



# PRESCHOOL OF THE ARTS

## FAMILY HANDBOOK 2016-2017

Revised 10/20/16

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## Section 1: PSA Overview

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### Mission and Values Statements

#### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Preschool of the Arts is to foster a vibrant and innovative learning community where child-focused exploration, creativity, and collaboration inspire the curriculum.

#### **Values Statements**

We value the philosophy of preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and hold the following beliefs:

#### **Our *children* are...**

- **capable researchers** who thrive in a negotiated curriculum. We value teachers who support and extend the children's emerging interests.
- **able communicators** who express and develop their thinking in a variety of ways, including artistic media. We value children's thoughts.
- **social beings** embedded within a family, community, and culture. We value the involvement of family and community members in the life of our school.
- **learners** within a community of learners. We value the inspiration of our children's continuing adventures and the opportunity they provide for community reflection.

#### **Our *community* consists of...**

- **people of diverse abilities, backgrounds, experiences, and cultures.** We value the differences among all people and welcome their varied contributions to our school.
- **qualified, compassionate faculty.** We value professional development and the implementation of the best current practices in early childhood education.
- **parents, faculty, staff, and children.** We value open, continuous communication among our collaborative partners. We partner together to support the various needs and learning styles of our children.
- **the City of Madison, the preschools of Reggio Emilia, and people everywhere who are interested in high-quality educational experiences for young children.** We value our role as a place for exploration of early childhood learning and teaching approaches, and strive to share what we learn with others who have common interests in the wellness of all children.

#### **Our *learning environment*...**

- **is inviting, inspiring, and safe.** We value our physical environment and the role it plays in developing our sense of community, well-being and opportunities for learning.
- **fosters play.** We value play as a means of developmentally appropriate learning. Play encourages independence and offers the opportunity to explore in a setting that has been thoughtfully established for this purpose.
- **is connected to the natural world.** We value relationships with the natural environment and the opportunities it offers for extending children's play, creativity and learning.
- **documents our beliefs.** We value our environment as a canvas for documenting ideas, emotions, and development.

## **PSA History**

In 1975, Preschool of the Arts was incorporated as a nonprofit school for children ages 3 through 6. The founder, Barbara Goy, believed that children had a natural affinity for music. They could learn social-emotional, academic, and motor skills through music, movement and creative dramatics, the graphic arts and sciences. In the early years, Preschool of the Arts operated at Bethany United Methodist Church and then at Hoyt School on Regent Street. In the fall of 1990, Preschool of the Arts moved to its current address in the University Research Park. Beginning in 1995, PSA adopted the Reggio philosophy. In 2000, we expanded the school to our current size, serving ages 18 months through 5.

## **Reggio Emilia Philosophy**

The Reggio Emilia philosophy encourages young children and their teachers to explore, question, theorize, and draw conclusions in a rich and pleasing environment. Children's actions take the form of a learning cycle through the processes of inquiry, investigation, and conclusion. Children can continue to refine their discoveries as they are nurtured and encouraged by the adults (parents, teachers, and community members) who facilitate their learning.

Key elements of the Reggio approach:

- **Image of the Child:** The essence of the child is seen as strong, capable, and resourceful. The child is social and able to express interests and ideas, research information, and reflect on the experience and form conclusions.
- **Role of the Teacher:** The adult's role is provocateur, researcher, facilitator, and guide alongside the children.
- **Environment as the Third Teacher:** The environment is inviting, inspiring, and accessible.
- **Negotiated Curriculum:** The children engage in in-depth investigations using the Project Approach. Projects engage children in real-life contexts and integrate the acquisition and application of basic skills through inquiry. These studies are negotiated upon children's emerging interests.
- **Use of Symbolic Language:** Children use a variety of means (drawing, language, music, dance, etc.) to express their thoughts and feelings.
- **Documentation as Communication:** Children's thoughts, ideas, growth and construction of knowledge are reflected upon and documented as a form of communication with the community.
- **Parent as Partner:** Parents are considered to be an essential component of the program. Parents play an active part of the children's learning experience and, at the same time, help ensure the welfare of all children in the school.

## **Board of Directors**

Preschool of the Arts is a tax-exempt organization according to IRS Section 501(c)(3), and as such is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of parents, faculty, and staff who provide leadership and direction for the school. Some of the major duties of the Board include: approving the annual operating budget for the school, approving tuition rates, establishing short term and long term priorities for the school, and supporting to execute major school

activities and events. Elections usually take place in the spring, and the Board typically meets once a month. Information about the current Board can be found on our website.

**Administrative Staff**

In addition to the teaching faculty, there are several administrative staff members who carry out the business of the school. The administrative staff includes the Executive Director, Admissions and Family Coordinator, Office and Faculty Support Coordinator, and After School Administrative Assistant. Please feel free to communicate with the administrative staff via email, phone or by checking in to set up an appointment for a meeting, as necessary.

<b>Paul Brahce</b> Executive Director	Overall program and operations	<a href="mailto:pbrahce@preschoolofthearts.com">pbrahce@preschoolofthearts.com</a>
<b>Jen Korz</b> Assistant Director of Operations	Staffing and faculty support, day to day operations	<a href="mailto:jkorz@preschoolofthearts.com">jkorz@preschoolofthearts.com</a>
<b>Debbie Hemb</b> Admissions & Family Coordinator	Admissions, family questions, changes in schedules	<a href="mailto:debbie@preschoolofthearts.com">debbie@preschoolofthearts.com</a>
<b>Abby Malesytcki</b> Administrative Coordinator	Attendance, enrollment forms, administrative duties	<a href="mailto:amalesytcki@preschoolofthearts.com">amalesytcki@preschoolofthearts.com</a>
<b>Kristin Slava</b> Environment & Facilities Manager	Environment and facilities management	<a href="mailto:kslava@preschoolofthearts.com">kslava@preschoolofthearts.com</a>

**School Statistics**

PSA has approximately:

- 200-215 children
- 14 classrooms
- 28 teachers
- 14 afternoon teachers
- 5 permanent substitutes ("floats")
- 4 art specialists
- 3 music specialists
- 5 administrative staff
- 1 chef

**Classrooms**

Preschool of the Arts currently has 14 classrooms, which include:

<b><u>AGES</u></b>	<b><u>ROOMS</u></b>
18-24 months	Silver
2	Yellow, Cloud, Orange, Snowflake
3	Red, White, Rainbow
4	Blue, Green, Gold
3-4 mixed age	Sunshine, Copper, Purple

*All ages are measured as of September 1.*

## Section 2: PSA Community

### Teaching Teams

Each classroom has three teachers:

- Two co-teachers who are in the classroom from 8-3:30 each day.
- One afterschool teacher who typically works in the afternoon from 12:30-5:30.

The co-teachers are responsible for the planning of activities and curriculum of the class. There are teacher meetings or planning sessions in the afternoons. The afterschool teachers provide opportunities for the co-teachers to have lunch and planning time in the afternoons. Not all the teachers are always present at the 3:30 pick-up, but at least one of the three classroom team members will be there.

Our teachers are professionals. Co-teachers must have at minimum an associate degree in child development. Most of our teachers have four year college degrees in early childhood education, child development, elementary education, or a closely related field. Afterschool teachers are carefully selected for their nurturing qualities, as well as the diverse curriculum experiences they add to our school. Many of them also have 4 year degrees. All faculty take part in professional development activities throughout the year.

We value the relationships that are built between children, families and the classroom teachers. Because we respect these relationships, we try our best to keep the teaching teams the same. However, **the continuity of the teaching teams cannot always be guaranteed due to the needs of the school and the faculty.** Should there be any changes in the teaching teams, parents will be notified as soon as possible after the changes have been communicated to the faculty.

### Substitute Teachers

PSA has qualified teachers who work as substitutes when a co-teacher or afterschool teacher is absent. Substitute teachers work to keep the flow of the classroom going in the current direction, with as little interruption to the daily routine of the children as possible. All faculty, including substitute teachers participate in a thorough orientation as required by state licensing and supplemented with PSA's own policies and procedures.

### Specialists

PSA has three Music Specialists and four Art Specialists, and the classroom teachers regularly meet with their assigned specialists to reflect and plan together based on the emerging interests of the children. The specialists strive to involve the children in exploring art and music concepts in the context of the topic of study in the classroom. This integrated approach gives the classroom teachers the opportunity to use the music and art studios to enhance classroom curriculum.

Here is the continuum of goals for PSA's art and music program:

**Exploration:**

A Beginning Relationship  
*Introduction and sensory understanding of material properties and processes.*

**Experimentation:**

A Growing Relationship  
*Investigation and discovery of possibilities of materials and processes.*

**Expression:**

A Familiar Relationship  
*Application of materials and processes as a tool and language.*

Music Specialists typically meet with each class in small groups in the studio twice a week, with the exception of family music classes. Music classes offer a variety of experiences that include instruments, movement, and song. Art Specialists typically meet with each class in the studio in small groups once a week. The specialists may also work in the classroom or join the class on a relevant trip outside the school. Both art and music classes are scheduled for days that have the maximum enrollment in each classroom.

**Children with part-time schedules will not have the same access to the studios, given their part-time schedule.** However, parents are welcome bring their child in for their child's classroom studio time – we ask that you check in with the specialist to notify them of your presence, then wait in the piazza with your child until the specialist comes to pick your child up. Please remain in the piazza during the studio time, and the specialist will meet you there to drop off your child. We will do our best to notify you of expected schedule changes in the studio(s); however, we may not be able to notify you in cases of unexpected cancellations or absences due to illnesses.

### **Conflict of Employment**

Please note, as per the Registration Agreement, families cannot hire any current PSA employee or any former PSA employee to provide child care on a full-time or part-time basis during the hours that the PSA employee would have been scheduled to work at PSA. Violating this agreement may result in consequences including loss of tuition deposit and disenrollment of your child(ren) from PSA.

### **School-wide Communication**

There are multiple avenues for school-wide communication with parents. Our most common method of communication is through email, but we also use the parent resource board, the school website and parent mailboxes. Parent mailboxes are found in the foyer of the school labeled by classroom and child's name; please check these on a daily basis! **Please keep your email addresses up to date, and notify the front office if you have any changes.**

### **Parent to Teacher Communication**

Each day there is an opportunity to communicate with teachers at drop-off and pick-up time. There may be much activity in the classroom during these "peak" drop-off and pick-up times, so please try to limit these times to quick questions or comments as other parents and children will be needing attention as well.

If you have important information (i.e. upcoming change in child's schedule, such as absences, pick-up times or appointments) that needs to be shared with your child's classroom teachers, you may communicate via email, face-to-face conversation, or a classroom log located in the room.

If you need to speak with your child's teacher for a longer period of time about any questions or concerns, please contact your teacher to arrange a time that is mutually convenient for you both to talk. This can be scheduled either in person, by phone or via email (each teacher has his or her own PSA email address).

## **Teacher to Parent Communication**

Teachers strive to send regular emails about the activities in the classroom. The email will describe activities, dialogues, and may also include upcoming projects. When possible, teachers will attach photographs so parents can see the children in action. Emails will also include any information or reminders as needed for parents (i.e. upcoming field trips, special events, etc.).

Teachers of 2 year-old children will provide a summary sheet for parents each day. This sheet will include information on diaper changes, eating and sleeping activity, and what activities the child participated in during the day. Any special reminders for the parent will also appear on the summary sheet.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled in the fall, winter and spring. A sign-up sheet will be posted in each classroom in advance. The fall conference will be a time to meet with your child's teachers to discuss social-emotional development, as well as to discuss goals and expectations for your child for the year. The winter and spring conferences will focus on assessments using the Focused Portfolio/Work Sampling System. We encourage parents to attend these conferences as they are opportunities for shared information and understanding of the child. Other conferences may also be arranged, as needed by parents or teachers.

## **Behavior Guidance**

At Preschool of the Arts, discipline is defined as a way of helping children to learn. Young children are just beginning to learn complex life skills (i.e. how to get along with others) that we, as adults, continue to work on. Children and adults are most comfortable and secure when they know the social expectations and routines, and this understanding is necessary for the smooth and cooperative functioning of society. PSA offers a warm, secure environment in which children can develop self-discipline with teacher guidance.

Our approach to discipline begins with having engaging materials and activities so children are positively occupied throughout the day. It is expected that children will have occasional social conflicts, and these conflicts are opportunities to learn how to interact with others in cooperative, respectful ways. We employ techniques that are typically successful with young children; positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, discussion of the problem and enabling children to find their own solutions, and positive redirection. Because each child is an individual, discipline must be tailored to meet his or her needs. When a child is having a difficult time monitoring his/her own behavior, the teacher and child will work together to ensure ample time and space needed to calm down. The teacher will also assist the child in processing the situation and in planning next steps, as appropriate. If a child's behavior is continuing to be a challenge, we will contact parents to problem-solve together. No form of physical punishment or humiliation is acceptable on the premises of Preschool of the Arts whether initiated by parents or staff.

In cases where the child is crying for an extended period of time or is unusually distraught, the teacher will:

- Make sure the child is safe and not physically harmed.



- For the safety of the other children, remove the child from the classroom and bring the child to a member of the administration.
- Refer the child/family to a specialist.
- In some cases, the child's parents may be called to pick up the child from school, or in extreme cases, the child may be disenrolled.

We encourage parents to talk with their child about his/her day at school. Sometimes expectations may differ between home and school, as group situations sometimes call for different rules. Please encourage your child to respect PSA's rules while at PSA. Please note that child guidance and supervision is the responsibility of the parents before the child is signed in to the classroom and after end-of-the-day sign out and at all social gatherings.

### **Dealing with Separation Anxiety**

Separation can be difficult for both the parent and for the child. If a child has difficulty transitioning into the classroom, please communicate with the teachers to develop a plan for helping this transition. Although each family is different, the following strategies may help children learn to manage separation anxiety:

- Bring children to school on time. It is often difficult for young children to join an activity that has already started, and the transition is easier for them when they feel a part of the group from the beginning.
- When first coming to school, come with the child into the classroom for the first few minutes, while the child gets involved in a classroom activity.
- Say goodbye and make a firm exit. If parents demonstrate their confidence in the decision to leave the child in the classroom, the child will learn it is okay. Taking the child out of the room or home when they cry will extend the adjustment period.
- If the child is upset, the teachers will reassure him/her that the parent will be back and redirect the focus to a classroom activity.

**Section 3: PSA Program & Logistics**

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**Registration**

Registration materials for current families will be available online and placed in parent mailboxes in early December. Current families are welcome to submit their registration contracts for their currently enrolled child AND sibling(s) anytime during a specified priority time period for current families. To receive this priority status, current families must submit their registration materials by the specified due date.

More information will be communicated to families via parent mailboxes and email as registration time draws near.

**Changes in Contract Schedule**

Children need and thrive on consistent routines. It is expected that families will adhere to their contracted schedule. Changes in the contract schedule can present additional transitions for the child and affect the dynamics of the classroom. Once a contract is signed, it is an expectation that the financial obligation of the contract be fulfilled.

If a **special circumstance** requires you to request a change in your contract from a 12-month to a 9-month contract, please complete and submit the Contract Change Request Form to the front office prior to January 1. Requests submitted by January 1<sup>st</sup> will receive first priority.

If a **special circumstance** requires you to request a change in your contracted daily/weekly schedule (adding days per week, adding hours to the day, and/or adding before/after school), please fill out the Weekly Schedule Change Request Form and email to the front office at least three days in advance of the requested date. These requests will be granted at the discretion of the PSA administration as several factors must be considered, including adult to child ratios and the needs of the classroom. You will be billed at a rate of \$13 per hour for before school and/or afterschool if it is not a permanent part of your child’s schedule. Please note that requests to reduce your child’s schedule (reducing number of days per week, reducing hours of the daily schedule) cannot be granted due to budgetary constraints.

Forms are available at the front office.

**Classroom Progressions**

Please remember the classroom progressions that we’ve designed to foster ongoing relationships:

	18-24	2	3	4 (or 5, based on kindergarten readiness)
Children and teachers stay together in Rainbow or Snowflake. After that, children move to Green, Blue or Gold.		Rainbow Snowflake		Blue, Green or Gold
Children and teachers move together from Yellow to Red. After that, children move to Green, Blue or Gold.		Yellow 2’s →	Red	Blue, Green or Gold
Children and teachers move together through the rooms.		Cloud →	White →	Gold

Children and teachers move together from Silver to Orange before entering one of two multiage rooms for two years.	Silver →	Orange: mid 2's	Sunshine OR Copper (based on the recommendation of the Orange Room teachers)
Any 3- or 4-year old child may request to join a Spanish bilingual, multi-age classroom.			Purple

We value the relationships that are built within each classroom community of children, families and teachers. Because we respect these relationships, we have the following policies and procedures to minimize transitions and changes:

**PSA reserves the right to determine classroom placement for each child including making changes to classroom progression if it is in the best interest of the child and/or PSA.** We expect that all children will stay with their classroom progressions once they are enrolled, unless their families request that they join the Purple (Spanish Bilingual) Room. However, if there is a compelling reason suggesting your child might benefit from a change in the classroom progressions listed above, please talk with your classroom teachers about how your child is doing in the classroom. The school does not generally make changes to classroom placement once the school year has begun. It is important for us to collaborate to best support the needs of each and every child, while meeting the needs of the school. Following discussion with your child's teachers, please submit a written request for a classroom change to the Admissions Coordinator, specifying the reason for the request. A committee comprised of the Admissions Coordinator, Teacher Leader and Executive Director will review the requests for classroom changes based on the needs of the child and the school. A final decision will be communicated to the family within 2 weeks of the request.

While we try our best to keep the teaching teams the same, the continuity of the teaching teams cannot always be guaranteed due to the needs of the school and the faculty. Should there be any changes in the teaching teams, parents will be notified as soon as possible after the changes have been communicated to the faculty.

### **Summer School-Age Program**

During the summer months (June, July, August), we welcome back alumni students from kindergarten and first grade to join us in the school-age classroom. This program offers PSA a wonderful chance to host alumni (and new) children for the summer. The school-age classroom is necessary to the financial health of the school due to general decreases that we see in summer enrollment. Registration begins in early December.

### **Summer Enrollment**

We strive to keep each child's summer classroom experience consistent. However, due to the number of 9 month contracts and the fact that PSA needs a classroom for its school-age summer program, **the classrooms, including teachers, are often completely reconfigured for the summer program. It is highly likely that your child's class will have different students and/or different teachers than during the traditional school year.** We recognize that this may not be an ideal situation for some families, because such changes disrupt established

classroom communities. However, our past experience is that children react well to these changes. We also ask for your understanding about the financial factors involved in summer enrollment decisions.

We work through the end of April to finalize classroom enrollment and teachers' summer plans, as these are factors affecting which classroom(s) may have to divide or combine for the summer. Once we come to a decision on the necessary classroom changes, the administration will work with the classroom teachers to determine a classroom placement that meets the needs of each child. These decisions will be communicated by April via a parent letter and a subsequent meeting with the affected families to explain the decision-making process and to discuss plans to support children through the transition.

### **Child Forms**

All required forms for your child must be submitted PRIOR to his/her first day unless otherwise indicated. All information about your child must be current. If there have been changes since your initial registration, you must provide this information to us immediately. WE MUST HAVE EMERGENCY NUMBERS. It is helpful if you indicate which parent is the preferred one to call in the event of an emergency. In the event that you cannot be reached, please list some alternative persons that know your child.

We require a list of persons authorized to pick up your child. Authorized pick ups must be at least 16 years old. If you do not want anyone other than parents to pick up your child, please indicate this on the Child Enrollment form, and this information will be relayed to staff. All pick up information should be given to us in writing. In the event of an emergency, we will accept telephone authorized pick up for your child, and this information will be relayed to staff. Please remember that although you may have listed a person as authorized to pick-up, the teachers and/or front office staff will still need to be notified in advance each time a different person is to pick-up. If the authorized pick-up person is not known to the school, he/she will be asked for identification at the front office.

### **Confidentiality of Student Information and Records**

Personal information about your child is confidential and will not be disclosed without the authorization of the child's parent or guardian. Confidential information, including *information on any special needs a child may have and the plan for how those needs will be met* will be shared among faculty and staff members on a need-to-know basis.

### **Special Needs**

We strive to maintain an environment of inclusion, where all children are respected and supported in partnership with families and faculty. Sometimes, a child has been identified with a special need before enrolling in our program. Parents are encouraged to share the details of any diagnosed or potential special need their child may have, as this will enable us to work together as team to find the best way to support the child.

At times, a child does not have an identified special need, but exhibits behavior that causes the teacher(s) to be concerned. The teacher may need extra help and support in understanding the

areas of concern and developing strategies that meet the child's individual needs. In this case, the teacher(s) will:

- Observe and document the behavior.
- Notify the Educational Consultant / Pedagogista of the concerns.
- Schedule a meeting with parents and appropriate staff to discuss concerns and develop a plan for support, which may include an observation from an outside professional\*.
- Continue to observe and document the behavior and keep parents, Educational Consultant / Pedagogista (and Executive Director as needed) updated with information.

If a reasonable time has passed, and the concerns still exist, the teacher(s) may propose a screening by an outside professional\*. Parents will be given information about available resources, and we will work together on a reasonable timeline for follow-up. Based on the initial screening, the team (faculty, parents, and outside professionals) will collaborate to develop an appropriate plan of action in supporting the child's needs.

If the concerns continue to exist, the next step may involve evaluating the feasibility of continued care for the child at PSA, and termination of child's enrollment may be a possible outcome. Please refer to the Disenrollment Policy.

\*Please note that fees for services from an outside professional would be at the parent's expense. Our faculty and staff will do our best to communicate with outside professionals to better meet the needs of the children within our community.

### **Absences**

If your child is going to be absent or late, be sure to call the absence line before 9AM. The number is (608) 233-6752. You may also send an email message to: [absences@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:absences@preschoolofthearts.com). If your child is sick, please inform us of your child's symptoms so that we can track illnesses. PSA will ask about your child's symptoms when absent with an illness. See also Health and Safety section.

### **Drop-off Time**

Please take your child to his or her teacher when arriving at school. We try our best to greet every child as they come in, but it occasionally happens that the faculty are dealing with other children, and may not see you arrive. It is important to us that you make personal contact with a staff member each and every time you bring your child to school, as well as when you leave. Please note that children must always be within sight and sound of a supervising adult.

### **Pick-Up Time**

Since we balance our staffing based on the contracts, it is imperative that you adhere to your contract hours. You may always pick your child up before the usual time, but we need to be informed if you expect to come later, as maintaining teacher-child ratio is imperative and space may not be readily available. **We will keep a record of late pick-ups, and parents arriving late are subject to a late fee of \$25.00 after the first 5 minutes and for every 15 minutes you are late.**

To ensure the safety of our children, the front and back doors have a pinpad system that requires an assigned pin number entry. This is in addition to staff in the front office who are available to monitor those that are entering the building.

Please help keep our school safe by entering and exiting through the front doors. The side doors (at the end of each wing) and the outside gates must be locked at all times. Please be aware of children exiting the building, and do not allow unattended children to leave through any door. This allows us to make sure that all children (the child being picked up, as well as those remaining) are accounted for through the pick-up transition.

### **Parking**

Please move through the parking lot to the most convenient open space. To prevent the parking lot from becoming congested, we ask that you not wait at the entrance of the driveway. Please do not leave a child unattended in your vehicle or leave your car running unattended in the parking lot, as this could endanger your child and others. Unless you have a sticker on your car indicating the need for handicapped parking, do not park in the handicapped spaces. Failure to follow this law can result in a parking ticket of \$100.00.

Parking is permitted in the PSA parking lot, 440 Science Drive or 455 Science Drive in defined parking spaces only. We do not have permission to park in neighboring lots in the Research Park nor the cul de sac; please refrain from doing so.

### **Cubbies**

Outside of each classroom, each child is given a cubby to store personal items and clothing. A child's name is clearly marked in each area. A large plastic box or container is provided to hold the required extra changes of clothing (see below). There is ample room in the cubby area for each child to also place lunchboxes, a backpack or purse, etc. Teachers will also leave notes and artwork to be brought home in the cubby area- please check this frequently.

All clothing, lunch boxes, blankets, thermos bottles, and any items apt to get lost (scarves, mittens, etc.) must be clearly labeled with the child's name. If they are labeled, they can be returned. Please check in with your child's teachers if your child is missing an item.

### **Clothing**

Children should wear clothes that are comfortable and easy for the child to manage. Children spend a great deal of time on the floor, and children should not have to worry about getting their clothes dirty. Though smocks are available for projects, children don't always participate if required to wear them. Art projects can get messy, and good clothing can get ruined.

Every child needs a complete change of clothing to be kept at school at all times in his/her cubby. A set of clothing includes seasonally appropriate pants, underwear, shirt, and socks. During toilet training, please send several changes for each day! Please make sure to label all items of clothing. Shoes should not impede your child's ability to play, both actively and safely. Please send your child in shoes that make running, jumping, climbing, etc. easier and safer. Heavy soled cowboy/girl

boots and clogs are not permitted. If your child wears sandals to school, please bring socks and closed toed shoes or sneakers for your child to wear outside for safety reasons.

*IMPORTANT: Please update the clothing kept at school as the seasons change and as your child grows! Also, please be sure to put sunscreen on your child each day before he/she comes to school in the spring, summer, and fall!*

IN THE WINTER: Coats, caps, mittens, boots, scarves, and snow pants are needed for outside play in the winter and cold weather. We do go outside to play each day, except when it is too wet or too cold. In order for children to enjoy outside play, they must have proper clothing. Temperatures must be below zero for us to remain indoors, except the toddlers (18-24 months) remain indoors when temperatures are below 20 degrees.

IN THE SUMMER: During the summer months, we ask that you bring a bathing suit and towel to be kept at school. We will be going outside for outdoor play unless the temperature is above 90 degrees.

### **Diapers**

For younger children in diapers, please bring a supply of diapers and wipes to the classroom on the first day of school (clearly marked with your child's name). Teachers will let parents know when additional diaper supplies are needed. While we support sustainability of our materials and environment, we are unable to accommodate the use of cloth diapers due to the size and needs of our school.

### **Toilet Training**

Please let the teacher know when you have begun toilet training at home. We can then reinforce learning at school. Please bring plenty of changes of clothing (including socks and possibly shoes). Please continue to send diapers to school during the learning period. If we have a particularly difficult day, it may be less stressful for the child to return to diapers for that day. Be aware that any changes in your family life or changes at school can cause a regression. Patience is the key to success. Children will never be criticized for lapses in toilet training.

### **Snacks and Lunch**

Snacks and meals are a wonderful time of the day for social interaction and skill development. Snacks are prepared by the school chef, Chef Tom. Menus are posted weekly outside the PSA kitchen, by the front office and on the school website. There is a mid-morning snack, an early afternoon snack (after rest time), and an after school snack for children who are in the after-school program. If a special snack is served (other than what was prepared by PSA staff), the snack will be posted on the classroom door.

Snack may be offered as a choice during work time or as a whole group activity. Children are involved in the set up of tables and encouraged to develop passing and serving skills with the help of a teacher. Children have a choice to drink either water or milk (provided by PSA) with each snack and with lunch.

Lunch is a whole group activity with teachers and children sitting together to encourage conversation and healthy eating habits. Children bring lunches from home, and as per Wisconsin regulations, must contain the following:

- 1 serving of protein
- 2 servings of fruits and/or vegetables
- 1 serving of a grain (such as crackers, bread, etc.)

Please do not send juice or candy in lunches and limit sugary items such as cakes, cookies or other desserts to small amounts included less than once per week (not daily). Teachers will always encourage children to eat healthy foods first. If teachers have a concern that a child's lunches are not meeting state guidelines, or are not well balanced, they will contact the child's parents with this concern.

Please do not send items that need to be heated, as our teachers will be focusing their attention on the children and helping them as needed during the meals. (However, please feel free to use thermoses to hold warm soup, for example). Please make sure all items are cut as appropriate for your child and are ready to eat (i.e. peel hard boiled eggs at home). The teachers encourage the children to act as independently as possible at mealtime, but are there to assist as needed.

Please note that PSA is a peanut and tree-nut free environment. See Allergies section on for more.

## **Parties**

Birthdays are significant events in the lives of many preschool children. We would like to help you recognize your child's birthday, if you would like. We understand that not all families cultures celebrate birthdays and respect your decision regarding your child's birthday.

Here are the guidelines for birthday celebrations at school:

- Children may bring a special treat to share with their classmates. We encourage you to bring healthy treats to support the children's well being. Examples: fruit salad, cheese and crackers, veggies and dip. Please check with the classroom teachers to learn about any allergies that affect some children in the class.
- Please do not provide balloons, streamers, hard candy, or take home treats for the birthday celebration. The main celebration of the child's birthday should be done at home.
- You may send party invitations via the parent mailboxes, but please do not put them in the child's cubby.
- Please be in communication with the classroom teachers about your plans; parents are welcome to come and join the class!

## **Classroom Pets**

PSA believes that there are many benefits to having pets in the classroom. Some of these benefits include understanding the cycle of life, care and responsibility for a pet, treating animals with respect, experiencing real life creatures (inspires art and music experiences), and learning about animal habitats. The following types of pets may be found in PSA classrooms: guinea pigs, hamsters, birds, fish, frogs, various insects and in the spring, baby chicks. Please let us know if your child has an allergy to any of these animals. Please note, no other animals are allowed at PSA for liability reasons.



## **Religious Training/Holiday Celebrations**

Preschool of the Arts respects the spiritual and religious beliefs of all persons. We will, therefore, not engage in any specific religious training at the center. PSA may choose to experience a variety of holidays based on the interests, cultures, and traditions of the children and will notify parents of all activities. If a parent does not want their child to participate in any of the activities, they should notify the center of their wishes and make other arrangements for that day.

## **Social Media Policy**

Parents are welcome to take photographs and videos at Preschool of the Arts for private personal family use only. No photos/videos taken at Preschool of the Arts that contain children may be posted to any form of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, WordPress and Instagram. Parents are advised that they do not have a right to photograph anyone else's child, or to upload photos of anyone else's child, without explicit permission from the parent/guardian. Check with staff before you photograph school-day events.

## **Allergies**

Please notify us of any and all allergies your child may have via the Health History form, and what specific precautions must be taken. This includes animals, foods, etc. We must also be informed if your child has a chronic condition such as asthma, for which s/he receives treatment and/or medication outside of school. If your child has a food allergy, including dairy allergies, please also fill out the Food Allergy Action Plan contained in your Preschool of the Arts packet.

In order to accommodate children with serious allergies, **no eating is allowed in common areas of the building, including the playground.**

**PSA will strive to be a peanut and tree-nut free environment.** The goal of these measures is to keep children with peanut and tree nut allergies safe, healthy and included in the PSA environment. We need the assistance of all parents to meet this goal. **We are prohibiting food items that contain peanuts, peanut products, tree nuts or tree nut products (as is included in the ingredient list) rather than food items that may have cross-contamination of such nuts (e.g. a product that is manufactured in a facility that also processes peanuts, peanut products, tree nuts or tree nut products).**

### What does a peanut- and tree nut-free environment mean at PSA?

- Snacks made at PSA, in our classrooms and in the school kitchen, will continue to be peanut- and tree nut-free. Tree nuts include, but are not limited to, walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, and Brazil nuts. Please note that coconuts and coconut products will be allowed, as there is a low risk of an allergic reaction to them.
- All foods that are brought to PSA (lunches, treats, potluck dishes, etc.) must not contain peanuts, tree nuts or byproducts from peanuts and tree nuts, such as peanut oil or almond milk. Please check the ingredient list on all food labels to be sure! Food prepared at home to be shared at school (ex: homemade bread for a classroom celebration) must not contain any peanuts, tree nuts or byproducts from peanuts and tree nuts.

- If your child eats peanuts, tree nuts or byproducts from peanuts and tree nuts prior to coming to school, please have your child wash their hands thoroughly and brush their teeth. If clothes exhibit remnants of peanuts, tree nuts or byproducts from peanuts and tree nuts, please have your child change their clothes.

## **Illnesses**

It is not always easy to decide if your child is sick enough to stay home or well enough to be in school. **Children who come to school are expected, with few exceptions, to participate fully in all indoor and outdoor school activities.** Children who become ill at Preschool of the Arts must be picked up by a parent or guardian within the hour of notification. The following is a list of illnesses or conditions that would necessitate a child staying home or to be temporarily removed from Preschool of the Arts:

- **Fever:** A temperature of 100 degrees or more signals an illness that is probably going to make a child uncomfortable and unable to participate in school activities.
- **Diarrhea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Certain rashes/discharge of skin lesion** (i.e. impetigo, poison ivy)
- **Conditions that may indicate a possible severe illness** such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing or other unusual signs.
- **Any illness or symptoms that prevent the child from participating comfortably in program activities.** (\*For example, coughing so hard unable to sit comfortably through group time.)

Preschool of the Arts reserves the right to request a doctor's written release if such a statement is deemed necessary by the director. **NOTE: If a child is sent home sick, he/she may not return until 24 hours after all symptoms have subsided.** The only exception to this is a doctor's written statement that the child is no longer contagious under any circumstances. If the child returns following illness, then exhibits the same symptoms again during the day of return, the child must then remain at home for another 24 hours before returning to school.

## **Medications**

Frequently following an illness, children need to receive medication for a period of time to eliminate the infection. Medications are given by the administrative staff. The school can not give any medication, prescription or otherwise, without the medication being in the original (prescription) container. Parents must complete an authorization for medication form kept in the front office which must be signed. **NO CHILD MAY MEDICATE HIM OR HERSELF, SO PLEASE DO NOT PUT MEDICATIONS IN LUNCH BOXES.** Medications may not be given as needed unless they are for an allergic reaction. All decisions to medicate must be made by the parent.

## **Treatment of Injuries**

Teachers will give the parents an incident report any time there is a treatment of injury.

- **Minor injuries:** Often in group settings, children can be injured in some minor fashion. Some of these injuries include: skinned knees or hands, scrapes of various kinds, bumps,

and bruises. Treatment for these injuries will include washing the site of the injury with soap and water, applying an ice sponge, and application of a band-aid. By state licensing rules, we are unable to apply any kind of first aid cream or other topical antiseptic. In the event of a splinter or hangnail, we will apply a band-aid to the site to make the child more comfortable. An incident report is presented to parents at the end of the day.

- Serious injuries: If a child receives a head injury (*any* injury above the neck), we consider this a serious injury. Parents will be called to determine if the child needs to be seen by a physician. In most cases, this is unnecessary but we prefer that parents have the opportunity to make this judgment. Other events that would necessitate calling parents would include any injury we have concerns about and that might require the care of a physician. Again, incident reports are filed and shared with the parents.
- Critical injuries: In the event of a life threatening injury to the child, our staff will contact 911 and will contact parents once the emergency service has been contacted. We will make every effort to contact parents as soon as possible, but please remember that our first concern is your child. If there is a need to perform CPR, this will be the first priority until we are relieved. All of our staff is trained in child-adult CPR.

### **Naps/Rest Time**

Children who stay all day are required to rest for at least 30 minutes a day. Many children will sleep for longer than this, so a flexible schedule for rest time is established. Quiet choices are offered for those children who do not sleep. Teachers read or rub backs to settle children during this time.

PSA provides each child with a soft pad for the nap period. You will need to provide a crib sheet (which fits over the pad), and if desired, a small pillow and a small stuffed animal/toy for your child to snuggle. All nap items must be placed in a closed bag for hygienic reasons (such as pillowcases that zip shut). Please mark your child's name clearly on the bag. On the last day of the week your child attends school, you are asked to bring home your child's nap bag and laundry items as appropriate, and then bring back the bag the following week.

### **Outside Time**

All children are required to have a period of outdoor play each morning. Those children who stay all day must also have a period for outdoor play in the afternoon. The exceptions to this rule are when there is severe weather, heavy rain, or the temperature is below 0°F (including windchill) or above 90°F (not including heat index). Teachers are available to facilitate play and social interactions, provide materials, and supervise the use of equipment. Groups may leave PSA grounds for walks when two teachers are present and aware of guidelines for safety. Children under the age of two will remain inside when the temperature or wind chill is below 20°F. In cases where a child has a specific medical condition that does not allow for him/her to be outside, the parents need to bring in a signed doctor's note that specifies that the child is healthy enough to come to school, with the exception of participation in outdoor activities.

### **Toys at School**

We discourage children from bringing toys from home since it is very difficult to keep track of treasures in the classroom. Children may be invited to bring objects for group meetings, which you will be advised about by the teacher.

We do not permit guns or any other weapon play at school; we ask that parents not allow children to bring this type of toy to school. We always take such items away until it is time to go home. We work hard to establish a peaceful atmosphere and materials become off-limit if they are used as weapons.

### **Video Usage**

The use of passive media, such as television, films and videotapes, is limited to developmentally appropriate programming that is related to the classroom curriculum. PSA discourages frequent use of such media.

### **Field Trips**

Children should wear their PSA t-shirts on field trips. Transportation for field trips must be via city bus or other bus with a professional driver. Neither parents nor teachers may drive children not related to them on field trips. For large groups of children ages three and up, we contract with a company that provides yellow school buses for transportation. Children less than three years of age must be transported in car seats on a bus equipped with seat belts. To ensure correct installation, parents are required to install their own child's car safety seat in the bus; teachers may not install a car seat. If the parents cannot be there, they must make arrangements with another parent to properly install the car seat. Rules on the bus are very strict for safety reasons. Children must use inside voices, remain seated at all times, and reasonable behavior is encouraged by having children and adults sing or play games together most of the way.

The school makes every effort to arrange for a ratio of one adult to no more than four children whenever possible, utilizing staff members and parent volunteers. A minimum of the regular classroom ratios will be absolutely required. Please note that children who don't attend on the day of the field trip should meet their class at the field trip location with their own chaperone. This allows the teachers/chaperones to maintain field trip ratios based on the children regularly scheduled for that day. PSA is not responsible for supervising a child who is not regularly scheduled to attend on the day of the field trip – that responsibility lies with that child's own chaperone. If your child does not typically attend on the day of the field trip, then you will not be counted as a chaperone for the classroom – just as a chaperone for your own child.

Siblings are not allowed on field trips, as parents who volunteer to chaperone on field trips should plan to be fully attentive to their own child and his/her classmates.

### **Playground Rules**

PSA teachers enforce the following playground rules. When parents take children out on the playground, we expect the rules to be followed where applicable.

1. All children riding bikes or scooters should be going in the same direction – counterclockwise.
2. It is the responsibility of each child (with the help of teachers as necessary) to put bikes/scooters in the parking spot when finished.

3. Shoes may be taken off in areas that are indicated by a "No Shoes Needed" sign (sandboxes, mud kitchen, sensory garden). When not in one of those areas, shoes must be worn.
4. Climbing is allowed on the rock wall, green bars (on top is okay), monkey bars (not on top), and the sumac tree only.
5. Teachers must supervise each climbing element, meaning you are standing near enough to catch a child should they fall.
6. Zone supervision shall be enforced, and the job of Zone Supervisor shall be a rotating job.
7. When a teacher is not a Zone Supervisor, you are to be either engaged with children in an area or walking around the playground to ensure sight of all children.
8. If your whole class is outside on the playground, two teachers must be on the playground, unless there is a brief need for a child emergency or bathroom break.
9. Materials are to remain in their designated areas, unless a teacher is specifically supervising a project and follows through with clean up when play ends.
10. It is the responsibility of each class to ensure the materials are treated with respect, and are put away when finished playing.
11. For both slip and slide and sledding play, two teachers need to be present – one at the top and one at the bottom.
12. Per licensing, the water tables must be emptied and sanitized daily (when used).

### **Child Tracking**

The teachers track our children at all times and safety procedures are followed at all times. However, in the case of a child who is missing, we will follow these procedures:

- Look throughout the school
- Notify administration
- Notify police (Call 911)
- Notify parents
- Notify parent's emergency contacts, if parent cannot be reached
- Notify Child Care Licensing authorities of incident

### **Fire and Tornado Drills**

Fire and tornado drills are scheduled regularly throughout the year to meet licensing requirements. Teachers prepare the children for this experience by discussing what this sound means and how to evacuate the building when this occurs. Teachers and children practice leaving their classrooms as quickly as possible, and teachers track children to insure that all children are accounted for.

### **Firearms**

Preschool of the Arts is a place of peace. Firearms, ammunition or other potentially dangerous items are not allowed on our premises.

### **Emergency Closing**

**School will be closed on an emergency basis (snow days) when the Madison Public Schools are closed.** Other situations may also require an emergency closing. These may include extreme heat or cold in the building due to malfunctioning HVAC systems. If we deem the situation bad enough, we may also make an independent decision to close. Announcements will be made

over WIBA, 1310 radio. Announcements will also be posted on our website, as soon as possible once it is finalized.

## **Parent Involvement**

Preschool of the Arts is based on relationships between children, families and faculty/staff. We encourage parents and family members to be involved on a number of levels, in a way that feels most comfortable to them. The biggest role parents play at PSA is to be involved in their child's learning and communication with teachers. Parents are encouraged to use this information to see into their child's day and appreciate the learning that is taking place. As curriculum develops, parents are encouraged to discuss topics of interest at home, share their own knowledge and experience with the class, and participate in field trips and classroom events. If questions or concerns arise, parents should first discuss them with their child's teacher. Teachers can often be reached by email, or time can be set aside to meet outside the classroom.

Parents can also be involved by becoming Room Parents, running for Board of Directors positions, or volunteering for a variety of committees that meet throughout the year. These committees develop as needed and topics range from fundraising to marketing to playground construction. This is an excellent way to understand PSA more fully and share professional knowledge and experience.

## **Grievance Procedure**

The Reggio approach to education creates a community of learners inclusive of children, parents and teachers. The cornerstone of this approach is open communication, asking questions, and the respectful sharing of ideas and information.

At times, differences and conflicts may arise that require people to express concerns. Below are steps to aid in navigating conflicts from the most informal to formal procedures.

- **Step 1.** The parent or legal guardian should discuss the concern with his or her child's primary teacher(s). So that people can focus on the issue, the parent/guardian is encouraged to request a special meeting time either in person or by phone to discuss the concern in detail. This meeting should take place as soon as possible. Concerns regarding the administration and management of PSA or the direct safety of children should be brought directly to the Executive Director.
- **Step 2.** If concerns are not resolved through discussion with the teacher(s), the parent/guardian may bring concerns to the Executive Director. In most cases the Executive Director will arrange a meeting with all those involved to facilitate discussion and help to work out an acceptable solution. This initial meeting will be scheduled within five school days after the parent / guardian contacts the Executive Director. Most issues can be resolved at this level.
- **Step 3.** Should a satisfactory resolution not be reached or the complexity of the issue be such that a more formal approach is needed, either the parent/guardian or the Executive Director may initiate a formal grievance process with a written grievance form provided by PSA that identifies the grievant, provides a description of the situation or issue, and relief sought. This form must be submitted within five school days after the meeting with the Executive Director. This form may be submitted to the Executive Director, the President of PSA's Board of Directors, or the PSA Ombudsman who will share a copy with the Grievance

Committee and the Executive Committee. The contact information for the President of the Board of Directors and PSA Ombudsman can be obtained from the Assistant Director of Operations or administrative personnel. The Grievance Committee may share the form with other parties involved, in its reasonable discretion.

- **Step 4.** Upon receipt of the grievance form, the President of PSA's Board of Directors will form a grievance committee to hear and review the issue. If, however, the President is involved in the event(s) giving rise to the grievance, then the PSA Ombudsman will form a grievance committee to hear and review the issue. The Grievance Committee will be comprised of five voting members of the Board of Directors. The Grievance Committee will convene within 10 school days of receiving the grievance form to review the grievance form and discuss any additional fact-finding that the Grievance Committee deems necessary or appropriate. The Grievance Committee may conduct interviews of the parties involved in the event(s) leading to the grievance. The Grievance Committee may hire legal counsel or other consultants to advise the Grievance Committee, subject to prior approval from the President of the Board of Directors. After reviewing the facts, the Grievance Committee shall propose a response or resolution to the Executive Committee for approval. If the Executive Committee reasonably determines that the grievance is required to come before the Board or would best be addressed by the Board, then the Executive Committee shall direct the Grievance Committee to propose its response or resolution to the Board of Directors. If the response or resolution is approved by the Executive Committee (or Board of Directors, as appropriate), then this response will be considered final with regard to any actions to be taken. The Executive Committee shall keep the Board reasonably informed about the grievance and its resolution.

**External Options:** If at any time a parent/guardian feels the situation so warrants, he or she may file a formal complaint with the Department of Children and Families, Southern Regional Office at 1 West Wilson Street, Room 655, P.O. Box 8947, Madison, WI 53708-8947 (608 266-2900) or City of Madison, Community Development Division at PO Box 2627, Madison WI 53701 (266-6520).

### **Disenrollment Policy**

PSA strives to meet the needs of each child enrolled in our program. However, it is sometimes necessary to disenroll a child whose needs cannot be met with our available resources. When disenrollment is being considered, the classroom teacher, in conjunction with the Executive Director, will initiate a conference or series of conferences with the parent(s). The situation will be discussed, and plans will be made for solutions, responsibilities, and follow-up. A reasonable timetable will be established to monitor and evaluate the situation. Options for dealing with the situation may include, but not be limited to: calling a consultant such as Rainbow Project, Inc., City Day Care staff, or Dane County Social Services staff to observe the child at PSA and/or to make recommendations, behavior modification plans, coordination between home and PSA, and schedule changes. Confidentiality among PSA staff shall be maintained at all times. Written records of meetings, evaluations, etc. shall be kept by PSA staff.

Disenrollment may be necessary if the staff and/or parent(s) believe that our program is not an optimal placement for the child. Factors to be considered in this decision may include, but not be limited to:

- Extent of a child's challenging behavior in the classroom
- Extent of a child's disruption of the classroom

- Possibility of danger/harm to the child or others in the classroom
- Demands of a child on staff time
- Extent and nature of resources available to PSA
- Ability of the staff to meet the child's needs
- Willingness of parents to work with staff and/or obtain outside help
- Concerns of parents of the other children in the class
- Physical punishment of the child by parents on the premises of the preschool
- Non payment of tuition and fees
- Non-compliance with PSA's policies and procedures
- Disrespectful behavior by parents towards staff

PSA reserves the right to disenroll a child and release the parent(s) from their contract without penalty upon reasonable notice, not to exceed 30 days. The determination to disenroll a child shall be made by the Executive Director. This decision is final.