



Spring-Mar Preschool Association, Inc.

DIRECTOR
Tracy McKay

March 21, 2008

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President
Barbara Breckenridge

Vice President
Bibi Ortiz-Levine

Treasurer
Eric Riutort

Secretary
Carole Letzkus

Assistant Treasurer
Debra Vail

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Education Chairs

Lubna Farid
Kirsten Buchner

Fundraising Chairs

Mary Cortina
Kara Figueredo

Hospitality Chair

Rachel Berger

Membership Chairs

Lisa Haworth
Siobhan Green

Newsletter Editor

Nicole Behrens

Property Chairs

Elaina Moy
Heather Patterson

Publicity Chair

Amanda Christman

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 2395
Springfield, VA 22152

SCHOOL LOCATION

10125 Lakehaven Court
Burke, Virginia 22015

TELEPHONE

703-239-1213

WEB SITE

www.spring-mar.org

Open letter to NAEYC from Spring-Mar Cooperative Preschool

Dear NAEYC,

The Board of Directors of Spring-Mar Cooperative Preschool (Spring-Mar Preschool Association, Inc.) wishes to inform you of our intention to neither complete new candidacy materials now, nor reapply for NAEYC accreditation in the foreseeable future.

This was a difficult decision, especially due to NAEYC's strong reputation and the fact that Spring-Mar had been accredited by NAEYC for the past 22 years. However, we as a board and community feel strongly that not pursuing NAEYC accreditation is the best decision for our school.

We would like to outline our reasons for this decision, in the hopes it may inform NAEYC about the challenges our school in particular, and many other cooperative model schools, may face in the accreditation process.

Spring-Mar is a half-day, non-profit, parent cooperative preschool with a 45-year history in the Springfield/Burke community. Our parents are intimately involved in the running of the school. We serve on the Board of Directors and make up the committees that perform the administrative and maintenance functions of the school. We serve as teacher helpers in every classroom every class day. In doing so, we get to know our director and teachers, our own children, and all the other children in the school.

In summary, we feel that the workload required for our teachers and school to provide the documentation required for accreditation would significantly detract from our staff's core work of teaching our children.

NAEYC has substantially increased the documentation process for accredited schools in the last two years. The documentation required for NAEYC reaccreditation changed from a 2-page questionnaire to 413 criteria. After going through this process this year, we feel that there is now a significant mismatch between NAEYC's accreditation process and the cooperative school structure, especially for the expectations for use of our time and resources to document the quality of our school program.

NAEYC ranked Spring-Mar highly on 9 of the 10 Program Standards:

1 Relationships: 100%

2 Curriculum: 96%

3 Teaching: 90%

5 Health: 86%

6 Teachers: 80%

7 Families: 100%

8 Community Relationships: 100%

9 Physical Environment 100%

10 Leadership and Management 100%

For the 4th Program Standard, Spring-Mar was unable to document evidence of conducting individualized assessments for our children, reporting these assessments to parents, and using those assessments to adjust lesson plans and improve the curriculum.

We agree with NAEYC that we do not have sufficient paper based documentation of this process – however, we feel very strongly that our teachers and director perform these assessments on an ongoing and informal basis. We, the Board, know this because we see it in our roles as class teacher helpers, in our frequent conversations with other parents and our child’s teachers, and in our roles as committee members actively directing the future of the school. As a cooperative school, our parents serve as classroom teacher helpers every day. This means that each parent volunteers in the classroom once every 3-6 weeks. We have a unique opportunity at this time to discuss with the teacher the development of our children, observations made at home, observations made at school, how our children are different when the parent is in the classroom versus when the parent is not in the classroom. Our teachers evaluate our children daily and are able to present achievements and concerns on such a frequent basis that our formal Parent-Teacher Conferences mostly present previously known and discussed observations.

While we continue to hold a great deal of value for the spirit of the NAEYC’s approach to the teaching of small children, we feel that the documentation required to prove this to NAEYC’s satisfaction reflects a different school structure, one where parents are not so intimately involved in the day-to-day management of the school. Our parents are able, and are encouraged, to directly address needs for changes for their child, class, or school-at-large as we are the ones running the school.

The documentation required to prove compliance with all 413 NAEYC standards must be updated and in many cases re-created every year. We feel that the documentation load for teachers is significant when taking into account that our classes only meet between 6 and 12 hours a week. Unlike full-day preschool programs, our school structure only offers limited time to perform administrative functions, which we are already committed to do for licensing and school policy practices.

We fully support NAEYC’s commitment to the education of young children and hope that NAEYC also understands that its new accreditation requirements are not a perfect fit for the small, non-profit, cooperative school.

Sincerely,

Spring-Mar Preschool Association, Inc. Board of Directors