

2. CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

Daily Schedule

The following schedule serves as a guide when you help in the classroom. There are three parent helpers each day. Parent helpers share responsibilities. The program varies--no two days will ever be exactly alike. The schedule is flexible, and times are approximate. However, we usually maintain the same order of events so that the children have the security of knowing what to expect next. The teacher reserves the right to change the schedule as necessary to meet the needs of the children. Always consult the teacher when in doubt about how to help in the classroom.

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| 8:30 a.m. | Parent helpers arrive and set up for day's activities |
| 8:45 a.m. | Alternate parent helper arrives |
| 9:00 a.m. | Children arrive and do a workjob with a parent/carpool driver |
| 9:20 a.m. | Opening circle with Anette |
| 9:30 a.m. | Children flow into choice time including snack and outside/gym |
| 10:50 a.m. | Last call for snack |
| 11:15 a.m. | Shoes on |
| 11:20 a.m. | Clean up and circle |
| 11:45 a.m. | Reading room for circle, story and closing |
| 12:00 p.m. | Children leave with a parent/carpool driver |
| | Parent helpers complete daily cleaning |
| | Parent helpers debrief with Anette |

Your Day as a Parent Helper

There are three parent helpers each day. **Parent helpers must arrive by 8:30 a.m., and the Alternate Parent Helper must arrive by 8:45.** This ensures that class will start on time and the classroom will be ready. Parent helpers leave when the daily cleaning is finished, usually between 12:45 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.

SNACK PARENT HELPER

One parent helper each day is designated as the "snack parent." The snack parent provides our school snack for the day.

Snacks should be healthy and vegetarian. To give our children balanced energy sources, we ask that you generally provide a protein, a grain and a fruit or vegetable, but this is flexible. Please do not bring cookies, sugar cereals, syrups, or other sweet treats.

Please be mindful of the food allergies in your class and plan your snack accordingly.

A list of food allergies for each class is posted on the snack cabinet door for your review. Please see page 45 for our Food Allergy Policy.

Please be sure snacks are in small pieces. It is best for the children to take several small pieces rather than one large, and there are fewer unfinished pieces. The snack parent

needs to monitor amounts, so that the children learn to gauge their servings and learn not to waste food.

It is always fun for preschoolers to have a hand in preparing what they eat. Things as simple as spreading your own cream cheese on a bagel or pumpkin muffin is an adventure and good life skills practice. Some favorite special snacks are toast, pancakes, mini pizzas, bean dip and pitas, and edamame. Use your imagination. If you have questions, please talk with the teacher.

Before you prepare snack, clean and sanitize the snack table and serving table. Check the dishwasher to see if there are dishes to unload. Put a couple of inches of water in pitchers on the snack table. During class time, the snack parent helper often works in the snack area, but this is not required. Parent helpers often agree to follow the flow of the day trading areas of supervision. Whichever parent helper supervises the snack area needs to make sure that children have washed their hands adequately before they select food.

Snack time ends around 11:10. At 10:50, children should be given a last call for snack, so no one misses their chance to have a snack. At the end of snack time, snack foods are put away and dishes loaded in the dishwasher.

The snack parent is also responsible for wearing the inside clip necklace. On “outside days” children need to get their clip from the snack parent and deliver it to the outside parent helper. When going in they must take the clip in with them and give it back to the snack parent. The teacher and all parent helpers should work to monitor that the exchanges are taking place. Every few minutes, take a head count to be sure all the children are present.

The Snack Parent’s daily responsibilities are summarized on a laminated card available in the bin with the blue parent helper aprons (a copy is included on page 54).

THE OTHER TWO PARENT HELPERS

Before the start of the day, check with the teacher for any special instructions regarding the day's plan. Unless the snack person has brought a complex snack that they alone need to supervise, all parent helpers and the teacher float among the areas of the classroom and outside or gym depending on the number of children in an area.

Parent helpers share the following responsibilities **before school begins**. Do as much as you can by 8:55, then meet with the teacher to discuss the day’s events.

Set up the playground or gym (depending on the weather):

When you are setting up outside:

- Wear plastic gloves while you look for unsafe objects to be removed (glass, sticks, cigarette butts, etc.) and check the play area for dog and cat poop.
- Check for toys that are broken or unsafe.
- Talk to the teacher about additional set up.

When you are setting up in the gym,

- Pull the cart out and park it on the West gym wall.

- Leave the toys on the cart until school begins. A minimal set up helps control the curiosity of younger siblings.
- Talk to the teacher about additional set up.

Set up the classroom:

- Set up paint area. Hang paper at each easel and make sure this is a supply of easel paper. After circle, you will need to come back to uncap paints, put a brush in each container and make sure there is a supply of easel paper.
- Lay out vinyl tablecloth on gym floor for drying paintings.
- Prepare materials for special project.
- Assist the teacher with other classroom preparation as directed.

At the end of class time, all parent helpers join the class in the reading room for reading time. Cleaning will be done after the children are dismissed and your children have started their lunches. All parent helpers share cleaning responsibilities after school has ended. There is a list inside the white cupboard nearest the filing cabinet that outlines the daily cleaning chores.

The Parent Helpers' daily responsibilities are summarized on a laminated card available in the bin with the blue parent helper aprons (a copy is included on page 53).

CHILDREN ARRIVE

The teacher will greet the children near the door and have the child "clip in." At about 9:20, she will ring the bell for opening circle. A parent helper should keep an eye on the door and be sure to greet any late-arriving children. Have them put their clip in the clip can, and then direct the child and parent to the circle. Around 9:30 close the outside blue gym door again for safety. The children use the glass classroom door to go outside during choice time. The outside blue gym door remains closed for the rest of the school day.

Children and parents will choose a workjob and do it together. Encourage children to settle in an area where there is enough space for their chosen activity and that is out of the traffic ways. Workjobs may be done on the floor or at a table, in the main classroom or the reading room. There may be parents who need to leave quickly and need other parents or parent helpers to work with their child. If you see a child having difficulty saying goodbye to their parent at the end of their workjob, assist the child in getting involved in a new activity or get the teacher.

ACTIVITY/FREE PLAY TIME

When parent helpers arrive, the teacher will explain the day's planned activities. It is particularly important that the children do as much by themselves as possible. They will be delighted with what they produce and this will instill pride and confidence. It is important to emphasize the process, what they are **doing**, rather than the finished product. ("I see you used scissors and glue for your project," "I see you are using blue in your painting," "Tell me about your picture," etc.)

Some projects will require a limit of children at the table. The teacher will advise on this or, in your judgment, you can set a limit.

Some children will not want to start right away. Once the late starters see what the others are doing they will probably join in. There may also be times when a child does not want to participate at all. Children should not be forced to participate when they do not wish to.

The planned activities and the free play will blend together. You will need to blend your helping with projects and the help needed by children in free play. The children in free play usually need minimal supervision, but if you see a child having a hard time getting involved or having trouble sharing, etc., try to help him or her by suggesting alternate activities. The most important thing is making sure the children are safe, happy, and feel welcome.

SNACK

Snack is set out at the beginning of school and is available continuously throughout the activity/free play time. Children may choose to have snack whenever they are hungry. It is the responsibility of the parent helper working in that area to see that children wash their hands before starting snack. Children may stay as long or as short as they like at the snack table.

Eating and drinking take place only at the table and while sitting down. When finished, children should put compost-able items in the compost bucket, garbage in the garbage can, and unfinished water in the water bucket. They may then place their dishes and cups in the bin on the cart.

BATHROOM

The school has three bathrooms. One bathroom is located in the reading room, and two additional restrooms are available the hallway outside the reading room, if needed. Assist any child who needs toileting help. Extra clothing is in the bathroom in case of accidents. Many children keep an extra change of clothes in their cubbies.

MUSIC

Musical instruments and CDs are available for use throughout the day. Children may join in the music at any time, or not, as they choose.

TRANSITION TO OUTSIDE/GYM

The gym or the outside area is available as soon as the opening circle is over.

If we are in the gym, children may flow freely between the classroom and the gym. If we are outside, children need to get their shoes and coats, etc., then get their "outside clip" (which is different from their check-in clip) from the snack parent and deliver it to the outside parent. When going in they must take the clip in with them and give it back to the snack parent. The teacher and all parent helpers need to monitor that the exchanges are taking place. Every few minutes, take a head count to ensure all the children are present.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

The outside play area will be available unless severe weather prohibits it. Please make sure that your child has appropriate clothing at school. If they didn't want to wear a jacket or raincoat in the morning, please bring it and leave it in their cubbies. If children do not seem appropriately dressed for cold or wet weather, offer to find them something in the extra clothing cart located in the bathroom. If children come in wet, help them find dry clothes.

INDOOR GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITIES

When it is too wet or cold to go outside we use the gym. Because the children will move freely between the classroom and the gym, adults will also need to move back and forth according to the balance of children. The gym is neither well-heated nor insulated. The children are generally fine because they are active. Parents may need sweatshirts.

Parent helpers are responsible for safety in the play structure area. Assist children as needed, but please don't lift them up or down. Show them how, guide their feet and hands, if necessary. The standard guideline is they need to get themselves up in order to get themselves down.

CHILDREN'S CLEAN-UP

Encourage the children to put away the toy they are playing with before selecting a new one. Please don't put the toys away for them. Instead, take this opportunity to help the children learn to put their things away. If necessary, hand the child a toy and tell him or her where it belongs, or ask the child to put something specific away: "Kate, would you find a place on the shelf for the red blocks?" You will need to follow up and see that the children do get all the toys on the shelf.

CLEAN UP

At the end of the day we all work together to clean both the classroom and the gym/ outside. If a child says they didn't play there, you may say something like, "We all work together to get our classroom clean," "Friends help friends," "Let's see what working together can do," etc.

Outside Clean-up

- Children bring toys to the shed. **Children do not go in the sheds at any time.**
- Adults stack toys in the shed. Please put things away in the shed in an orderly manner. It will make the setup for the next morning's parent helper much easier.

Gym Clean-up

- All toys go in bins or on shelves.
- Stack bins and boxes on the cart.
- Taking down the climbing structure and moving large equipment will be done with close adult supervision or after school.

Art Area Clean-up

- Put away any remaining tools and art supplies.
- Remove brushes from paints to a container of water by the sink.
- Cap paints.
- Wash tables.
- Push chairs in.

Playdough Table Clean-up

- Put away tools in bins.
- Put playdough in tub, put on lid and place on top of tool bins.
- Check floor and chairs for playdough.
- Wash table.
- Push chairs in.

Dramatic Play Area Clean-up

- Hang up/put away all dress-up clothing.
- Remove toys from indoor play structure and put away.
- Lock crow's nest.
- Put away dishes and food.
- Make sure purses and bags are emptied and items are put away.

Block/Toy Area Clean-up

- Put blocks in rolling bins.
- Put toys in labeled bins and on shelves.

Touch Table Clean-up

- Take all toys out of table and put in bins.
- Put lid on table.
- Sweep up area around table.

Reading Room Clean-up

- Put books on display shelves.
- Put all buddies in the buddy box.
- Put away tapes and puzzles.
- Straighten writing area (papers, stamps, markers, etc.).

After the children finish in one area, you may suggest they help clean another area. The exception is the gym. Adding a second group to the gym usually makes for chaos. Too many children and too much space usually equals no work.

When each area is clean, parent helpers will accompany the children to the block area for circle.

CIRCLE/STORY TIME/GOOD-BYE

Two parent helpers will join the teacher and children directly for the transition from circle to story time in the reading room. The third parent helper will remain in the classroom until the first parent arrives for pickup and will then join the teacher and children for the rest of group and story time. The teacher will read stories and engage the children in conversations. Please sit near talkative or wiggly children. Your presence is often enough to help them concentrate. This is a time to be with your child, but not a time for your child alone. Your lap will probably be needed by more than one child. After the goody-bye song children will remain in the reading room until they have been picked up.

PARENT HELPER DAILY CLEANING

Parent helper daily cleaning begins after circle, story time and good-bye. Duties are posted on the inside door of the white cupboard nearest the phone (a copy is included on page 55). Get your children set up eating lunch, supervise children not yet picked up and work on cleaning until all children have been picked up. Parent helpers will need to check with each other as to the jobs that have been done and those that remain. When the cleaning is done, meet with the teacher for the after-class debriefing. Before you leave please double check the cleaning list and clean up after the "lunchers"--floor, table, lunch boxes, etc. Also ensure that all doors are locked and the dishwasher is started.

AFTER-CLASS DEBRIEFING

This is a time for you to share with the teacher what was both positive and negative about the morning for you.

- Did the projects work?
- Was the room set up well?
- Did anyone, or group, have particular difficulty or success today?
- Did you observe anything you think might be helpful to the teacher in making future plans?

If you witnessed a minor accident or mishap, be sure the teacher is informed now (if not earlier) so parents can be notified when appropriate. If you noticed anything unsafe about the equipment or activities, be sure to mention this to the teacher.

Any observations you relate about your classroom experience or that of the children are extremely helpful; the teacher appreciates your time and commitment. The teacher is looking for information about the children that is newsworthy--who, what, when, and where. Judgments about individual children's "goodness" or "badness" are not what we will be talking about and looking for. The teacher will be taking notes from these sessions, and this information will be added to what she can discuss with parents at conferences, etc. This is also a time to ask advice about handling specific situations that may have left you wondering during class. These debriefings should last no more than 15 minutes.

Specific Guidelines for Working in the Classroom

CLASSROOM PRINCIPLES

These three principles are basic to our social interactions. Be prepared to intervene if you see children having difficulty.

- Children may not harm themselves or others.
- Children may not destroy materials.
- Children may not engage in weapons play.

FREE PLAY

Table Toys

- Honor a child's need to play with a table toy alone.
- Help a child who wants to play with an unavailable toy to find another toy or activity. Make sure that s/he does get a turn later.
- Facilitate cooperative play: "I wonder if there's a way you can do it together?" "Will you let Kate know when you're finished with it?"
- Table toys may also be used on a rug nearby.
- Allow creative use of toys. For example, dinosaurs in the playdough or jungle animals in the touch table.
- Table toys should be returned to the shelf by the child, with all pieces, after use.
- Discourage random dumping of toys onto floor. When this happens, engage the child in returning toys to appropriate bins.

ART AREA

Easel Painting

- Assist children in putting on paint smocks/shirts **if** they choose to wear them. An offer of "Would you like to wear the red or the blue smock?" is much more likely to get children's clothes covered than "Would you like to wear a smock?"
- Display an interest in the children's work, but do not ask what they have made. Young children are often more involved in the process than the product. You might say, "Tell me about your picture," or "I see you are using red."
- Avoid praise and value judgments.
- Encourage children to replace brushes in the correct container.
- Ask the child if s/he would like to write his/her own name. If not, ask the child where s/he would like you to write his/her name and the date on the paper. Capitalize the first letter of the child's name, and use lower case letters for the rest.
- If the child wishes, you may label paintings or write comments made by the child.
- Put paintings on vinyl tablecloths in the gym to dry.
- Children should hang up smocks and wash and dry their hands.
- If a color of paint runs out, refill paints container from jugs in cabinet.
- Do not paint pictures for children. This discourages their creativity as they cannot hope to imitate your models.

Art Tables

- The children may use any of the materials on the open art shelves to create at the table nearby.
- They should return unused materials to the shelf when done, and throw small paper scraps into the recycling bin.
- Large paper scraps are saved for future projects. There is a cubby for this paper.
- Encourage children to use small amounts of glue, but realize that there is a fascination with the squeezing and that it takes time to learn.
- Place names and dates on papers the same as at the easel and follow same guidelines for comments.

Touch Table

- Encourage children to keep water/seed/etc. inside table.
- Assist children in mopping or sweeping up spills. The floor gets very slippery when wet or covered with cornmeal and other materials.

DRAMATIC PLAY AREA/INDOOR PLAY STRUCTURE/BLOCKS

Children may mix and match equipment among the areas for maximum creativity.

Indoor Play Structure

- Everyone can play on the structure. Groups of as many as three children can be in the crow's nest at one time. Work to honor the child who wants to be/play alone.
- Children may not drop anything from the structure.
- No jumping off the structure.
- Assist children when they are learning to climb. Do not lift children up or down, assist them in doing it themselves.
- If they are afraid, acknowledge that it is hard and that it is fine to be afraid. Assure them that they can keep trying, perhaps another day, and that you know they will learn how soon.
- Celebrate their success!
- The play structure gives children a feeling of power; "I am so big, bigger than you." If a child is having an issue while up in the structure, you will get more cooperation by climbing up to his/her level rather than trying to discuss it from the floor.

Housekeeping

- Encourage children to return dolls, dishes, etc., to their places when done.
- You may facilitate play by supplying needed props or making suggestions when you sense the play breaking down, but then withdraw and let the children play out their own themes.

Blocks

- Blocks may not be thrown. If this is a problem, tell children, "Blocks are for building," or "Let's go outside and find some things to throw."

- Don't build structures for children or build elaborate adult models that children cannot hope to attain at this age. Adults should follow the children's lead.
- Don't solve their problems for them. Children learn about objects in space and the force of gravity by experiencing these forces.
- Say, "That's very big," or "You seem proud of your building," etc., instead of "What is it?" or "It's a. . ."
- As with table toys, help a child who wants to play with an unavailable toy to find another toy or activity.
- Allow creative use of toys.
- Discourage random dumping of toys onto floor.
- Encourage pick-up by making it fun: "Let's drive the cars to the garage (shelf), or "Let's be cranes and lift these onto the shelf."

Playdough

- Playdough should stay on the playdough table.
- If children hoard, suggest, "Kate needs some playdough. How can you help? Would you like to give her some, or shall I help you?"

Reading Room

- This space contains our library, a writing center, other print materials, cassettes and a cassette player, typewriter and a bin of cuddly buddies.
- We encourage children to keep their play at a more mellow level in this room.

OUTDOOR TIME

- The playground will have been set up before class.
- There must be a parent helper outside before children go out. Children must get their clip from an inside parent helper (usually the snack parent) and deliver it to the outside parent helper. When going in they must take the clip in with them and give it back to the inside parent helper. The teacher and all parent helpers need to monitor that the exchanges are taking place. Every few minutes, take a head count to ensure all the children are present.
- Be firm about boundaries. Children may not play behind the shed, down the side of the church or go toward the parking lot past the cones.
- Children may not throw sand. Encourage children to keep the sand "low" and inside the sandbox.
- Bikes may not crash into people or things. Children get one warning, then "lose their license" for the day. If this happens, help the child find something else to do.
- Short neighborhood walks or trips outside the cones must be supervised or accompanied by an adult.

Additional Information

This section includes information for parents on days when they are *not* parent helping.

ABSENCES

Parents should notify the teacher of absences by calling and leaving a message on the school phone, (503) 234-1691, before school starts that morning (or sooner, if it is a planned absence). The teacher will call you back later in the day to talk in more detail, if necessary.

ARRIVAL/DROP-OFF

After parking in the preschool section of the parking lot (**the second bay of parking spaces**), please use the blue gym door as your primary entrance. Please put your child's things in his/her cubby and then have your child wash his/her hands in the reading room or bathroom. Starting at 9:00, the children will be greeted near the classroom door by the teacher. If you arrive early, please stay with your child in the gym until the room is ready. Do your best to arrive on time. If you arrive late (after about 9:20), a parent helper will greet you and help your child with the clip can. After about 9:30 the gym door will be closed, so please enter through the glass classroom door. If you arrive after circle, select a short workjob or encourage your child to get involved in an ongoing activity.

If there is anything special the teacher should know about your child that day (s/he didn't sleep well that night, will be picked up by a neighbor, etc.), tell her briefly or write a note and give it to her. It is also important that you say good-bye to your child. Never sneak out, as this could lead your child to mistrust you and may lead to more severe separation problems.

After the teacher greets your child, help your child choose a workjob from the shelf and find a suitable place to work. Encourage your child to sit in a space large enough for the activity. Workjobs may be done on the floor or at a table, in the classroom or the reading room. When your child has completed an activity, it should be returned to the shelf and s/he may choose another or go on to some other activity. Once a workjob has been completed and put away you are free to say goodbye. You are also welcome to stay for the opening circle, which often helps to ease your departure. If your child needs help with this transition, ask a parent helper or the teacher for assistance. If you would like to visit with other parents or have school business to transact, please do it in the gym or hallway outside the reading room.

BIRTHDAYS

We will celebrate each child's birthday by having them bring pictures from their past and/or items that they feel are significant, such as footprints, baby clothing, birth certificate, etc. You will mount the items your child brings on the "birthday board" using push pins. If you wish to contribute a special snack, please talk with the teacher. Remember to keep it both healthy and accommodating to those with food allergies. If your child has a summer birthday, we can celebrate the "half birthday."

A special way of commemorating a birthday is the purchase of a book for the school library. Your child's name and birthdate can be placed inside the cover. Please see the teacher for book suggestions or to discuss a favorite of yours you think the school might enjoy.

CLOTHING

Both parents' and children's clothing should be very informal at school. Children should wear comfortable clothes that can get dirty without concern. We do lots of creative, messy things at school. Parent helpers should also wear appropriate clothing such as jeans, sweatshirt, and tennis shoes. Please label all outer clothing, hats, and other items your child brings to school with your child's name. Both children and parents need clothing appropriate for wet and/or cold weather in order to be comfortable for outside time. A box of extra children's clothes (in case of spills, accidents, etc.) is located in the bathroom. Donations of underpants, sweatpants, leggings, T-shirts, shoes, socks, and other items in a range of sizes (preferably unisex styles) are appreciated.

CUBBIES/HALLWAY

Be sure to check your child's cubby every day for artwork, school information, etc. If you are carpooling, check the cubbies of all the children you are driving. Also be sure to check the bulletin boards every time you are in school, and relay urgent information to the other parents if necessary. Children are not allowed to sit in or climb on the cubbies.

Often, parents like to visit with each other or have co-op business to conduct in the morning. We ask that you do so in the gym or outside the classroom.

HOLIDAYS

Our curriculum encompasses a rich array of opportunities for the children, and we feel that holidays are best celebrated in the context of the family. Holidays are not the focus of the class. For example, there are no holiday-related decorations in the classroom.

We do celebrate friendships on Valentines' Day by making "mail boxes" and exchanging valentines.

Children are encouraged to share aspects of their family's culture throughout the year (special foods, books, etc.), especially during the month of December. Please watch for a sign-up sheet or talk with the teacher. We always welcome the sharing of family heritage.

SHARE CIRCLE

Each day there will be an optional Share Circle. This safe, small setting nurtures oral development, listening skills and a positive sense of identity in preschoolers. The four children whose parents are scheduled to parent help or be the alternate parent helper that day are invited to bring in one item to share--a book, photograph, story, special buddy, token from a trip, Lego construction, etc. After Share Circle, the items will go to the children's cubbies for safekeeping until pick-up time. Their classmates are welcome

to join them in the Share Circle. Please help monitor the item your child selects to share and avoid bringing in superheroes and movie/TV characters. Your child and his/her "share" won't be turned away, but please keep in mind that we need to honor the choices families make regarding the exposure of their children to these media and toys.

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

Not all children are ready to separate from parents that first day. Even a child who has not had difficulty separating in the past may experience some fear or hesitation. You are welcome to stay with your child the first day or so to ease them into their new experience. Make it clear that this is temporary and that you know they will be able to stay by themselves next time. Your confidence in them, the teacher, and the school will reassure them.

Children are welcome to bring their comfort items (e.g., blankets) to school with them. These are especially helpful at first. We will encourage their safe-keeping in the child's cubby when s/he seems ready to part with them.

It's also helpful to establish evening and morning routines conducive to getting enough rest and arriving at school unhurried and prepared for the day. These may include laying out clothes and items to be taken to school the evening before, school night bedtimes, school day breakfasts or dressing routines.