

Clarke Caregiver Handbook

2025-2026



**Clarke teaches children who are deaf
or hard of hearing to listen and talk.**

1 Whitman Road, Canton, MA 02021
P: 781.821.3499 | F: 781.821.3905 | Info@clarkeschools.org

clarkeschools.org

Melanie Austin, Program Director

August 2025

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear families:

We would like to welcome your family to ours and thank you for choosing Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech for your child's education! Clarke is the first and largest organization of its kind, offering a continuum of services for students and their families at home, our multiple locations and in mainstream classrooms.

Since our founding in 1867, we have prepared children to succeed in mainstream schools and the wider world, evolving to meet the needs of children and families today. Our goal is to prepare students with hearing loss to succeed in classrooms alongside their peers with typical hearing. You can learn more about Clarke's history here - <https://clarkeschools.org/about-us/history/>

This handbook provides you with our goals, expectations, policies and procedures. You have the right to inquire, receive and review all of Clarke Schools' policies and procedures by contacting me by email at maustin@clarkeschools.org. You have entrusted us to partner with you to provide the child in your life with the best possible education. As we embark upon a new school year working together as a team, may the spirit of cooperation, support, and encouragement lead to a wonderful and successful year at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech!

Sincerely,



Melanie Austin, MS, CCC-SLP
Director, Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech MA in Canton

Clarke admits children who are deaf or hard of hearing, providing services to our families regardless of race, color, gender, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, or marital status.

Introduction

This handbook has been prepared as an informational guide regarding Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech (Clarke) policies and procedures. It is an important reference to save and refer to throughout the school year. You are requested to review and discuss its contents with your child, especially sections dealing with child/student responsibilities and behavioral expectations. The handbook was revised in response to suggestions from caregivers and staff while still meeting regulations of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) under which Clarke operates. Clarke is a state approved private school, which accepts students from public sources. As such, it retains autonomy over admission. It is important that caregivers read and understand the information in this handbook.

Title IX Notice of Nondiscrimination

Clarke does not discriminate on the basis of sex in admission, administration of its educational programs or activities or employment. Clarke Schools is required by Title IX and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. Part 106 not to discriminate on the basis of sex in admission, administration of its educational programs or activities or employment. The Senior Human Resources Manager, 45 Round Hill Road, Northampton, MA 01060, telephone number 413.582.1155, has been designated as the employee responsible for coordinating Clarke efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under Title IX. Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. Part 106 to Clarke Schools may be referred to Andrea Harkins or to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, at 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-1100, telephone number 800-421-3481.

Table of Contents

Statement of Purpose	6-8
Objectives.....	7
Program Goals.....	8
General Program Information	8
Daily Schedule	8
2025-2026 Calendar	9
Transportation	10-11
Arrival and Departure	10
Van Transportation	10
Caregiver/Caregiver Transport.....	10-11
Curriculum	11-12
Audition, Speech, and Language Therapy	12
Audiology	13-14
Library	14
Family Communication	14-16
Caregiver/Teacher Conferences	14-15
Family Visits/Guided Observations	15
Progression From Clarke	15
Caregiver/Family Rights	16
Progress Reports	16
Health Policies	16-20
Fire Drills, Emergency Procedures and Weather Closings	20
Food: Snacks, Lunch, and Nutrition	20-22
Helpful Hints	23-24
Social and Emotional Learning and Behavior Supports	24-25
Anti-Bullying Policy	25-26
Visitor’s Policy	26
Releasing Children From School	26

Building Security26

Sexual Harassment27

Special Events/Celebrations/Holidays 27-28

Research, Funding, Publicity, and Student Clinician Policies 28-29

Families in Temporary Housing29

Payment Options/Billing.....29

APPENDICES

School Immunization Requirements 2025-2026: Massachusetts Department of Public Health.....30

Individual Health Care Plans: Department of Early Education and Care.....31-32

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.....33-34

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resources.....35

Back to School Packet Forms36

First Day of School Checklist37

Statement of Purpose

At Clarke, we teach children who are deaf or hard of hearing to listen and talk.

Children served by Clarke use advanced technologies, including cochlear implants and hearing aids, to maximize their access to sound. We work with children and their families from infancy through their teen years. Our teachers of the deaf, audiologists, and speech-language pathologists have the background, training, and experience to prepare children academically and socially for a world of limitless possibilities. Clarke children listen and learn in the classroom, run, and laugh with their friends on the playground, and have lives filled with music, sports, family, and community. Many children who come to Clarke are ready to attend their neighborhood schools by completion of preschool or kindergarten. In addition to our work with children, we serve families and adults through a wide range of programs and services. With a comprehensive team of experts, in-person preschool locations along the East Coast, and an Early Intervention program that provides individualized parent coaching and infant–toddler group services, we strive to reach people with hearing loss at key life stages.

We believe that the home environment is the most influential factor in a young child’s life. We strive to have teachers and families collaborate to ensure the safety, happiness and overall development of children enrolled at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech.

1. We have an open-door policy for caregivers and families and encourage families to visit at any time their child is at school. Caregivers are encouraged to spend time in the classrooms to participate or lead activities related to our classroom themes.
2. Clarke staff use various platforms to promote home/school communication, including home/school notebooks, blogs, etc. to collaborate with families and other caregivers to ensure ongoing communication across the child's daily environments. We are happy to arrange progress meetings and or phone calls with the child's teachers or the director at any time.
3. Families are encouraged to participate in caregiver-teacher conferences, guided observations, family fun nights, and caregiver workshops presented by Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech.

We believe that educational planning for children who are deaf or hard of hearing must consider the whole child, and not just the communication needs. Educational experiences should support learning across all developmental domains: cognitive development, social and emotional development, motor development and communication development. We believe that children learn best when curriculum is presented in theme-based units, including hands-on experience with the materials and high levels of teacher guidance and interaction.

1. We provide a comprehensive preschool and kindergarten program with an enriched language component. The children's educational needs are addressed in a structured, well-ordered, child-centered, process-oriented developmental curriculum designed to promote the acquisition of age-appropriate conceptual and problem-solving skills.
2. We provide age-appropriate activities and materials that encourage children to explore and build foundations for knowledge in Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts, and History and Social Sciences, Health Education and Arts.

3. Each child is provided with activities and instruction to promote acquisition of new skills based on their individual level of development.
4. Our typical class has four to nine students, providing a small student/teacher ratio which allows for ample individual instruction and attention in the classroom. Each child also receives 30 minutes of daily audition, speech, and language instruction outside of the classroom. These sessions may include a peer at times providing opportunities for peer-to-peer communication and practice around social routines and conversational skills.

Our team has extensive knowledge in child development, hearing loss, audiology, and speech and language development as it relates to children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

1. We have a multi-disciplinary team of educational staff here at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech, including teachers of the deaf, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and early childhood teachers. Our staff works collaboratively to ensure that all the children's needs are met.
2. All staff hold certification specific to their position and participate in ongoing professional development activities.

Objectives

1. To provide a strong academic base by (a) employing a staff that is certified, well-prepared, and up to date on current educational best practices for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; (b) continuously updating curriculum to meet educational needs and prepare students for a mainstream education; (c) increasing the literacy skills of all students.
2. To provide direct instruction on developing self-awareness and self-advocacy skills to promote confidence with their hearing loss by (a) improving their ability to explain their own hearing loss and equipment, (b) advocating for appropriate accommodations, (c) troubleshooting their own equipment in a variety of settings.
3. To promote the development of listening and spoken language skills throughout the school day by (a) attending daily audition, speech and language therapy sessions, (b) embedding focused auditory targets into academic curriculum.
4. To provide sound training in communication (speech, language, listening and social skills) by (a) providing adequate amplification devices; (b) providing acoustically sound classrooms; and (c) providing sufficient print and non-print materials to promote development of articulation, voice, language, pragmatic and social language skills.
5. To provide optimal access in all settings by maintaining the integrity of the hearing technology equipment and ensuring the environment is accessible for each child. Individual auditory, speech, and language services are also available for children in mainstream programs.
6. To analyze each child's ability to hear specific sounds, identifying auditory, articulation, and language concerns, and dedicating time to building the speech and language skills needed for success in a hearing world.

Program Goals

1. To provide a curriculum that meets each student's educational needs and prepares them for competition in mainstream educational settings and beyond.
2. To develop age-appropriate social skills, decision-making skills, and problem-solving skills.
3. To encourage and support opportunities which require the use of these skills in a variety of settings; and
4. To maximize time-on-task in small group settings with specialized technology in order to facilitate the development of speech, language and listening skills.

Additionally, each child has an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) with individualized goals and objectives. The goals and objectives for each child are based on his or her skills and abilities in the areas of auditory, speech, expressive language, receptive language, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, life skills, and social-emotional development.

General Information about Educational Programs

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech is a national nonprofit organization using a listening and spoken language approach with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Clarke's continuum of services includes a Birth to Age Three Program, Preschool/Early Childhood Program and Mainstream Services (Massachusetts and Philadelphia). Services are customized to fit various needs and ages.

Clarke Schools MA in Canton Daily Schedule

School year August, 2025-June, 2026:

Preschool (3-4 yr. old): Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Extended day (5+ yrs): Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Friday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Summer Session – July 6th-23rd, 2026:

All school: Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



**Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech
Massachusetts
2025 - 2026 School Calendar
As of 2.25.2026**

JULY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

12 Student Days
12 Staff Days

AUGUST						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

2 Student Days
5 Staff Days

SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

21 Student Days
21 Staff Days

OCTOBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

21 Student Days
22 Staff Days

NOVEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

16 Student Days
17 Staff Days

DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

17 Student Days
17 Staff Days

JULY	
7	Summer Session Begins (9 a.m.-1 p.m)
	Week 1: July 7 through July 10
	Week 2: July 14 through July 17
	Week 3: July 21 through July 24
24	Last day of Summer Session-Graduation

AUGUST	
25-27	Professional Development Days (No Students)
28	First day of school (9 am - 1 pm)

SEPTEMBER	
1	Labor Day (School Closed)
10	Back to School Night (6 pm - 8 pm)
19	Grandparents/Special Person's Day

OCTOBER	
10	Professional Development Day (No Students)
13	Indigenous People's Day (School Closed)

NOVEMBER	
4	Professional Development Day (No Students)
11	Veteran's Day (School Closed)
18	Parent-Teacher Conferences (1 p.m. dismissal)
26	Early Release (1 p.m. dismissal)
27-28	Thanksgiving Holiday (School Closed)

DECEMBER	
24-31	Holiday Recess (School Closed)

JANUARY	
1-2	New Year's Break Observed (School Closed)
16	Professional Development Day (No Students)
19	Martin Luther King Holiday (School Closed)
26	Snow day-School Closed

FEBRUARY	
16	President's Day Holiday (School Closed)
16-20	Winter Recess (School Closed)
23-25	Snow days-School Closed

MARCH	
20	Professional Development Day (No Students)
24	Parent-Teacher Conferences (1 p.m. dismissal)

APRIL	
20-24	Spring Recess (School Closed)

MAY	
15	Professional Development Day (No Students)
25	Memorial Day Holiday (School Closed)

JUNE	
17	Original Last Day of School EXCLUDING 4 snow days to make up
19	Juneteenth Holiday (School Closed)
24	Current (2.25.26) Last Day of School w 4 Snow Days (9am-1pm)
25	Last Day of School with 5 Snow Days (9am-1pm)

Total Staff Days	200
Total Student Days (academic year)	180
Total Student Days (summer Session)	12

School Closed For All
Professional Development Day - No School for Students
Early Release Day
Special Event Day

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

17 Student Days
18 Staff Days

FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

12 Student Days
12 Staff Days

MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

21 Student Days
22 Staff Days

APRIL						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

17 Student Days
17 Staff Days

MAY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

19 Student Days
20 Staff Days

JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

17 Student Days
17 Staff Days

Transportation

Transportation, Arrival and Departure

The safety of the children at Clarke is of the utmost concern. A Transportation Authorization Plan must therefore be on file with Clarke School. While children are in the care of our staff, they are carefully supervised, and it is important for caregivers to follow and enforce Clarke safety rules when dropping off or picking up your children. Therefore, we ask that during drop-off and pick up caregivers or other authorized adults closely supervise your children. Please do not allow children to run through the parking lot or to play around the cars and vans. While we encourage socialization between families, we respectfully ask that you arrange to do so off Clarke property and exit the parking lot to ensure the area remains as quiet and safe as possible.

Van Transportation

Van transportation is approved and coordinated by the student's school district if requested by a family. Clarke School requires that each driver present a valid driver's and 7D license. If Clarke Staff are concerned for your child's safety, your child will remain at school until an alternative arrangement can be made. In addition, the caregiver, van company and school district will be immediately notified in the event of an unsafe situation.

Children should arrive before the 9:00am start of school. The van should arrive 10 minutes prior to the child's designated dismissal time in the afternoon. If a van is late in the morning or afternoon, the caregiver should contact the van company and then update Clarke MA in Canton at 781.821.3499 or via email at ClarkeCanton@clarkeschools.org.

Once transportation is established, the following are the responsibilities of the caregiver:

- Contact the van company several days before school starts to confirm service
- Communicate any absence directly with the van company and Clarke MA in Canton at **ClarkeCanton@clarkeschools.org**.
- Securely buckle the child in the age and size appropriate car or booster seat in the morning
- Communicate any concerns regarding the transportation service to the school district's transportation coordinator and Clarke School.

Caregiver/Caregiver Transport

- Children are expected to **be at Clarke by 9:00** am so that they are able to capitalize upon the entirety of their school day
- Children are escorted in and out of school by Clarke staff.
- Caregiver/caregiver must stay with their child until a Clarke staff member greets you to escort your child.
- If late, the caregiver must wait with their child outside until a Clarke staff member is available to check in the child

- Caregiver/Caregiver should arrive at Clarke 10 minutes prior to their child's dismissal time.
- Additional caregivers or family members who do not typically pick up a child must have written permission from primary caregivers to do so
- Caregivers should be prepared to show picture identification.

Curriculum

Preschool, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and elementary classroom activities are designed to enhance children's listening and speech and language abilities while supporting their pre-academic/academic, social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative skill development. Children engage in problem-solving, discovery, exploration, reasoning, and experiential activities in a joyful, nurturing environment. Classrooms are designed for the unique acoustic needs of children with hearing loss, and curriculum is aligned with state and national standards. Classes are led by experienced professionals. Classes are taught by master's-level teachers who are educated in the Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) approach to intervention. All children receive daily individual auditory speech and language therapy with a speech-language pathologist or speech-language pathology assistant trained in auditory-verbal therapy and/or listening and spoken language.

- **Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks** - Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech MA in Canton campus works hard to ensure that its curriculum is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks issued pursuant to the Education Reform Act of 1993. The Creative Curriculum is used as a framework throughout the year, and all staff provided with the Early Childhood Program Standards for Three-and Four-Year Olds and The Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences. All our teachers, but specifically our kindergarten teachers, also use the kindergarten and first grade Curriculum Framework materials to assist them in planning for their students and to become familiar with what children will be expected to know and what curriculum goals will be in place in the receiving school. This is especially important as we prepare children to move out of our program and into their public schools. Our teachers and staff work closely with the public schools, sharing curriculum materials, ensuring that each student is exposed to the public school's curriculum materials, and communicating about progress and assessment data.
- **Individualized audition, speech, and language sessions:** In addition, thirty minutes of individualized work is provided daily to address: 1) those speech and language patterns which fail to develop during regular classroom work and 2) the development of error-patterns in danger of becoming habituated. Individual work includes the development of auditory, receptive/expressive language, and speech skills as indicated by results of the child's evaluation and as documented in the educational plan. Individual work supports topics being addressed in the child's classroom (e.g. pre-teaching/review of vocabulary, concepts embedded within the curriculum).
- **Self-help, daily living skills:** A major component of the curriculum addresses these areas by incorporating a core set of skill development into center play, story time and other supporting activities related to the classroom themes. Some of the basic skills addressed include:
 - Buttoning, fastening, buckling, and tying
 - Pouring liquids and solids, cutting spreading foods during snack activities
 - Measuring, stirring during cooking activities

- Acquisition of appropriate toileting behaviors including hand washing
- Acquisition of appropriate tooth brushing skills
- **Social/emotional needs:** The social science curriculum is designed to help children explore the people, places, cultures, and communities in their world. The Pyramid Model framework is implemented with fidelity throughout all Clarke School classrooms. As a preschool and kindergarten program in which social emotional development is a major focus, the bulk of information provided within these curriculums is designed to promote self-esteem, self-confidence, and age appropriate social-emotional skills. Social concepts which are embedded throughout each students' day include but are not limited to: recognition and expression of feelings and emotions, working as a group, social problem solving, and perspective taking. Additional themes targeted throughout the year include families, communities, countries, travel and transportation, a variety of cultures (with emphasis on the cultural makeup of the class), occupations, seasons, celebrations, and holidays.
- **Prevocational, vocational, career education:** This area is addressed through several thematic units including: our community and community helpers such as Firemen, Policemen, Doctors, Nurses, Dentists, Teachers, and Armed Services. The local Fire Department visits every school year during Fire Safety week, as does a Dentist during Dental Hygiene week. Each class also makes field trips where the students learn about careers in other areas.
- **Pre-Reading and Writing:** Even the youngest classroom at Clarke MA in Canton is introduced to the concept that print has meaning. The Hegarty Program is used to promote literacy development, and print is used in the classrooms in many forms such as the children's printed names, calendar materials, written numerals, daily news, and printed vocabulary. Both in school and at home, the children share daily what is written in their home-school notebooks. Teacher and caregiver-prepared books are used to provide a context for sharing past experiences or preparing for upcoming events across environments. Children's literature plays a central role in creating a language rich environment, including picture books, poetry, rhymes, songs, newspapers, magazines, and teacher made materials, and are used as part of the curriculum.

Auditory, Speech, and Language Embedded into the Curriculum and Instruction

Students receive intervention and education from master's degree level teachers of the deaf and ASHA and State Board certified speech-language pathologists. The staff are supervised by professionals who are Listening and Spoken Language Specialists, Certified Auditory-Verbal Educators or Therapists (LSLS Cert. AVEd/AVT) and who also provide direct service to children as part of their daily responsibilities. All professionals work to foster development of age-appropriate listening, vocabulary, language, and social communication skills. All interactions promote the basic goals of early childhood education and include structuring the environment to provide opportunities to aid in each child's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth.

Auditory, speech, and language development and strategies are embedded into the curriculum and instruction in addition to being targeted during individual speech and language therapy sessions. Each student at Clarke Schools MA in Canton receives 30 minutes per day of individual auditory, speech, and language therapy. Treatment goals are based upon the individual needs of each student as based on assessment results, data collection, and progress monitoring. As previously indicated, treatment activities will align with the curriculum

theme being presented within the child's classroom. Collaboration between therapists and teachers will take place regularly to promote carryover between therapy and classroom environments.

Audiology

Clarke recognizes that children who are deaf or hard of hearing need appropriate hearing technology to maximize the use of residual hearing. Clarke audiologists are licensed and certified health care professionals who have training, expertise, and knowledge about state-of-the-art amplification devices for children/students. Our audiologists work to ensure that each student's hearing technology works optimally. In addition, our audiology teams follow recognized protocols for audiological assessments.

Clarke offers audiological services and support for our birth-through-high-school-age population including:

- Audiology consultation for young children, as well as students in the mainstream
- Screening and assessment at some locations
- Full-service audiological care for adults *at some locations* (hearing aid testing and selection)
- Recommendations for local resources

Teachers and SLPs perform sound checks daily in the classroom and in individual therapy. Caregivers send spare batteries in their child's backpack. HAT (Hearing Assistive Technology) and compatible equipment (e.g., receivers) are provided by the family. Clarke uses the Roger Sound Field System in each classroom. Private audiologists provide loaner equipment if needed and respond quickly to requests to help with equipment issues through email or text message. The audiologists consult with the Clarke program regarding children on their caseload with their child's teacher and/or SLP. Some offer complimentary services on site. Examples of services include participation in caregiver meetings, staffing for a particular child, earmolds, impressions and mapping services if warranted on a case-by-case basis.

Spare Parts and Batteries for Cochlear Implants and Hearing Aids:

In preschool, caregivers are responsible for providing this equipment to Clarke to assure a child always has full auditory access.

- Children should wear their hearing aids or cochlear implants during all waking hours. Research shows that children need to wear their technology (hearing aids, BAHA, cochlear implants, etc.) at least 10 hours per day to develop age-appropriate listening skills (caregivers are encouraged to discuss wear time with their child's audiologist).
- Please send a supply of these replacement parts and batteries to be left at school.
- Please call or email Clarke in the morning if a child's hearing aid or implant processor did not work prior to the child getting on the bus.
- Caregivers must notify their child's primary audiologist or implant center when replacement parts are needed. Please have at least one spare for each external component of a child's implant and a three-month battery supply at home.

- If your child is sent to school without their hearing aids or cochlear implants, caregivers will be called to bring the device to school immediately.
- Caregivers may be contacted to pick up their child to bring them immediately to their audiologist, especially if not having amplification creates a safety and health concern for your child.

Library

Clarke MA in Canton has a large children's library that brings curriculum support and greater knowledge to everyone at Clarke. The library has a wide selection of books which vary by reading level, children's author, and themes. The books are available for classroom and home use, as well as during instruction with our on-site literacy specialist. Each book is color coded by topic and author, and includes subject matter related to diversity and social-emotional concepts.

Family Involvement and Communication

Caregivers and families are the child's primary educators; therefore, we encourage and promote your involvement during these exciting and crucial years. Many caregivers of our young children are still learning how to meet their children's listening and spoken language needs.

All caregivers are strongly encouraged to observe at Clarke MA in Canton at least twice per year. **Families are welcome to visit and to observe as often as they wish.** You may wish to schedule your observation with your child's speech and language and/or classroom teacher, but **you are welcome to visit unannounced at any time that your child is present.**

Caregiver/Teacher conferences are offered twice per year in November and March. We encourage caregivers to attend conferences to receive updates on their IEP benchmarks and academic goals. Caregivers may request a conference with teachers, therapists, or supervisors at any time. Caregivers may want to schedule a conference following receipt of their child's Progress Reports, which are written three times per year.

The teachers want to hear from you often. If there are any changes in your child's life at home, including special events, new accomplishments, stressful situations, or anything which may inform your child's moods, feelings and behaviors - please let the teachers know. You can convey this information in a written note or leave a message for the teachers, and we will return your call. It is important that caregivers communicate important events, because the children are not always able to inform staff on their own. A short note regarding occurrences big and small helps the teacher to understand your child better and to provide an opportunity to shape conversation and expressive language skills.

Clarke Schools MA in Canton teachers and caregivers will maintain consistent communication to promote carryover between environments in the method that works for both the teacher and the caregiver. Caregiver-teacher conferences will occur twice per year during which the teachers and speech-language pathologists will meet to discuss each child's progress and areas targeted within both the classroom and therapy environment.

Groups and family activities are also available throughout the school year to provide caregivers with access to other people caring for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. These events are opportunities to address the impact of deafness on a child's overall development, as well as on the family. Virtual Caregiver Connections with Clarke meetings will be held 4 times annually, and additional family activities will be announced throughout the year.

Family Visits and Observations

You are welcome to observe any day when your child is in school. You will be asked to sign in as a visitor at the front desk and to sign our nondisclosure policy. Once you receive your visitor's pass, a designated member of the Clarke staff will escort you to the observation booth. **Families are welcome to visit and to observe as often as they wish.** You may wish to schedule your observation with your child's speech and language and/or classroom teacher.


We also will ask you to schedule **"Guided Observations"** at least once per year. This is an opportunity for you to observe your child in the classroom and within their speech and language session while guided by a school administrator. At these observations we will discuss ways that you can carry over strategies from the classroom or a speech session into your daily lives. Guided observations take approximately an hour and a half to complete, which includes 30 minutes observing the classroom, 30 minutes observing a speech session and a 30-minute meeting with the administrator. In addition, we welcome caregivers to plan to participate in classroom activities as well. Let the director and teachers know if you would like to participate!

Progression from Clarke

Progressing from a specialized program like Clarke to a mainstream school is an exciting time for each child and family. While each child is different, the age of progression to mainstream settings has decreased to the preschool level over the last 15-20 years. The reduced age of progression is directly related to newborn hearing screenings, early identification, early amplification, and early education around deaf or hard of hearing children. Clarke guides families through the progression process, providing step-by-step instructions and offering support and guidance throughout this important period of change. During these early years, the staff will provide a continuum of relevant information to assist with suitable school placement and to establish appropriate IEP goals, benchmarks, and accommodations.

Once a school is selected, a Clarke professional begins to prepare the staff of the school to receive the student and is available to provide ongoing support through our itinerant services. Some questions that may come up include:

- What is the best placement for my child?
- What kind of support services will my child need?
- How will the environment be modified to suit my child's needs?
- How do we educate our children's teachers and classmates about hearing loss?
- What do we do if something unexpected comes up?

Families form partnerships with Clarke's experienced mainstream staff or the district's teachers of the deaf to create a supportive team dedicated to the success and development of each child. 

Caregiver-Family Rights

Caregivers of children with disabilities from ages three through twenty-one have defined educational rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These rights are called procedural safeguards. Procedural safeguards are the specific rules that make sure that you know what the school district is proposing to do (“receive notice”), agree with the school district’s plan (“give caregiver consent”) and have a range of opportunities for resolving disagreements with the school district (“due process”). When a caregiver has a concern, it is important that they contact their child’s teacher or Clarke MA in Canton administrators. Caregivers must be given opportunities to participate in any decision-making meeting regarding their child’s special education program. Caregivers have the right to participate in individualized education program (IEP) meetings to discuss and determine special education eligibility, assessment results, educational placement of their child and other matters relating to their child’s free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Some basic rights you have as a caregiver are:

- To have your child receive free, appropriate public education (FAPE)
- To be a member of the team that develops your child’s education program and to attend meetings about that program
- To understand every document, you sign
- To know and understand your rights in the language you understand best
- To pursue other options if you disagree with your local education agency (LEA)

For more information about your rights as they relate to your children, you may refer to Wrights law [here](https://www.wrightslaw.com/) - <https://www.wrightslaw.com/>

The Caregiver’s Notice of Procedural Safeguards through the Department of Secondary Education (DESE) can be found here - <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/prb/>

Progress Reports

Clarke students’ progress towards IEP goals and general curriculum acquisition are provided to the caregivers and to their public schools on an annual basis according to the school’s calendar. In addition, progress towards IEP goals is measured and documented quarterly in December, March, and June. Progress notes are sent home to the caregivers and provided to the school district upon completion.

Health Policies

Where Clarke is a licensed Early Education and Childhood Center, we closely follow the EEC Health and Safety guidelines, which can be found in section 7.11 at the following website:

https://www.sec.state.ma.us/reg_pub/pdf/600/606007.pdf

Health and Infectious Disease Reporting

Our goal is to keep your child and all the children at Clarke MA in Canton healthy and as free from illness as possible.

The occurrence of certain diseases is required by law to be reported to the local Board of Health by the person making the diagnosis. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health list of reportable diseases is on file and at our reception desk. We will report any of these diseases at our center by telephone or in writing within 24 hours.

Clarke School MA in Canton will report an outbreak of a suspected infectious disease. An outbreak is defined as more than three children or staff with the same disease symptoms. Caregivers will be notified by letter, or telephone, if any communicable disease such as chicken pox or salmonella has been introduced to the school.

With advance planning, an informed staff, and cooperation from caregivers, we *can* minimize the spread of infectious disease. Caregivers are asked to be watchful for signs of infectious disease; to send an email to ClarkeCanton@clarkeschools.org when their child is ill-when a specific diagnosis is made (i.e., strep throat); to tell us immediately if a diagnosis of Hib or meningococcal disease is made; and to inform us of any changes in emergency telephone numbers.

For additional information on infectious diseases, your child's teacher will be glad to help find websites or other resources.

Illness and Exclusion Policy

Any child who is ill should not refrain from attending school. Control of communicable illness among children is of significant concern. Policies and guidelines related to outbreaks of communicable illness at Clarke School MA in Canton have been developed in conformance with regulations and recommendations set by the Division of Communicable Disease Control in the Department of Public Health. **To protect all other children and staff at Clarke MA in Canton, we ask that caregivers assist us by keeping sick children at home if they have experienced any of the following symptoms in the previous 24-hour period:**

- vomiting
- complaints of sore throat headache, stomachache
- a fever of over 100 degrees, orally
- persistent, bothersome cough
- conjunctivitis- if less than 2 doses of antibiotic have been administered
- impetigo- if it is a mild case (prescribed a topical treatment) the student does not need to be excluded. If put on oral antibiotics, the student should remain out for 24 hours
- frequent diarrhea
- unexplained rash
- lice-child may return to school after 1 treatment of anti-lice shampoo
- other diagnosed or suspected communicable disease

A child may return to school once the infectious disease is under control and the child is no longer contagious. **Caregivers must wait 24 hours after a child's fever has broken before sending the student back to school.** A child returning to the school should feel well enough to participate in all activities (including outdoor play and field trips).

Meeting the needs of mildly ill children while at school

Staff at Clarke School MA in Canton are not equipped to care for sick children, and our exclusion policy outlines the procedures that we will take when a child becomes ill while at the school. If your child becomes ill with any of the symptoms listed above during the school day, we will contact you as a caregiver to come pick your child up to take home. However, there are times when children are tired, ill, upset, or are waiting to be picked up by their caregiver or emergency contact person. The procedure we follow for meeting the needs of mildly ill children while in our care is as follows:

1. Children who are tired or upset but not otherwise showing symptoms of illness will be given a chance to rest in a quiet area of the school classroom, such as in the book area window seat. Close supervision is made possible by keeping the child in the classroom.
2. If a child is suspected of being ill, Clarke staff will consult virtually or by phone with our licensed health care consultant to determine the appropriate course of action. With the help of the Clarke staff, the health care consultant will gather information related to the following: general mood, activity level, fever, breathing difficulties, skin color, rashes, sores, swelling or bruises, severe coughing, and discharge from nose, eyes, and ears. Although we are not qualified to diagnose a specific illness, based on the child's symptoms, together we will determine if the child should rest for a short time or be sent home.
3. If the decision has been made to send the student home, he/she will be removed from the classroom and given space in an area of the school separate from peers while arrangements are made to transport the child home. Clarke staff will first contact the primary caregivers and, if they are unavailable, the emergency contact will be called. A staff member will stay with the child until his/her ride arrives. The child will be provided with food, water, and rest as deemed appropriate.
4. If the decision is made that the child only requires a short period of rest to continue to participate in academic activities, he/she will be monitored and allowed to return to class when appropriate. A caregiver will also be notified of the child's need for a rest. If the child's symptoms progress and they are unable to successfully participate in learning, a caregiver will be contacted to pick up their student.

Plan for administering medication (prescription, non-prescription and topical medications)

Non-prescription medications may not be administered to children at Clarke School MA in Boston. In the event of a rare, unanticipated situation, non-prescription topical medications may be administered. Caregivers should plan to give their child any necessary prescription medications at home before and/or after school. Should it become necessary for prescription medication to be administered at school, we follow the policy outlined below:

1. The caregiver must contact the school for the required permission forms that must be signed by both a doctor and caregiver.
2. All medication must be in its original, clearly labeled prescription bottle with the child's name, the name of the medication, and specific dosing directions.

3. In the unusual circumstance in which a child requires medication to be administered during school hours, designated Clarke staff members must be trained and certified annually by a health care professional in the administration of the medication.
4. A medication log will be completed each time the medication is administered. The log will include the name of the medication, the name of the person administering the medication, and the time and date the drug was administered. This log and the original permission slip will be placed in the child's file.
5. The medication will remain in a locked drawer, and any unused medication will be returned directly to the caregiver. Medications will not be kept at the school for any student.
6. If the medication requires refrigeration, then it will be placed in the refrigerator in the staff kitchen which is not accessible to students.
7. If any students require epinephrine auto injector for an allergy, it will be kept in the classroom and will be easily accessible to staff. The child's allergy plan will be kept with epinephrine.
8. School staff will never administer the first dose of any medication
9. All medications will be administered in accordance with the plan generated by the doctor.

Should it become necessary for a child to receive a topical, non-prescription medication at school, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The caregiver must give written authorization. We will also provide the caregiver with a permission slip, a signed copy of which will be placed in the child's file.
2. The medication must be in its original, clearly labeled container that includes the directions for use. It must also be marked with the child's name. It may only be used for the child to whom it belongs.
3. A medication log will be completed each time the medication is administered. The log will include the name of the medication, the name of the person administering the medication, and the time and date the drug was administered. This log and the original permission slip will be placed in the child's file.
4. If the medication requires refrigeration, then it will be placed in the refrigerator in the staff kitchen which is not accessible to students.
5. If a student has a diaper rash and a staff person administers a diaper rash cream, the caregivers will be notified at the end of the day.

Physical Examination and Immunization Records

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Education both require that each child have a yearly physical examination, including vaccinations and a lead screening, conducted by a physician/health care provider. The Department of Public health mandates that we have immunization records on file. Your physician's office may mail or fax the completed and signed form directly to the school if you wish. **Additionally, a letter dated within 30 days of the start of the school year must be received from your health care provider stating that your child is healthy to attend Clarke School.**

Emergency Medical Plan

The emergency care of injuries shall be limited to simple first aid procedures. Caregivers must be notified of all injuries on the same day that the injury occurs. The procedure that Clarke School MA in Canton follows when a child is injured is as follows:

1. The teacher-in-charge is notified immediately of any injury to a child.
2. The teacher-in-charge or other designated Clarke employee will call the caregivers, or if the caregivers are unavailable, the emergency contact.
3. When ambulance transportation is necessary, a staff member will accompany the child if the caregiver is not able to do so. Once an ambulance is called, the student must be transported from Clarke regardless of parent consent.
4. The health care consultant, the Director of Clarke, and the Clarke president will be notified/looped on any medical emergencies

Additional information regarding procedures followed during emergencies can be found in the Health Care Plan addendum. Our current licensed health care consultant is Michelle Kenyon R.N (License # 2272503).

Smoking/Tobacco

Clarke is a tobacco-free location. Smoking, vaping, and chewing tobacco are prohibited on all school grounds and on and off-site activities.

Fire Drills and Emergency Procedures

Fire drills, emergency evacuation routes and “alternate” routes are posted within each classroom and throughout the building. Practice emergency procedures will be held periodically throughout the school year. The function of these drills is to practice a rapid, safe and organized method of keeping everyone safe whether in the building or when exiting the building. Practicing the procedures also helps students and adults remain calm and prepared in the event of an actual emergency. Practiced procedures include scenarios for severe weather emergencies and lockdowns, which would be implemented if there were a possibility of a person within the building or in the vicinity of the building that might cause a risk to students. All drills are treated as an actual emergency and all people present during a drill or actual emergency will be expected to follow the established procedures.

Due to the age of our students, explanations about the emergency procedures will be age-appropriate and will be explained to students prior to any of the practices. If the building must be evacuated, all students and staff will report to their predetermined emergency location immediately. No one should return to the building for any reason until the all-clear signals have been given. Emergencies are unexpected, unpredictable and take many forms. No one can be fully prepared for everything that may happen, but guidance, strategies, and practice are helpful in any emergency. Clarke’s primary goal is to ensure that our students are safe in any situation.

Weather related school closings of Clarke School will follow the Canton, MA Public School District. Please check local radio and tv stations for Canton, MA Public School weather closings. Families will receive communication from Clarke School for any delayed openings or school closings.

Food, Snacks and Nutrition

Nutrition

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care regulations require programs to follow USDA guidelines for nutrition and food service. All educators at Clarke School MA in Canton are trained in the USDA nutrition requirements, good nutrition, and the “My Plate” guidelines (see below), the importance of physical activity, the importance of teaching children about healthy eating and food choking hazards. The program director manages the food program and assists the EEC Director with preparing the snack menu.

MyPlate is **the newest version of the United States Department of Agriculture's** (USDA's) Food Guidance System (replacing the Food Guide Pyramid). MyPlate depicts proper meal portions of the five food groups (fruit, vegetables, grains, proteins, and dairy), helping Americans build healthy meals.

See the Pack Smart Graphic on the next page for guidance when packing your child’s lunch.

Pack Smart!

Help your kids stay healthy and focused in school— pack them a nutritious lunch. Each lunch should be about $\frac{1}{2}$ **Fruits** and **Vegetables**, $\frac{1}{4}$ **Grain**, and $\frac{1}{4}$ **Protein** with one serving of **Dairy**.

Encourage children to eat vegetables and fruits by making it fun. Provide healthy ingredients like the ones below and **let kids help with preparation!**



Fruits	Vegetables	Grains	Protein	Dairy
<i>Go easy on juice and make sure it's 100%.</i>	<i>Use dark green and orange veggies.</i>	<i>Make half of the grains whole grain.</i>	<i>Use low-sodium, lean or lowfat meats.</i>	<i>Choose lowfat or fat-free dairy.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apple Orange Pear Peaches Grapes Melon Dried Fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broccoli Carrots Cauliflower Red Peppers Zucchini Broccoli Cucumber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole Wheat Bread Pita Bread Brown Rice Cereal Pasta Salad Sunflower Seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken Turkey Fish Nuts Seeds Peas Beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yogurt Milk Cheese <p>TIP Mix yogurt with cinnamon or garlic to make a delicious dip for fruits or veggies!</p>

Source: U. S. Department of Agriculture

Snacks

We strive to provide wholesome, natural, and nutritional food within Clarke School MA in Canton as much as possible. We will provide mid-morning snacks every day. The weekly snack schedule is posted in each classroom and in the kitchen. Each day's snack follows USDA nutrition guidelines for preschool-aged children and includes at least 2 food groups. An alternative snack choice is available each day. Filtered water is available to children at any time throughout the day and is always offered during snack. Milk or juice will also be offered on occasion.

Lunch

Caregivers will need to send lunch daily for their child. We encourage you to send in nutritious and well-balanced meals that will not spoil while stored in their cubbies during the morning hours. Foods that need to be served warm should be sent in a thermos, because we will not have time to heat everyone's lunch. We will provide water but understand that a child may request a special drink in their lunch box from home and welcome them to bring them to school.

In accordance with EEC policy, caregivers are asked to prepare children's food in small, manageable, ready-to-eat portions. The EEC provides a list of foods that are considered choke hazards for young children. The list is available below. We ask caregivers to please review the list and to properly prepare food, or to avoid those that present choking hazards. For example, for children under four years of age, grapes must be cut in half, skin removed from apples, string cheese must be cut lengthwise and then sliced, and popcorn must be avoided.

Children will be allowed to eat the food in their lunch box in whatever order they choose, and we will not insist that a child eat specific food. Caregivers should be aware that children may choose to eat a treat or sweet dessert before or instead of more nutritious food. We will send home all uneaten food so that caregivers are aware of what foods their children eat each day. Some healthy lunch ideas include sandwiches (ham, turkey, tuna, etc.), bagels with cream cheese, cut up cold meats, leftovers (pizza, chicken, pasta, mac and cheese), cheese and crackers, whole grain waffles or pancakes with jam, soups (in thermoses), yogurt, cut up steamed vegetables with dip, pasta, peeled and cut up fruit and whole grain cereal mixes.

Choking Hazards

Caregivers are advised that children younger than four are not provided with round firm food, unless it is cut into small, non-round pieces. Young children may not chew food properly before swallowing, increasing the risk of swallowing the food whole and choking. Foods to avoid, particularly for children under age four include:

- Hot dogs or sausage, whole or cut into rounds (they may be sliced lengthwise and cut as well)
- Nuts
- Tough or large chunks of meat
- Grapes
- Hard Candy
- Popcorn
- Marshmallows
- Chunks/spoonful of peanut butter (may be spread thinly)
- Raisins
- Raw carrots
- String cheese (may be sliced lengthwise and cut up)

Birthdays

If you would like your child to celebrate his or her birthday at school, please notify the teachers several days in advance. You may send in cupcakes, muffins, doughnuts, cookies, or ice cream. Individual servings are much easier for the teachers to handle within the classroom than one large cake. Caregivers are welcome to attend their children's party. If you would like to send a special snack to school with your child to share with the class at any other time, please feel free to do so. As a reminder, we are a nut free school. Please keep this in mind when preparing birthday treats.

Helpful Hints

Adjustment to School

Children may respond to starting school in a variety of different ways. The change from home to school is a major one in the child's life. Effects of this stress may be observed in a child's behavior and are considered normal and healthy. Some children may cry when they leave home, others may revert to earlier behaviors such as bed-wetting or baby talk, and others may simply refuse to talk about school with their families. It is helpful to be patient and supportive of your child's feelings and to share changes in behavior at home with the teachers.

In the classroom, children adjust to being in a group with other children in different ways as well. Some children join the group right away, seem comfortable from the start, and experience few problems with separation. Other children may seem to adjust easily at first but show signs of stress after a week or two. We will try to make this transition as smooth as possible for your child and will let you know how your child is adjusting in the form of frequent notes and phone calls during the first few weeks of school.

One of the best methods for a smooth transition in the morning is a hug, a kiss and reassurance that "I'll be back" or "I'll see you soon," then a quick exit versus remaining with your child for an extended period.

The staff realize that the separation of a child from their caregiver(s) is filled with emotion for the caregivers, as well as the child. The beginning of school is especially difficult for those caregivers who will be separated from their child on a regular basis for the first time. Clarke's goal is to be supportive of families as well as to their children. Please feel free to talk to staff if you are having difficulty adjusting to separation from your child.

Bringing Items from Home

We discourage children from bringing their own toys to school, as they might be lost, misplaced, or broken. In addition, it is often difficult for children to share their special possessions. The classroom teachers will often have a weekly designated "sharing" time when children can bring special things from home and tell the other children about what they have brought at group time.

However, we also realize that sometimes children need a "progressional object" to help them through the progression from home to school. This is especially true of those children who ride the bus to and from school. A book, a favorite stuffed animal, a photo of the family or a blanket could all serve as progressional objects. We welcome these objects but ask that they remain in the child's cubby during class time. Caregivers can help by assuring the child that while it is fine to bring a reminder of home to school, their item will stay in their cubby during class time.

Clothing

Each child should wear comfortable play clothes that they can manage for toileting. Clothes with elastic waists are ideal. Sneakers are preferred and sandals with backs and straps are permitted. Please, **no flip-flops or heels allowed**. Children in the preschool and pre-kindergarten classes are required to wear shorts under dresses/skirts. Please send clothing that is appropriate to the weather conditions -hats and lightweight clothes in the summer, snowpants, hats and gloves in the winter and layers in between seasons. Do not dress your child in clothing that has to be kept especially clean. We encourage the child's use of materials, and we would not want their clothing to inhibit their freedom to investigate and explore.

Accidents Happen

We have many potty-training or newly potty-trained students. In working with young children, we expect that bathroom accidents, spills, and general messes will occur. As such, **we ask that each child have a bag with-two complete changes of clothing** (e.g., underwear, socks, pants, shirt, etc.). Your child's name should be marked clearly on the bag. In December we will need another two sets of clothes that are appropriate for the cooler temperatures. If back-up items are used and soiled, the dirty clothing will be sent home. At that time, please be sure to send replacements for the classroom.

Pets

As of this writing, there are no classroom pets living at Clarke. From time to time, families may have a pet they would like to introduce to their child's class. Arrangements for pet visits should be made in advance with your child's teacher to make sure we can accommodate all safety concerns. There may also be opportunities for community organizations to offer animal visits to our location. Should such visits be planned, we will inform families in advance in the event they would prefer that their child not participate. Any visiting animals should be leashed and/or in a crate and under the sole supervision of their owner.

Social-Emotional Learning and Behavior Supports

Clarke MA in Canton is committed to providing discipline and guidance that is consistent and based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of each child. Discipline is directed to the goal of maximizing growth and development of the children and for protecting the group and the individuals in it. Clarke uses elements of curriculum from the Strong Start, Pyramid Model, and Social Thinking Programs which provide a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development.

When a child's behavior is deemed inappropriate or endangers others, they will be redirected to another activity. The child is welcome to return when they are ready to do so. A teacher may ask the child if they need a "body break," this gives the child a few minutes to gain control of themselves. When inappropriate behavior is consistent and chronic, a teacher may request a meeting with the caregiver(s) to develop a plan to modify the behavior to be followed at school as well as at home.

Our curriculum goals and objectives support children to learn social, communication and emotional regulation skills. When students demonstrate challenges regulating their behaviors, we use a wide variety of sensory and self-regulation strategies or other redirecting techniques.

Clarke’s mascots “Millie the Hearing Monkey”, “Kee the Hearing Koala” and “Sophie the Hearing Schnauzer” are tools used to help create a positive atmosphere and promote positive social-emotional development. Your child will have opportunities to bring Millie, Kee or Sophie home for weekend adventures. A chart is prominently displayed in each classroom so that students have a visual aide to help them regulate their own behavior. We also use visual timers and other picture cues to assist with progressions between activities and environments throughout the day. These environmental and activity modifications are effective ways to prevent challenging behaviors.

Staff have been trained through on-going professional development to recognize triggers for children that mark an escalation in challenging behaviors. Therefore, they can intervene quickly and redirect the student.

In the beginning of the school year, teachers spend time teaching the students the classroom routines and establishing expected classroom behaviors. The children participate in regular discussions about their emotions, the emotions of others with whom they are interacting, and the impact that their behaviors have on others within their environment. Role-playing and puppets, part of the Pyramid Model curriculum, are also used to help students begin to verbalize their feelings. At times positive reinforcement is implemented when trying to help a child to generalize a specific skill.

Under no circumstances do we use corporal punishment (including spanking), severe or cruel punishment, humiliation, neglect or verbal or physical abuse. No form of physical punishment (e.g. hitting, shaking, etc.) is ever used or tolerated at Clarke School, nor are there any type of threats or derogatory remarks. We do not deny children snacks or outdoor time as a form of punishment. Under no circumstances do we force-feed children or make them eat any food item against their will or use food consequently. We do not discipline or punish children for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet. We do not force children to remain in soiled clothing or to remain on the toilet. Clarke has appropriate clothing in the event a child does not have an extra set of clothes in their cubby.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Clarke MA in Canton community is committed to making our school a safe and caring environment for all students. We treat each other with respect.

Bullying is not always easy to define but is unfair and one-sided.

Young children at times may put their own feelings before others, and even the most considerate child will have the occasional outburst due to frustration, anger or over exuberance. We acknowledge that this is a developmental area that needs to be nurtured and supported, and that young children do not intentionally wish to cause harm. Strategies that are used in our program include:

- Recognizing that young children are not always able to manage their own feelings and deliver them appropriately. Clarke staff work hard to model and promote vocabulary required to label and express emotions, problem solve social situations, and comprehend the impact of their behavior on themselves and others
- Offer support to all children who may be involved to help them comprehend and discuss the issues through play, stories, and other age-appropriate methods

Clarke staff will teach the students to do the following things to prevent bullying, and everyone feels safe at school:

- Treat everyone with respect and kindness
- Will not bully others
- Will not let other students be bullied
- Include everyone in play, especially those who are often left out

Teachers and staff do the following things to prevent bullying and help children feel safe at school:

- Closely supervise students in all areas of the school and playground
- Watch for signs of bullying behavior and stop it immediately
- Explore all reported bullying incidents
- Assign consequences based on the school social, emotional, and behavior supports

The role of caregivers:

- Caregivers who are concerned or have questions about bullying should contact the child's teacher and the program director
- Caregivers are encouraged to support Clarke's policy and actively encourage their child to be a positive member of the Clarke community
- Work closely with Clarke staff to promote healthy social-emotional development

Visitors Policy

All visitors to the building must be allowed entry to the locked building by a staff member. Upon entering, the visitor must sign in, sign a nondisclosure policy, and will be provided with a visitor badge to be worn throughout their time at Clarke.

Release of Children from School

Please remember that we cannot release your child to anyone other than a caregiver, legal guardian, or bus driver without written permission. We will review proof of identification when anyone other than the caregiver, legal guardian or bus driver picks up a child. Please send an email to **ClarkeCanton@clarkeschools.org** to notify and authorize your child's teaching staff and administration if someone different is picking up your child from school.

Building Security

Clarke has a security system in place for the safety of families, staff, and students. Your understanding and cooperation are appreciated. All visitors, including families, staff from various school districts, and other Clarke campuses must ring the bell and be allowed into the building through the front door. They must sign in and take an identification badge to be worn throughout their time in school. The sign-in allows Clarke MA in Canton to have an accurate count of the individuals who are in the building in the event of an evacuation such as a fire. All doors are always securely locked.

Sexual Harassment

There is nothing more important to us than the children we teach and support. We understand that children and youth are not only our future; they are a valuable part of the community. However, our students are also vulnerable. Sadly, because of their vulnerability, they can be taken advantage of or become victims of abuse. Therefore, it is imperative that we are proactive in protecting them and in providing safe environments.

In addition, we must protect those who work with our students. Our school personnel need the security of knowing that they are working in a setting where processes and procedures are in place to minimize any possibility of an erroneous accusation.

Clarke's Plan to Protect[®] Policy establishes the criteria for the provision of a safe environment for all children, youth, and school personnel.

Special Events

Celebrations and special events are an important and exciting part of Clarke MA in Canton throughout the school year. Such celebrations can range from a more formal event that includes food and drink to something as small as extra impromptu outside activities. Five ways in which special events tie into the curriculum and promote educational/social skills include:

- Helping to build connections between students and teachers or peers
- Helping to develop social skills
- Helping to build positive relationships with the community
- Helping children practice and develop social expectations in real-life situations
- Helping to support academic achievement by targeting language and academic concepts

One of our goals at Clarke is to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within our school so that all children bring their whole selves to school, feel safe and welcome, and embrace their differences. I am writing to clarify

Holidays

No holidays will be *celebrated* at Clarke MA in Canton and there will not be a focus on one singular holiday. Instead, throughout the year, the emphasis will be on learning what various holidays mean to different students and the numerous ways that even the same holiday may be celebrated in different homes. A non-exhaustive list of holidays that some of our families may celebrate are listed below.

Clarke MA in Canton staff encourage you to reach out with additional holidays that you would like included and we invite you to observe in the classroom or participate at ANY time.

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| -Hanukkah | -New Year | -Lunar New Year | -Thanksgiving |
| -Christmas | -Diwali | -Eid | -Ramadan |
| -Kwanzaa | -4 th of July | | |
| -Special People's Day (an all-encompassing version of Mother's and Father's Day) | | | |

The focus throughout each holiday activity will remain on each child's specific academic, audition, and speech/language goals which include but are not limited to the list below. Your teachers will be sure to send home information so that you can carry the vocabulary and concepts over into your home environment including:

- literacy skills
- math skills
- following directions
- increasing receptive and expressive vocabulary
- articulation and overall intelligibility
- comparing and contrasting
- improving narrative development/storytelling
- promoting social interactions (asking and answering questions, being respectful of differences, recognizing and expressing emotions, strategies for self-regulation, etc.)

We here at Clarke hope you know how important every single one of your children is to us. They deserve to be recognized and to share all of the unique things that make them the wonderful little people they are today.

Research, Fundraising, Publicity and Student Clinician Policies

From time-to-time Clarke participates in research projects with other institutions. When such projects arise, we will request permission for your child's participation and will provide detailed information regarding the nature of the research study. Clarke saves data related to children's enrollment, services, demographic characteristics, assessment, and testing. The data is used to monitor each child's progress, to assist in program improvement and to document listening and spoken language outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Fundraising and Publicity

To continue to remain such an excellent and transformative program, Clarke depends on the support and generosity of those in our community who recognize the crucial work that we do with young children. Clarke conducts necessary fundraising and promotion for programs and services. If you would like to become more involved with efforts to support fundraising and Clarke's long-term sustainability, please contact develop@clarkeschools.org.

Observations and Student Clinicians

Clarke is committed to training future professionals, such as teachers and speech-language pathologists, to work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- College students and professionals often visit Clarke for the opportunity to observe and learn more about the work we do with Listening and Spoken Language. Observers are not allowed to have any direct, unsupervised interaction with any child.
- Graduate student clinicians, typically speech/language interns or student teachers, are often accepted for placement at Clarke as they complete the required components of their professional training. They come from a variety of colleges and universities, such as Columbia University, Northeastern University, Stonehill College, Bridgewater State University, and many others. All student interns and student teachers undergo the same rigorous background checks that employees go through. You will be notified if your child's teacher or speech-language pathologist will be mentoring a student clinician.

Families in Temporary Housing

Please let us know if you/your child are in temporary housing, such as a shelter. There are special regulations to support your child in enrolling in school and providing more time, if needed, to get some of the health requirements for us.

Payment Options/Billing

We accept most insurance and Medicaid. We also accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover credit cards for payment for speech services and/or summer school year when applicable.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies or any information contained within Clarke's handbook, please contact:

Melanie Austin, MS, CCC-SLP, Director

Email: maustin@clarkeschools.org

Phone: (781) 821-3499, x2201

Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements 2025–2026[§]

Massachusetts school immunization requirements are created under the authority of [105 CMR 220.000: Immunization of Students Before Admission to School](#).

Requirements apply to all students, including individuals from other countries attending or visiting classes or educational programs as part of an academic visitation or exchange program. Requirements apply to all students in every grade, even if they are over 18 years of age. Doses that satisfy ACIP recommendations as adopted by the CDC on October 24, 2024 also satisfy school requirements.

Childcare/Preschool^{¶†}

Attendees <2 years should be immunized for their age according to the [2025 ACIP Recommended Immunization Schedule](#). Requirements listed in the table below apply to all attendees ≥2 years. These requirements also apply to children in preschool classes called K0 or K1.

Hib	1–4 doses ; number of doses is determined by vaccine product and age the series begins
DTaP	4 doses
Polio	3 doses
Hepatitis B	3 doses ; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
MMR	1 dose ; must be given on or after the 1 st birthday; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
Varicella	1 dose ; must be given on or after the 1 st birthday; a reliable history of chickenpox* or laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable

Grades Kindergarten–6^{¶†}

In ungraded classrooms, Kindergarten requirements apply to all students ≥5 years.

DTaP/Tdap	5 doses ; 4 doses are acceptable if the fourth dose is given on or after the 4 th birthday; DT is only acceptable with a letter stating a medical contraindication to DTaP
Polio	4 doses ; fourth dose must be given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥6 months after the previous dose or a fifth dose is required; 3 doses are acceptable if the third dose is given on or after the 4 th birthday and ≥6 months after the previous dose
Hepatitis B	3 doses ; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
MMR	2 doses ; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday, and second dose must be given ≥28 days after first dose; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
Varicella	2 doses ; first dose must be given on or after the 1 st birthday and second dose must be given ≥28 days after first dose; a reliable history of chickenpox* or laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable

[§] Address questions about enforcement with your legal counsel. School requirements are enforced at the local level.

[¶] Meningococcal vaccine requirements (see Grades 7–10 and 11–12) also apply to residential students in Grades Preschool through 8 if the school combines these grades in the same school as students in Grades 9–12.

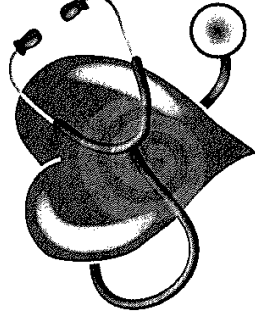
[†] Medical exemptions (statement from a physician stating that a vaccine is medically contraindicated for a student) must be renewed annually at the start of the school year, and religious exemptions (statement from a student or parent/guardian, if the student is <18 years of age, stating that a vaccine is against sincerely held religious beliefs), should be renewed annually at the start of the school year.

* A reliable history of chickenpox includes a diagnosis of chickenpox or interpretation of parent/guardian description of chickenpox by a physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or designee.

See the following pages for Grades 7–10, Grades 11–12, and College (Postsecondary Institutions)

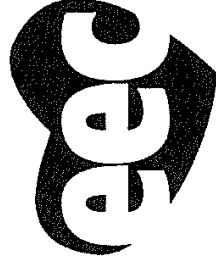
Every child with a chronic medical condition diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner must have an Individual Health Care Plan on file at the program, even if there is no medication, or the medication associated with the plan does not need to be administered at the program.

Individual Health Care Plans (IHCP)



The Do's and Don'ts

The Department
of Early
Education and
Care
51 Sleeper Street,
4th Floor
Boston, MA



Do's

The IHCP Must have the following:

- Description of the chronic condition.
- The symptoms of the condition.
- Any medical treatment that is necessary while the child is in care.
- When to give treatment(s). If the plan has more than one treatment, make sure that it clearly states what medication to administer for each of the symptoms listed.
- The potential side effects of the treatment.
- The potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not administered.
- The Educator(s) in the program must have been successfully trained in the child's chronic medical condition/needs by the child's health practitioner, or receive training by the parent or the program's health care consultant, as authorized by the practitioner.
- Make sure that the plan is signed and dated by both the parent and the Health Care Practitioner annually.
- Make sure that the treatment listed on the IHCP is in the program while the child is in care.
- Medication must be stored in it's original box with it's original label.

Don'ts

- Don't accept a plan that has missing information.
- Don't have information or directions for the medication written as needed or a PRN (per request as needed).
- Don't allow multiple chronic health conditions to be listed on one IHCP. A plan must be written for each chronic health care condition. (i.e. if a child has asthma and is allergic to bees, then this child would have two separate IHCP's).
- Don't change, cross out, or add information on the plan after it is created and signed by the doctor and parent.
- Don't allow the child to attend the program unless the Director, Nurse, or designated staff has reviewed the IHCP and found it to be complete, and all related medication is provided.
- Don't forget to check that the medication provided as listed on the IHCP is current. For prescription medications, the script and the date stamped on the medication has to be current; for non-prescription medications, the date stamped on the medication box must be current.
- Don't provide a generic form of the medication treatment listed on the plan, unless the plan states such.

Tips

- When creating/obtaining an IHCP, make sure that it has all of the information listed in the "Do's" section of this brochure.
- Make sure that a medication consent form is fully completed for each medical treatment that is listed on the IHCP. If the medication listed on the IHCP is a prescription medication, then the consent form only needs to be signed by the parent. If the medication is non-prescription, then the consent form must be signed by both the parent and health care practitioner.
- All medication listed on a IHCP is considered an emergency life-saving medication, therefore it has to be readily available for the child for which it is intended. This medication must follow the child whether indoors or outdoors.
- If an allergy/action plan is received, review it to make sure it has all the necessary information. If it is only missing the information about whom the doctor authorizes to train, and whom at the program will be trained, then the following should be added prior to the health care practitioner signing the IHCP: "I authorize the parent or program's health care consultant to train '(name of program)' staff in my child's chronic health care needs and treatment."



Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - Accrediting organizations;
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student

handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

For additional information or technical assistance, you may call (202) 260-3887 (voice). Individuals who use TDD may call the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

Or you may contact us at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

Last Modified: 04/27/2007



DR. OPEOLUWA SOTONWA
MCDHH COMMISSIONER

WEBSITE:
[MASS.GOV/MCDHH](https://mass.gov/mcdhh)

MAILING ADDRESS:
600 WASHINGTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02111

CONTACT NUMBERS:

- 617.740.1600 (MAIN)
- 800.882.1155 (VOICE)
- 617.326.7546 (VP)
- 800.530.7570 (TTY)

MAURA HEALEY
GOVERNOR

KIM DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

KATE WALSH
SECRETARY EOHHS

Children's Services

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Children's Specialists at MCDHH provide unique support services to families, professionals, and educators connected to children who are Deaf or hard of hearing throughout the Commonwealth.

CHILDREN'S SPECIALISTS

MCDHH carefully selects staff experienced in working with children and adolescents with varying degrees of hearing loss. Each staff possesses a wealth of knowledge in communicative and educational choices available for deaf and hard of hearing children. All Children's Specialists are bilingual in English and American Sign Language (ASL).

It is the goal of the Children's Specialists at MCDHH to ensure equal access to communication in the modality that best supports the child and family across all areas of life including home, school and community.

SERVICES

- Education relative to the effects of hearing loss at birth, during childhood and in the teenage years.
- Support with transitions around Early Intervention, the public school system, and adult service.
- Identification of Intervention Strategies for parents, educators, professionals and community members, including but not limited to the appropriate usage of technology and language development.
- Objective Information regarding choices for early language development.
- Information and Referral to specialized services such as mental health, behavioral health, psycho-educational evaluation and testing, speech and language pathologies and audiologists.
- Assistance with Early Intervention and educational programs regarding the communication need and cultural perspectives of Deaf and hard of hearing children.
- Advocacy and Support to families and agencies in the development and utilization of service plans.
- Connecting Children and Families to recreational and social activities as well as other families and Deaf adult role models.

All services are free and confidential.

MCDHH-CommServDiv@mass.gov



Nov 2024

Back to School Packet Forms to be Completed Prior to the First Day of School

- Enrollment/Application Form
- Medical Form: documenting current health, immunizations, and special needs. This form must be consistent with the individual health care plan
- *Individual Health Care Needs Plan (IHCP)- This is for children with allergies, asthma, cochlear implants, any child who may need an EpiPen or other health needs. This must be completed in full by a doctor and it must be consistent with the Medical/Physical form.

*Children with EpiPens cannot be in school without this form completed and an unexpired EpiPen on site.

- Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
- Emergency Contacts and Consent to Pick up:
- Clarke must have at least 3 contacts to call in case we cannot reach you.
- No child will be released to a non-caregiver caregiver if they are not listed on this form.
- Dental Form
- Consent to Obtain/Release Information
- Permission Slip-off campus trips/neighborhood walks
- Permission for Assessment
- Permission to apply topical protection
- Media Releases and Consent
- Transportation Plan
- Permission to Read with Cooper, the Dunkin' Service Dog

Additional Forms

These forms are needed for a child to receive services or required by regulation:

- Caregiver Handbook/Orientation Review Acknowledgement of receiving the orientation and enrollment material, including the Caregiver Handbook and all its information.
- Assistive Technology Intake Form: This form provides us with information about the technology your child uses and the audiologist your child sees outside of Clarke. It also includes specific consent for data logging.
- Latest Audiogram
- Current IEP
- Annual Development Forms
- Caregiver Involvement Forms

First Day of School Checklist

- Backpack-To be brought to school each day. Backpacks should be of reasonable weight. Each child should be able to carry his/her own backpack without assistance. The backpack should fit your child's lunchbox, notebook, and other items.
- Lunch in a lunch box (each day). No nut products. Clarke does NOT heat or refrigerate food.
- 2 Changes of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) appropriate for the season to be left in school. All items should be labeled with your child's name
- Supply of spare batteries for your child's hearing aids or cochlear implant
- Pull-Ups for children not yet toilet trained (Pull-Ups with velcro side tabs are preferred)
- A package of wipes

The following items are not mandatory but would be appreciated by your child's class:

- Packages of unopened wipes
- Glue/glue sticks
- Construction paper
- New non-toxic, washable markers
- New, unopened crayons
- Boxes of unopened, soft tissues
- Unopened boxes of healthy snacks- animal crackers, pretzels, rice cakes, etc. to share with class (NO NUTS)
- Cake, muffin, or brownie mixes (NO NUTS in ingredients) for special occasions.

Connect with the Clarke Community and Online Resources

Clarke produces a variety of resources for caregivers including tips, at-home strategies, blogs, newsletters and more. Visit clarkeschools.org/resources and follow @ClarkeSchools on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to stay connected.