheet and blanket to use for "quiet time" (NYC Health Code does not allow pillows).



Clothing:

In school, children participate in a variety of sensory and messy activities and will get dirty. Therefore, children should come to school in comfortable clothing and footwear appropriate for play and that allows them maximum freedom of movement. Where possible, try to dress your child in clothing that offers the child a chance to be independent. For example, many young children can put on and take off sneakers or shoes that have Velcro fasteners as opposed to laces.

Our children play outside all year so please make sure your child comes to school with adequate outer clothing and footwear including a hat, boots and mittens when the weather turns colder.

The wearing of jewelry, whether of monetary or sentimental value is discouraged. Hanging necklaces, bracelets, rings and earrings can catch on objects in the environment and can break or cause an injury to your child. Starting Point cannot be responsible for the loss of or damage to jewelry items during the school day.



Lunch/Snack:

Nutritious meals and snacks are provided by the school or day care agency. It is very important to let us know about food allergies or other dietary restrictions.

We view lunch and snack time as very important parts of our students' day. The need to stop and "re-fuel" when hungry allows the child to become re-energized for the rest of the day's activities. It is also an important learning time. Children are able to socialize and talk with adults and peers during this time. They also begin to learn skills of independence: washing up and preparing their places, using utensils and napkins, pouring and spreading and cleaning up after themselves. It is also a wonderful time to introduce children to a variety of foods. With friends and classmates all "chowing down" on the same thing, a child is often motivated to try foods he may reject at home.



Transportation...

For children enrolled in SCIS classes, transportation may be one of the services mandated by your child's IEP.

Please be aware that the bus company transporting your child to and from school is **NOT** associated with or hired by Starting Point. The bus company is an independent company contracted through the New York City Department of Transportation and does not fall under the authority of Starting Point.

At the time of your child's enrollment in our class, you will be given the name of the transportation company, its address, phone number and dispatcher's name. You will also be given information about your child's pick-up and drop-off times and other details regarding your responsibilities in ensuring that your child receives transportation to and from school efficiently and regularly.

For safety reasons, do not allow children to board a bus with food, drink or bottles. Children can choke on food or beverages during sudden stops, fall

asleep with food in their mouths or fight over food with their seatmates. Generally, we discourage the practice of children carrying toys or other items on to the bus as they may fight over them, chew them or throw them - all dangerous situations. However, there are times when certain “comfort” items or “transition” objects may be necessary for some children to have with them to allow them to feel comfortable leaving you and riding the bus. In these situations, we will work with you and the bus company to meet your child’s needs.



NOTE: ALL CHILDREN MUST WEAR SEAT BELTS ON THE BUS AT ALL TIMES. MANY CHILDREN ARE REQUIRED TO BE IN CAR SEATS OR BOOSTER SEATS DUE TO THEIR AGE AND SIZE.

If the bus is late to pick up/drop off your child you must call the bus company directly. We at Starting Point can give you the number(s) to call but we are not in contact with the drivers and cannot tell you anything about where the bus is or when it will be at your house. If you have extreme trouble getting through to the bus company or are not getting information from them or there is an emergency, we will of course do anything we can to help. In routine situations however, calling the bus company directly is the best and fastest way to find out the status of your child’s bus.

In the case of extreme inclement weather, like a snowstorm, the bus company decides whether buses will run or not. Sometimes, Starting Point services and classes will remain open to students but the bus company, for safety reasons, has decided not to transport students. To find out whether the bus is running in bad weather, *please call the bus company directly.*

If your child is ill and cannot come to school you must also cancel bus service for all of the days that your child will stay home. When your child is ready to return to school, you must call the bus company to resume service.

There may be times during the year when a parent may wish to ride the bus with a child to school, for example, for a meeting or to participate in a class trip. Often this is not a problem. However, *you must inform the bus company of your wish to ride the bus.* Only the bus company (*not Starting Point*) can tell you if there will be room for you on the bus.

PLEASE BE AT THE DROP OFF POINT WHEN YOUR CHILD RETURNS HOME! Bus drivers may not release your child to anyone but you or other persons authorized by you. Starting Point and the bus company must know who the other authorized people are who can pick up your child. Be sure to fill out the

form that we give you on enrollment regarding who else may receive your child. Please keep it up to date by notifying Starting Point if you have a change in the authorized people who can receive your child. Other authorized persons not known to the transportation staff will be required to show identification before the child is released to them.

The bus company must be kept up to date regarding any change of address, pick-up or drop-off point and persons authorized to receive your child. Please also immediately notify Starting Point of any changes.

If you have questions or concerns about bus service, please call the bus company. If you are having continuous or on-going problems and wish to file a complaint, you can notify the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) of the NYC Department of Education. The phone number for complaints is (718) 482 3800. Should you file a complaint be sure to get the number assigned to your complaint.



Attendance...

Regular participation in educational and therapy activities is very important to your child's learning. If your child has to miss school you must notify your child's teacher and/or Starting Point's offices (and also the bus company, if your child is bussed to school). We must know the reason for your child's absences. By law, unexplained and/or illegal absences can cause your child to be terminated from all programming. If you don't call us, we will call you!

If your child misses five consecutive sessions of school and we do not know why, Starting Point is required to contact your child's school district. The district will decide if your child remains with us or is discharged. If your child is discharged s/he cannot return to school without the district's permission. Your child may be absent from school for many different "legal" reasons. If your child's absences are legal and we know what those reasons are, your child's enrollment will not be jeopardized. The "legal" reasons for absence are:

- Illness;
- Medical appointments;
- Hospitalization;
- Religious observance;
- Transportation problems;
- Severe weather;
- Death in the family (limited to 5 days);
- Your inability to prepare your child for school because you are sick or unable to do so and there is no other adult in the house who can assume that responsibility (limited to twice a term).

Your child may miss school for other reasons, which are not considered legal. These illegal absences could result in the NYC Department of Education discharging your child from Starting Point. Examples of Illegal reasons are:

- Family vacations
- Visits to relatives

We give each family a calendar which shows you the days Starting Point is closed and we take holidays and vacations. Please plan your own trips, vacations and special events accordingly. We want to make sure that your child does not risk placement at Starting Point due to illegal absences. Please contact us if you have any questions about attendance issues.



Illness:

Here are some guidelines to help you decide whether to keep your child home from school. The New York City Department of Health requests that children stay home from school if they show any of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100° F. Your child should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school;
- Severe coughing or trouble breathing;
- Thick nasal drainage;
- Conjunctivitis;
- Spots or rashes;
- Infected skin patches;
- Diarrhea or vomiting. Your child should be well for 24 hours before returning to school;
- Headache and/or stiff neck
- Loss of appetite;
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing;
- Change in behavior;

We advise you to consult your doctor should your child experience any of these symptoms. Please inform us if your doctor makes a specific diagnosis and/or places your child on medication. We may ask you to provide a doctor's note before your child returns to school.

If your child is with us in school and develops any of these symptoms, we will notify you and tell you that we are sending the child home.



Health and Safety...

Physical well-being is of vital importance to development and learning. Therefore, we ask your cooperation with the rules we have established for the health and safety of all of our students.



Medical Form and Immunizations:

The New York City Department of Health requires that all students have a completed, dated and signed medical form and immunization record on file with this agency prior to the first date of attendance. A new medical examination and updated immunizations are required yearly. You will be notified when the annual medical is due. Failure to provide a medical will delay your child's entrance to a program and may cause a disruption of service when the annual medical is due.

Medical Alerts, Medications and Medical Procedures:



Please inform us of any special medical conditions that your child may have, including asthma, allergies, seizures, heart condition, etc. We want to be able to plan appropriately for your child. Information regarding your child's health can be enormously important in setting the right environment for your child. Please also inform us of any medications your child is on, or may begin to take, over the course of the year. Some medications can have an effect on the child's alertness, behavior, appetite and mood. Prior knowledge can help us monitor your child's reaction and understand his/her behavior while with us.

Under New York State law, no member of our staff may administer medications of any type, including over-the-counter medicines. They also cannot provide any other medically-oriented procedures, i.e., tube-feeding, catheterization, inhalation therapy, etc. Medications and medical procedures must be administered by a registered nurse. Starting Point does not have nurses on its staff.



Injuries and accidents in school:

We are deeply concerned with the safety of the children in our care and maintain high levels of supervision and watchfulness. However, bumps and bruises are a part of childhood and most preschoolers do fall or hurt themselves on occasion. Should your child sustain a minor injury under our care, be assured that all necessary first aid will be provided and your child will be

comforted. You will be notified. If we cannot reach you, we will send a note home to you describing the incident and what (if anything) you should notice by way of a bump or bruise. In rare situations, we may ask you to take the child home. We will file an accident report in your child's educational chart.

In the unlikely event of a medical emergency, we will call 911 and take your child to the nearest hospital emergency room. We will call you (or your emergency contact if we cannot reach you) and ask you to meet us at the emergency room.



Note: It is important that you always provide us with current emergency telephone numbers so that we can reach you or an authorized person as soon as possible.



Accidents at home:

We ask you to let us know if your child has gotten hurt at home and the accident has left a scratch, bruise or bump. Please know that we will call you should your child come to school with the signs of an injury that you have not told us about. We want to be partners with you in looking out for your child's safety and health.

Should your child sustain an injury at home that requires medical attention, we may ask you for a doctor's note "clearing" the child for all school activities.



Child Protection:

All Starting Point staff members are required by New York State law to report the suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Starting Point cooperates with all Child Protection authorities. We will work cooperatively and supportively with families as is allowable and feasible in each instance.

Parents and Caregivers as Partners



We believe deeply that we are here to help you help your child. We have knowledge and expertise to share but you know your child best. We want our program to be meaningful and relevant to you and to your child as a member of your family and culture. We'll need your help to do this.

Communication is vital. We need to talk to you on a regular basis and we want you to talk to us. You may take as active a roll in your child's education as your responsibilities, life-style and abilities allow you. We want always to be inviting and including you and also to follow your lead.

We ask that you provide a hardbound notebook that can be sent to school in your child's book bag daily. This is one way we will communicate with you about what your child is doing in school. You can use the notebook to share with us any news about family events, i.e. the birth of a baby, information that would be helpful for the day, i.e. that your child slept poorly the night before, or just to make us aware of something, i.e. your child had a great time at the neighborhood playground.

Do not hesitate to participate in your child's sessions, observe and participate in school and special events, talk to all the professionals on your child's team and contact administrative staff. You can visit, call, or write. Please do so frequently!

All of our professionals are dedicated to the well-being, growth and development of the children in their care. There are times, however, when a well-meaning professional may say or do something that is not in line with a parent's wishes or is confusing or upsetting to the parent. We ask that you make these feelings known to the professional and/or administrative staff at Starting Point. It is YOU who must be comfortable and confident in the people who work with your child. We want to know if there is something that we can do better; we want to help if problems arise. Please don't hesitate to talk over your concerns with the professional involved or with us at the administrative offices.



Progress Reports:

Four times a year, teachers and therapists must report to you how your student is progressing toward mastery of his/her IEP goals. You will be given a copy of each Quarterly Progress Report. You will also be invited to a Parent-Teacher conference at the time of the update to discuss your child's progress.

Professionals are also required to provide reports to you and to your child's school district should an annual or requested CPSE review of your child's IEP be scheduled. CPSE reviews must occur annually, but can also be requested by you, the CPSE, or Starting Point staff at any time should your child's placement and program need to be reviewed. As appropriate, your child's teacher and/or therapists are also required at these times to provide drafts of new goals and objectives for your child's IEP.



Cultural Diversity:

Throughout the year, we may hold various celebrations and special events. Special occasions such as birthdays, holidays, civil and school-related celebrations and parties and class trips are all a part of our curriculum. Please know that we celebrate diversity and try to honor the special calendar days of the variety of cultures our students represent, i.e., Cinco de Mayo, Purim, Halloween, Eid ul-Fitr, Chinese New Year, as well as those important to the American tradition such as Thanksgiving, Columbus Day or Martin Luther King Day. If you would like us to celebrate a special day related to your culture, we would love suggestions for activities, help with special foods for the day, etc. You might want to volunteer to teach our students about the special day and its meaning for your family and culture.

We ask you to inform us if there are any events that you do not want your child to participate in due to religious or cultural reasons. We will try to honor those requests by having an alternate activity, *if possible* or by informing you of the event so that you can choose to keep your child home on that day.



Confidentiality:

The information you have given us about your child and your family is held highly confidential by law. Starting Point adheres to all legal and regulatory statutes regarding confidentiality. No staff person may provide identifying information about your child or his/her history, development, family, learning, etc. with anyone outside of Starting Point without your written consent. For children enrolled in our SCIS classes housed in a in a school or day care center, you will be asked to provide written consent so that we may discuss your child and his/her progress with the other people involved in your child's education at these facilities, including the general education staff in your child's classroom and the program administrator(s) of the school.

Starting Point will send you notification of your rights annually. If you have any questions or concerns about confidentiality at any time, please do not hesitate to call us.

In conclusion, let us say again, "Welcome to Starting Point!" We are very happy to have the opportunity to work with you on behalf of your child. We hope you and your child have a positive, successful experience with us.

