

Ms. Megan's  
Mixed Age/Pre-K Class Handbook



2021-2022 Preschool

Parent Training

As we head back to school, I hope you will enjoy the challenge and the joy of being a teacher in your child's outdoor classroom. It is a new learning environment, and it may not always be easy, but it will be rewarding. Not only will you be guiding student learning, and modeling behaviors for the children; but you will be learning yourself. Mistakes will be made and there will be many questions. Let's look at mistakes as learning opportunities for all; and know that it really is true, the only "dumb" question is the one not asked.

1. **AT HOME / PREPARATION BEFORE CLASS:** In your child's backpack, as well as back-up mask(s). You will also want to pack a full water bottle labelled with your child's name, an extra set of clothes and a coat. \*\*\*Please do not allow the children to bring to school the following items: toys, money, valuable objects, candy and gum. **JOVIAL HEALTH SURVEY:** Will also work as your sign in.
2. **DROP OFF:** You will park in lower parking lot, walk your child up into school using upper doors. You will assist with them using the bathroom if needed and washing hands. You will then walk them to the classroom door, where a working parent or myself will greet, take their temperature and guide student into class. Please be mindful of social distancing while in the hallway, if it looks crowded, wait a minute or two and then try again.
3. **FIRST 15 MINUTES OF CLASS:** This sets the tone of the school day. The students will:
  - a) Find name tag in hallway and attach to shirt.
  - b) Come in and hang up coat and backpack.
  - c) Find their name on job chart and do job if applicable at that point, and see what number you are sitting on during circle time.
  - d) Answer question of the day, by finding their name and placing it on the "yes" or "no" side.
  - e) Sign up for a book to be read to them at the end of the day.
  - f) Finally, find a STEM box, playdough, book or manipulative to work on.
4. **WORKING PARENTS:** Arrive 15 minutes prior to class starting. If you are unable to make your shift, please try to find a parent to swap with or sub for you. See cheat sheets for job descriptions☺
5. **SOCIAL DISTANCING / BOUNDARIES / COVID SAFETY IN CLASS:** Masks are required for parents and children alike. Please pack back-up masks in your child's backpack. Working parents must social distance. Each child will have their own individual

supplies to use for writing activities. Art supplies and other shared supplies will be sanitized between uses as much as possible. Sanitizer will be used periodically as well. Although we will not force children to social distance during class, activities and circle times will be designed to space children out as much as possible, and teachers (and parent teachers) will guide and ask children to adhere to a "hands to themselves" policy as much as possible.

6. **CLASSROOM JOBS ARE IMPORTANT TO CHILDREN:** Having responsibilities makes the children take pride in their room and school; and many children take their jobs very seriously. Jobs are posted so all adults will be able to help each child complete their tasks.
7. **FIRST 15 MINUTES OF CLASS FOR WORKING PARENTS:** Help guide children to activities if they are uncertain of what to do. When a child is finished with an activity, help them return the activity to its box and/or back to its storage area. Teaching children to return the materials is a very important part of learning to be responsible. It does take a while for the children to know they are expected to take responsibility for the environment. Help them by gently reminding and offering to help carry if necessary.
8. **THE CHILDREN ARE OUR FOCUS DURING CLASS TIME.** Please hold adult conversation with each other (and with me) before class time or in the hallway. The children are the focus during class hours and adult conversations can be distracting.
9. **CIRCLE TIME:** Circle time sets the tone for the day. Because the activities in the beginning circle set the tone; encouraging and welcoming each child, is a very important part of the program. Please make every effort to be on time so children feel a part of the group. Working parents join the circle and participate as role models for the children. If any child is struggling, a gentle hand on their back or pat may help them settle down and focus. The child may be asked to look at a book in the book area if not attending. They may return to the circle when ready.
10. **SMALL GROUPS:** We will break into small groups after circle time. Each working parent will have 4-5 children in their group. Small group is mainly for practicing writing and Special Day activities, although special projects and math will be sprinkled in. As children finish their work, please remind them to give you any completed work and put their own supplies away. Again, it is very important to teach students to be responsible for supplies. If students in your small group finish early, you may find additional activities/materials to use in the small group trays (sometimes), sing songs, make rhymes, and grab a book from the book basket, etc. until the remaining groups finish.

11. **CENTER TIME:** Listening will be one of the most important jobs you will have. When children, just like adults, are listened to, they feel they belong. By listening and using the tone and volume of your voice, you can help children problem solve. This is one of the techniques for helping children solve their own problems-it should be a quiet voice with an encouraging tone (no scolding). Sit down or kneel down to be at eye level with the children whenever possible. Facial expressions, silent nods of encouragement and understanding eyes are a very important part of the communication process. Repeat what you hear; "I can see two friends are having trouble sharing the truck. What shall we do?" Listen again, if they are having trouble coming up with solutions; suggest a few: "we could use a timer, or write John's name on the card so he will be next-what do you think?" Listen again for agreement. Congratulate the children for solving a hard problem.

\*ART CENTER/ SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY: Children understand activities by asking questions, rather than being told. "What do you think we will be doing here?" If children are having difficulty using the equipment, show them how. Inspire creativity by not showing your model (once in a while if we are making a craft we will model) or expecting each child's creation to be the same. Please remember it is the process not the product that helps children to learn. Allow time for children to finish. The finished product will not be judged by how it looks to you. We do not always have to comment on the children's art work-we want them to begin to depend on their own judgements. If you comment, please keep it on the topic of the process: "those brushes were very tiny. You used many muscles making those punched holes. I see you were thinking of something special when you painted that." Please don't ask, "what is it?" However, it is fun to write on the bottom or side anything the child wants to tell you about their creation. Do remember to ask the child if you can write his name on the front of his project if not where.

12. **SHARING IS ENCOURAGED:** While sharing is encouraged, it should not be forced. We want to give children tools to navigate sharing situations for themselves. Encourage children to speak for themselves using phrases like, "May I have a turn when you are done?", "Can we play together?", etc. It may also help to say things such as: "If we give Marcy some of the cars, we could all play together." If that doesn't work, write Marcy's name on a piece of paper and put it on the table. The next vacancy will go to her.

13. **CLEAN UP:** The 5 minute warning for cleanup will be a drum. Then we sing our cleanup song. Everyone helps with cleanup. This is a time to stress cooperation, being helpful, friendship and being responsible for our classroom.

14. **OUTSIDE/DOWNSTAIRS:** We will be going outside most days. We have the option of using the downstairs area if the weather is just TOO rainy. After recess is over we will line children up and bring them inside or upstairs for bathroom use and

handwashing. Working parents are responsible for taking half of the group into the bathrooms. Please allow for bathroom use and handwashing (for all). When children are done, they line up against wall and wait for the rest of the group and the working parent. You can sing a song, play a guessing game or another quiet activity to hold their attention while waiting.

15. **SHARING ABOUT YOURSELF IN FRONT OF A GROUP:** Each child of a working parent may bring one book to share. Upon entering school, the book to be shared is placed on a table with sign-up sheets, so that students can choose one of the 3 books to hear later. Children will have an opportunity to share during the final circle time. It is helpful to talk about this book with your child before he or she shares (title, favorite part to share, what it is you like about this book or page, who gave it to them, where did they get it). A little preparation helps them feel more confident. Children are never forced to share. Please bring an appropriate book that can be shared with children. No comics, cartoons or TV character books or religious text. Also, remember that you will be reading the book you bring in and you have about 10 minutes of reading time.
16. **WE END THE DAY WITH SHARING BOOKS:** At our closing circle time, each working parent's child will share the book they brought from home and then we will break into small groups to read the books. As groups finish, they return to the large group circle and sing a goodbye song. The Teacher's Assistant will call children for dismissal as they see parents pull their cars into the designated loading/unloading spots. It is the job of the TA to supervise their child and the other working parent's children while the ART and SNACK parents help do final cleaning.
17. **END OF THE DAY PICKING UP ROUTINE:** At the end of the day, you will come to the upper double doors near playground. You will wait outside for your child to be dismissed to you. Please make every effort to be on time for pick up. If for some reason you are going to be late, please notify the class rep or another parent to let me know.
18. **HONOR YOUR CHILD'S CREATIONS BY TAKING THEM HOME:** It is important that you take artwork home. This shows your child that you value what they accomplish at school. Often the art goes along with a theme and can be used as a conversation starter with your child about what they did at school.
19. **SPECIAL DAYS ARE A GREAT WAY TO MAKE YOUR CHILD FEEL LOVED:** Every child will have a special day. Parents will sign up for their child's special day at the beginning of the school year. Many parents choose dates near birthdays or half birthdays, but any date is fine. (While it is not always possible, many caregivers try to sign up to work on the day their child has his or her special day). *Your child will be given a small poster board at the beginning of the year, please have this board prepared with*

*a few pictures, maybe a few words or drawings of their favorite things, memories, people etc. This board is to be brought in on their special day. The child will present this with me to the rest of the class. The child will wear a special crown on this day, and their friends will ask him or her about some of their favorite things during circle time. This discussion helps inspire drawings by friends to be made into a special day book for the child. \*It may help if you can discuss with your child some of their favorite things before class that day.*

20. **WHAT TO DO ABOUT HEALTH ISSUES:** Your child will not enjoy their preschool experience if they are not well; and there is a great possibility of making others ill. Please keep your child home if he or she:
- a. Has had a fever in the past 24 hours.
  - b. Has had a cold, child's, fever, sore throat, runny nose or difficulty breathing
  - c. Has vomited or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours
  - d. Is fussy, cranky, and acting like they don't feel well, even without fever
  - e. Has a dry hacking cough
  - f. Is overtired
  - g. If you have come in contact with a known case of Covid or a household member to have, please contact our Health and Safety person before returning to school.

If I feel that a child is not feeling well, I will ask you to take him or her home. I appreciate your cooperation on this. Please also keep in mind that a sick adult will need to make arrangements to stay home as well. Be sure you know your class's system for substitutes. (If you are not clear on this, ask your class rep.)

21. **EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE DRILLS:** We will be having monthly earthquake and fire drills. This will be talked about with the children beforehand. It will be a calm experience without big bells.

22. **RULES FOR PRESCHOOL**

- 1) Respect ourselves
- 2) Respect each other

### 3) Respect our environment

This includes the following:

We give our each other space (this spring we will have a "hands to yourself" policy)

Up the stairs, down the slide

Calm voices mean everyone can be heard

We will learn to take turns

Everyone cleans

## 23. THE VALUE OF PLAY

Research shows that the one key factor to success in a young child's educational meeting is the amount of time they are allotted to play. Although it can be easy to focus on academics from a young age, it is actually through play that kids learn to regulate conflict, solve problems, become resilient, delay gratification, and take turns. These are the skills that our children need most to be successful in life- socially, emotionally, and academically.

On a social level, play-based preschools help children learn the skills they need to be a good friend and work as a member of a group through collaboration, learning to follow rules, use empathy, take turns, and self-regulate. These skills help children to learn the rules of social interaction that will in turn help them in relationships throughout life. Children in play-based settings get lots of opportunities to practice experiencing their friend's points of view by working through conflicts about space, materials, and rules with support.

Academically, play promotes language, literacy, and mathematical thinking. Research shows that kids who frequently engage in play, particularly socio-dramatic (imaginative) play, show an increase in the total number of words used, the length of their sentences, and the complexity of their speech. It has been found that play also helps children to understand the relationships between things, which helps them develop the type of reasoning that aids in mathematical performance. Play also helps build the skills of attention, concentration, and impulse control. These skills are integral to kindergarten success. Furthermore, if children are not comfortable in social free-play environments, learning to be so in later years can serve as a distraction from elementary school academics.

Play also provides an outlet for the expression of emotion in young children. Strong emotions, especially frustration, fear, and anxiety, can be overwhelming for children to process. Play provides an outlet to voice those overwhelming feelings. In play-based

preschool settings, we provide children with the space to explore how they are feeling, what caused those feelings, and how best to express their feelings in a positive, safe, healthy way.

I often hear parents say, "My child just wants to play all the time" or "my child spends all his/her time in the blocks/dramatic play area and doesn't do anything else". I wonder if parents realize the value of play and how wonderful it is to see children extend themselves and take risks in their play.

A long-running study of the effects of preschool programs has shown the benefits of a child-initiated, teacher-facilitated curriculum. The Direct Instructions curriculum which consisted of sequences of academic lessons and teacher-directed activities may seem like the surest path to school readiness and may show a temporary improvement in academic performance but it may be at the cost of a missed opportunity for long-term improvement in personal and social behavior. On the other hand, child-initiated learning activities seem to help children develop their social responsibility and interpersonal skills to that they become more personally and socially competent.

Playing is learning for children. What appears to adults as aimless pattering about with paints, sand, water, and blocks - in activity centers with other children or by themselves- helps preschoolers develop control of their bodies, investigate cause and effect, and follow-up on the innate human curiosity that is at the root of all high achievement. A good preschool program will permit children to explore their environment without fear of failure, without imposed adult expectations and adult learning priorities. This kind of curriculum helps develop self-confidence and a joy of learning that is the best possible motivation for formal schooling.

"Playtime doesn't get enough respect. Play gets overlooked. Society doesn't value it. Play is fun, but equally important, it makes kids smarter. Play benefits especially in terms of later development- especially when we look at creativity, flexibility, and ability to cooperate. Kids who have had a great deal of play are more able to function socially, emotionally, and physically as they move forward in school and life. Parents who want smart kids should realize that rolling around in the dirt is just as important as scoring well on standardized testing."

"Remember it's not a race for information, it's more a matter of who keeps going, who perseveres. If we want to prepare our children for a successful life, we need to give them a sense of self, balance, and confidence."

"When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I came to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent of absorbing positive knowledge."



-Albert Einstein-

"Play is an essential function of the passage from immaturity to emotional maturity. Any individual without the opportunities for adequate play in early life will go on seeking them in the stuff of adult life."

-Margaret Lowenfield"

**"Play is the highest form of research." -Albert Einstein**

**"It is a happy talent to know how to play" -Ralph Waldo Emerson**

**"Take chances, make mistakes, and get messy!" -Ms. Frizzle**

**Here are a few guidelines to help promote learning through play (child-initiated activities):**

- Don't hover over children.
- Respect their uniqueness (and independence). Let them do it themselves.
- Allow for mess. Allow children to express themselves in their way.
- Honor each child's timetable for growth.
- Do not always model for children; allow opportunity for risk, to be different.
- Give the child tinkering time- time to put things together and take it apart.
- Let them be problem-solvers and negotiators. Help children find their own solutions if necessary.

## 2021-2022 Curriculum Themes

Our classroom environment is rich and stimulating, designed to promote exploration by all children. A theme is used to help design learning experiences, however I try to be flexible and offer a variety of activities that are determined by the children's interests and opportunities that may arise.

<b>MONTH</b>	<b>THEME</b>
September/October	Apples, Pumpkins, patterns
November	Thankful, Bats, Owls
December	Reindeer, Gingerbread, Snowflakes
January	Snowmen, Snow, Elephant and Piggie
February	Australia and Australian Animals, Friendship
March	Famous Artists
April	Spring, Planting, Flowers, Eric Carle
May	Beach, Fish Prints, Boats, Float/Sink