

WEST CHESTER PLAYSCHOOL

HANDBOOK

A non-profit preschool operated and administered by parents. Families pool their talents, along with certified teachers, and work together to create a better school environment for their children. Parents assist in the classroom, as well as in the development of Playschool's programs and policies.

725 West Miner Street
West Chester, PA 19382

(610) 692-6538
westchesterplayschool@gmail.com
www.westchesterplayschool.org

Erin Neurohr, Director

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Nondiscrimination Policy Statement

It has always been the firm policy of this Playschool that no child is discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religious creed, handicap ancestry, national origin or sex. We are not affiliated with any organized religious, ethnic or political group.

All employees and parents sign the Nondiscrimination statement as part of our contract. Our "Nondiscrimination Policy Statement" notice is prominently displayed on the information board in the coatroom of our building.

Complaints of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religious creed, handicap, ancestry, national origin or sex may be filed with any of the following:

West Chester Playschool, Inc.
725 West Miner Street
West Chester, PA 19382

Within 90 days of incident(s):

Dept. of Human Services, Bureau of Equal Opportunity, Southeast Field Office
801 Market Street, Suite 5034,
Philadelphia, PA 19130

Dept. of human Services, Bureau of Equal Opportunity
Room 225, Health and Welfare Building,
PO Box 2675,
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Within 180 days of incident(s):

Office for Civil Rights, US Dept. of Health and Human Services
Suite 372, Public Ledger Building, 150 S. Independence Mall
Philadelphia PA 19106-3499

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
Philadelphia Regional Office
110 N. 8th Street, Suite 501
Philadelphia, PA 1910

Underlying Philosophies

1. Every individual is unique.
2. Growth takes place in orderly sequences in each individual.
3. The physical, cognitive and socio-emotional aspects of development are interrelated.
4. The child's thought and language is qualitatively different from the adult's.
5. Children should be actively involved in their own learning process. It is through direct exploration and manipulation that children construct knowledge of the world.
6. Play is a learning medium. It contributes to all types of learning (social, cognitive, physical and emotional.)
7. Interest and learning are facilitated if the experience presented to the child bears some relevance to what he/she already knows, but at the same time is sufficiently novel to present incongruities and conflicts.
8. Social interaction, particularly when it occurs around relevant physical experience, promotes intellectual and social growth.
9. Personality development (the affective-social areas) depends on the presence of adequate and sustaining personal relationships, opportunities for learning and for self-expression, and guidance appropriate to each stage of a child's growth.

General Development Goals for Children

Socio-emotional

- To have a positive self-image
- To show respect for the feelings and thoughts of others
- To have a sense of belonging to the group and group cooperation
- To learn appropriate ways of acknowledging and expressing emotions
- To be able to coordinate different points of view
- To have a sense of independence and autonomy
- To be able to cope with separation, failure, fear, disappointment and change
- To be self-started and self-finished
- To be able to become involved with other children and materials and to sustain play

Cognitive

- To develop an intellectual curiosity
- To develop varied interests and tastes
- To develop a sense of exploration and experimentation
- To develop the cognitive processes necessary to cope with life.
- To develop the processes necessary to put things into relationships
- To refine speaking and listening skills
- To develop an ease for expressing one's ideas and feelings to others
- To be able to follow directions

Physical

- To develop coordination and balance
- To strengthen and control large and small muscles
- To develop competence in dealing with one's physical environment

Advantages

Because a cooperative program creates a learning environment for all those involved, many advantages are offered to children, parents and teachers:

1. For the children, the opportunity to know different people-other children their own age with whom they can identify, parent's other than their own, and teachers who guide them in supervised play and learning experiences.
2. For the parents, a new appreciation of their own child as a separate person. Parents gain insight into their tasks as parents, and with the teacher become co-workers in the educational task of supporting the child in developing his/her own talents and in gaining self-confidence.
3. For the teachers, a broadened professional insight by working closely with parents as well as the children, and greater skill in leadership through group techniques that invite teamwork and leadership from others.

Administration

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Each spring parents volunteer or are elected from the general membership to serve as officers for a period of one year. The officers include President, Secretary, Treasurer and Class Representatives for each of the playschool classes. Co-op committees also have chairs who are members of the Board of Directors and attend the meetings when necessary. Meetings are held monthly and are also attended by the Director.

DIRECTOR

The Director is a paid employee, hired by the Board of Directors to assist in the operation of the Playschool. The Board of Directors determines responsibilities and salary.

Parent Responsibilities

All parents are expected to assist in the administration of Playschool. This includes:

- Aiding in the classroom when scheduled
- Attending General Membership meetings two times per year
- Participating in a Co-op Job
- Participating in the Silent Auction
- Taking concerns to the Director, the President or the Class Rep so that they may be addressed in the proper manner

Parent Aiding

A parent aide is scheduled each school day for each class. Parents should check the monthly aiding schedule to see their aiding assignments and note it on their calendars. The frequency with which one will be scheduled to aid depends on the class. If you are unable to aid on an assigned day you must find a substitute. This can be done by trading assignments with another parent or buying out of your scheduled day. Buyouts can be paid per diem, monthly or annually. Arrangement must be made with the director.

As a rule, 2-day parents will not aid in their child's class for the first 1-2 months to allow the younger children time to acclimate to their new surroundings. You are welcome to be an extra person in your child's class at any time. Just make arrangements with your teacher before visiting. Parents may also aid

in other classrooms at various times. We also welcome family members to aid, not just parents. Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles enrich the class in a special way. Effective the 2017-2018 school year all volunteers must have their clearances.

Aides must arrive by 8:45 am and be available until 12:30 pm. The Guidelines for Parent Aides are included in this Handbook. Each parent should become familiar with what is expected of parent aides prior to their first scheduled day.

IMPORTANT: No younger siblings may accompany the parent aide to the class on the morning assigned. Your class representative may be able to help you find another parent with whom you can trade babysitting (see Playschool Directory).

Programs

4-Day Class

Available for children who are 4 years old by Sept. 1, Monday through Thursday mornings from 9:00am to 12:00 noon

3-Day Class

Available for children who are 3 years old by Sept. 1 Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9:00am to 12:00

2-Day Class

Available for children who are 2 years old by Sept. 1 Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:00am to 12:00 noon

Friday Fun

Available for children age 2-6 Friday mornings 9:00am to 12:00 noon
You can sign up monthly for a discounted price or just drop in for a day if space is available.

Early Care

Available for all classes Monday through Friday mornings from 8:00am to 9:00am Child must be scheduled to attend that morning. **Staff must be notified in advance.** Time is billed in 15-minute increments.

Activity

Currently available Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 12:00pm to 2:00pm for children ages 3 – 6. Children will have the opportunity to register for classes such as Spanish, Soccer, Science etc. Activity time will include parent provided lunch from 12:00 – 1:00 and activity during the second hour. Payment will be made per 8/9-week session

Playtime

Available to children age 2-4 Monday and Wednesday from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. This is an opportunity to play, relax and create in a small supervised group. Playtime is available on a monthly basis for a discount or attend on a drop-in basis for an hourly rate.

Enrichment

Available for children age 3 – 6 Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 12:00pm to 3:00pm. Different themes rotate throughout the year. Enrichment is available on a monthly basis for a discount or attend on a drop-in basis for an hourly rate. We offer busing from Pocopson Elementary for those students enrolled in morning kindergarten.

Program Policies

Age Requirement

Your child must be the required age of the program by September 1st of the year he/she enters the program.

Behavior Policy

If a child's behavior is consistently unacceptable, out of control, or in any way detrimental to the well-being and development of himself/herself or that of the other children, the parents, teacher and director will meet to review the situation and plan a solution. If, after a period of two weeks, the child has not progressed and continues to have a negative impact on the class, he/she will be asked to leave by the Playschool Director and Board of Directors.

Calendar

A Playschool calendar is distributed at the beginning of the year and is available on the website. For holidays, Playschool generally follows the West Chester Area School District (WCASD) except where noted.

Playschool closings for snow and other inclement weather follow WCASD. For example, if WCASD has a two hour delay we have a two-hour delay, and if WCASD closes we are closed for the entire day. For information about school closings or delays please listen to local television or radio stations or call Playschool. The message on our answering machine will reflect our status. The two-hour delay schedule is as follows: 11am-1pm morning classes, 1pm-2pm lunch and 2pm-3pm Enrichment, K Club and Playtime.

Class size:

The Board of Directors will adhere to the following guidelines for maximum class size

- 2-Day Class: 12
- 3-Day Class: 14
- 4-Day Class: 16
- Friday Fun: 12

Clothing

Casual clothes are recommended at Playschool. Also, send an extra set of clothes marked with your child's name (in a Ziploc bag) as soon as possible. (Accidents do happen!) Since the children go outside most days we ask parents to send boots, hats, mittens and any other weather appropriate gear. Jackets and sweatshirts should not have ties as they pose a choking hazard. Also, please no scarves. Be sure to mark all clothing with your child's name. All shoes must have a back on them. Crocs are NOT ALLOWED.

Daily Arrival and Departure

Drop off time for the morning classes are from 8:50-9:00am. Please use the sign in sheet to indicate your time of arrival. The parent must bring their child into the classroom, wash hands and a staff member must acknowledge the child's presence. A child cannot be left outside the building or anywhere inside the building without a supervising adult.

Pick up time is 12:00 noon. Sign your child out indicating the time of pick up and the signature of the person picking them up. Please take all your child's personal belongings at this time and check the bulletin board for any pertinent information. There is a fine if you do not sign out.

Reminder: A child will only be released to the parent unless a signed authorization is given to the teacher. “Blanket” authorization for individual’s other than the parents to pick up the child may be filed with the Director. Authorized persons (other than the parent) picking up a child will be asked to show their driver’s license for identification.

Health

Each child will have in his/her file an age-appropriate health assessment and current immunization record. Playschool requires that children who have not been immunized complete an immunization waiver form.

Although the Playschool staff understands the needs of working and student parents, all children must be protected from infection. For the protection of children and staff, your child should be kept home and will be sent home if he/she displays any of the following symptoms:

- Two episodes of diarrhea
- One projectile vomiting
- An elevated temperature (100.6F or greater)
- Discharge from the eyes
- Drainage from the ears
- Unexplained rash

Your child must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication, before returning to Playschool. They must also be diarrhea free, vomit free, and pink eye free for 24 hours before returning to school.

If a child has been exposed to, or diagnosed with a contagious disease, details must be reported to the Playschool staff. Among conditions categorized as “highly contagious” are: strep throat, pin worms, viral infections, measles, mumps, chicken pox, fifth disease, scarlet fever, head lice conjunctivitis (pink eye), diarrhea, impetigo, hand foot and mouth, etc.

To help us meet staff/child ratios we request that parents notify Playschool on the morning of the days the child will not arrive at the scheduled time.

Medicines

Prescription medicines, Benadryl, inhalers and epi pens may be dispensed by any Playschool staff in emergency situations only if permission is given on the Emergency Contact card.

Nutrition

Each family is responsible for providing a healthy snack for his/her child’s entire class on a rotating basis. The Director will coordinate the schedule. Your child’s birthday will be included in one of your designated weeks if possible. See Guidelines for Snacks in this Handbook for suggestions and quantities.

Communications

Directory

Each year a Playschool Directory is published with the names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers of the current students, their parents and the children's birth dates. A list of the staff with their addresses and telephone numbers is also provided.

General Membership Meetings

The General Membership meets at Playschool two times a year as scheduled on the calendar. Besides the regular business meeting, programs of special interest may be offered. ***At least one parent from each family is required to attend in*** order to handle necessary business as it arises. It will be your responsibility to get the information discussed at the meeting in the event that you cannot attend. Minutes from each meeting will be posted by the bulletin board and on our website.

Newsletter

A newsletter is published monthly by Playschool. Parents are encouraged to contribute any information or ideas by the posted deadline. Please submit contributions to the newsletter coordinator's email address.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences may be scheduled with a teacher or the director if necessary. When possible, evening or telephone conferences will be available for parents who cannot come in the daytime. Parents will receive a written report of their child's individual progress during Winter Break and at the end of the school year.

Email

Please notify us of any changes in your email addresses. You will receive most correspondence, reminders and updates through email.

Activities

Field Trips

Field trips will be scheduled periodically during the school year. Parents are responsible for transporting their child to the field trip location. A field trip fee is paid at the beginning of the school year.

Fundraisers

To keep tuition costs down and retain the quality of our program, your full cooperation and participation is expected in our annual Silent Auction. Parents secure donations, advertising, and perform a job on auction night. All other fundraisers are not mandatory. The fundraising committee handles all fundraisers.

Socials

A family oriented event, such as the pumpkin carving, is scheduled during the school year. Other socials may be scheduled throughout the year for holiday celebrations or other events. Twice a year each class has Muffins with Mom and Donuts with Dad in the morning before school. At the end of the year we gather at a local park for a family potluck picnic. These are great times to get to know one another better. Refer to your Playschool calendar. Details will be posted on the large Playschool Calendar in the coatroom and on our website.

Policies and Procedures

Cleaning

On a daily basis, teachers, staff and parent aides are responsible for seeing that the classrooms are left clean and orderly. A list of specific tasks is posted in each classroom. The maintenance committee perform 3 cleanings annually as well as providing general maintenance around the school.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are conducted bi-monthly so that the children are familiar with emergency exit procedures.

Parking

Playschool shares the driveway with our landlords, the Yearsleys. Please do not park in front of the barn and carriage house, as they need access to them throughout the day. You may park along the main drive and in the gravel circle, but please allow for continued traffic flow and do not park on the grass. Please hold your child's hand when walking through the parking lot. Children are not permitted to run through the lot for safety reasons.

Toilet Training

Children are not required to be toilet trained for the 2-Day class or the 3-Day class. They must be toilet trained by the time they enter the 4-Day class.

Toys

Children are not permitted to bring toys from home. No blankets or binkies are allowed. If your child needs to bring these items please leave them in the car for them to receive when you pick them up.

Finances

Tuition and Fees

Tuition is determined annually to cover operating expenses. The annual cost of tuition is divided equally by the month's you child is in school. It should be sent to the Director according to the schedule outlined in your registration packet. Checks are made payable to "West Chester Playschool, Inc."

A tuition contract is required from all members of Playschool. Please sign and return it to the Director. Any member who becomes two months' delinquent in tuition payments will not be allowed to continue in school programs. Monthly tuition, enrichment, playtime, Friday fun and lunch is due by the 15th of the month. In the event that payment for tuition and extended care charges for any period is not received by the fourteenth day after which it is due, a late charge of \$10 per week will be assessed.

You will receive a monthly invoice for hourly charges for early or late care and drop in programs. Invoices are due by the 15th of the month. Any family who owes more than \$200 for more than two weeks is considered delinquent and will not be permitted to participate in enrichment and playtime until the balance is paid. A \$25 per month late fee will be assessed for all those aftercare charges not paid at the end of the school year.

A \$5 per incident charge will be assessed to parents for failure to sign out when picking up a child. In September, you will receive an invoice for a one-time field trip fee to cover the costs of scheduled field trips for the entire year. Occasionally we will add an unscheduled field trip, which will be paid separately at the time of the trip.

Registration

Registration opens in early January to current members and alumni. It opens to the community by late January. A registration fee is due with the application. This fee is non-refundable and not applicable to any other fees.

Guidelines for Parent Aides

These are general guidelines. Please note the class specific sheets included in your orientation packet.

Arrive by 8:45am to assist the children who are coming into the classroom.

Free Play

Be where the children are. Let children attempt to solve their own problems but step in when needed.
Help with games.
Encourage children to use all areas of the rooms.
Read a story to the children.
Share a special interest if you would like to.
Put names on artwork.

Clean-Up Time

Encourage and direct children in cleaning up.
Wipe tables, rinse out paintbrushes and put art materials away.

Circle Time

Please actively join in our circle.
Encourage each child to join in the circle time activities.

Snack Time

Help with hand washing.
Help supervise the children setting up snack (if needed.)
Encourage children to have good manners and to try different foods.
Help 4 Day to serve their own snacks using small pitchers.
Put snacks away.
Wash the classroom tables with bleach water.

Story and Puzzle Time

Join the group. Help children to do puzzles or read stories to them.

Outside Play

Help children into outdoor clothes. Encourage them to do as much as they can themselves.
Monitor children's safety on the playground. Teachers may assign you an area and group of children to be responsible for. If there are enough adults on the playground you may go inside after checking with the teacher.

Cleaning Inside

Wipe down tables, vacuum & sweep the carpet and floor, wipe down the sink and toilet.

Guidelines for Snacks

Each family will be responsible for providing a week's worth of snacks for their child's class on a rotating basis several times during the year. The purpose of the daily snack is not only for an energy boost but to expose the children to different types of foods. The snacks should be nutritious and help the children develop good eating habits. Snacks need not be elaborate.

Pay close attention to food allergies. **We are a nut free school.** Check with the teacher or parent if you have questions. Teachers occasionally plan to do cooking or have special snacks. Please consult them before making up your snack menu. You can be as creative as you want. Some classes are open to trying new foods and some are not.

Remember for the 2's no carrots, celery nuts, popcorn, raisins or other things they may choke on. Grapes should be cut up and apples should be peeled. All foods should be prepped and ready to serve. All classes enjoy grahams, mini bagels and muffins, pretzels, cheese, crackers cream cheese, fruit and yogurt so there is a lot to choose from. Please bring a gallon of water for each day of snack.

On your appointed week bring snack into the kitchen and label food with the name of your class. Put perishables in the refrigerator and non-perishables in the labeled bin in the kitchen. Fill out the weekly snack form and post it on the bulletin board in the kitchen.

Co-op Jobs

Each family will be responsible for fulfilling a job to be selected from the co-op job list. Most committees have a chair as well as other members. Each family will have the opportunity to rank their top three choices and jobs will be assigned on a first come, first served basis. Listed below are the main categories of jobs from which to choose:

Fundraising Committee
Auction Committee
Maintenance Committee
Hospitality Committee
Newsletter Editor
Marketing Committee
Budget Committee

Parents who serve on the Board of Directors as President, Secretary, Treasurer, Class Representative and Committee Chairs are exempt from taking another co-op job.