



# **PRESCHOOL OF THE ARTS**

## **Family Handbook 2020-21**

**Updated January, 2021**

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## Section 1: PSA Overview

### **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. The COVID-19 outbreak is a global challenge on an unprecedented scale, but Preschool of the Arts still strives to offer a vibrant, innovative and supportive learning community committed to child-focused exploration and creativity. We aim to meet the significant impacts this crisis has on our children with **love, compassion and understanding**. We believe children are capable. We value play as both means of developmentally appropriate learning and processing the world. We will continue to structure our curriculum around these constructs, while incorporating ongoing best health practices regarding COVID-19.

### **Values Statements**

We value the philosophy of the 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 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.

### **Statement of Diversity and Inclusion**

PSA's dedication to diversity and inclusion is firmly rooted in the Reggio Emilia approach. We see all children as capable and we value the many different ways they communicate who they are, how they learn, and how they understand the world. We are committed to intentionally creating a school environment where all children and families and all members of the school and wider community are valued and treated with respect, dignity and compassion. We strive to see and celebrate our differences and commonalities in race, culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender and gender identity, religion, family structure, and socio-economic experiences. We acknowledge that this commitment demands that we continually educate ourselves and our community, embrace challenging conversations, and transform this ideal into action, to the best of our abilities. We hold ourselves accountable to this statement by infusing diversity and inclusion in our day-to-day practices and in making decisions that impact our school and community. We expect this dedication from ourselves, our school, and our community because our children deserve an environment and experiences that support them to joyfully engage with, value, and nurture the diversity of the world in which we live.

### **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 children ages 18 months through 5 years.

### **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 composed of parents, faculty, and community members 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.

### **Administrative Staff**

In addition to the teaching faculty, there are several administrative staff members who carry out the business of the school. 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.

**Dr. Penny Robbins**, Executive Director, [probbins@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:probbins@preschoolofthearts.com)

**Mollie Stetzer**, Admissions and Community Outreach, [mstetzer@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:mstetzer@preschoolofthearts.com)

**Abby Malesytcki**, Assistant Director, [amalesytcki@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:amalesytcki@preschoolofthearts.com)

**Kristin Slava**, Environment and Facilities Manager, [kslava@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:kslava@preschoolofthearts.com)

**Mickey Willis**, Pedagogista, [mwillis@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:mwillis@preschoolofthearts.com)

**Mallory Williams**, Pedagogista, [mwilliams@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:mwilliams@preschoolofthearts.com)

**Lindsey Jacobus**, Social Emotional & Behavior Support, [ljacobus@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:ljacobus@preschoolofthearts.com)

## **Section 2: PSA Community**

### **Classroom Pods & Teaching Teams**

Each pod consists of 2 classrooms in close physical proximity to each other in the building, as well as home to similar age groups. Within each pod, one classroom follows a 8:00am-3:30pm schedule, while the other follows a 8:30am-4:00pm schedule. Children enrolled in After School combine within their pod until 5:30pm.

Each classroom has two Co-teachers working staggered shifts to cover Before School (if applicable) and the regular school day. Each classroom in a Pod shares a Support teacher that covers After School. This Support teacher helps the classrooms with things such as: break times, diapering and bathrooms, cleaning, taking the group on walks, and pick-ups.

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 support teachers provide opportunities for the co-teachers to have lunch and planning time in the afternoons. Not all of the teachers are always present at pick up times.

Our teachers are professionals. Most of our teachers have college degrees in early childhood education, child development, elementary education, or a closely related field. Support 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 a college degree. 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 support 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 as possible. All faculty, including substitute teachers participate in a thorough orientation as required by state licensing and supplemented with PSA's own practices and procedures.

### **Specialists**

PSA has both music specialists and art specialists. 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 the classroom curriculum. Due to COVID-19, Art and Music Specialists will not be able to interact with children directly indoors, but will be able to interact with classrooms virtually and in outdoor spaces. To supplement, Art & Music Specialists will provide materials and simple provocations to

their assigned classrooms so that teachers can independently extend the Art or Music experiences in their classrooms.

### **Conflict of Employment**

Please note, as per the Registration Agreement, families cannot hire any current 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. Our most common method of communication is through email, but we also have the school website and monthly email newsletters from the office. PSA has a text alert system that is used in emergencies and to notify parents of school closings due to weather. Parents are automatically added to the text alert system, and the lists are updated monthly.

**Please keep your email address and cell phone number up to date, and notify the 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 significant activity during these 'peak' times, so please try to limit conversations at these times to quick questions or comments as other children and parents will be needing attention as well.

If you have important information (like an upcoming change in your child's schedule, an absence or appointment) that needs to be shared with your child's classroom teachers, you may communicate via email.

If you need to speak with your child's teachers for a longer period of time about any questions or concerns, please contact your teachers to arrange a time that is mutually convenient for you to talk. This can be scheduled either in person, via audio or video call, or by email. Each PSA teacher has their own PSA email address.

### **Teacher to Parent Communication.**

Teachers strive to send regular emails about the activities in the classroom. The emails will describe activities, dialogues, reflections and may also include upcoming projects. When possible, teachers will include photographs so parents can see the children in action. Logistical emails will also include any information or reminders as needed for parents. We discourage staff from communicating with parents via text message.

Teachers of children two and under 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 parents 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 distributed by teachers. 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 PSA's developmental portfolios. 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. For the 2020-21 school year, conferences will be held virtually.

### **Our Approach to Discipline at PSA**

Our approach to discipline begins with having engaging materials and activities so children are positively occupied throughout the day. It is expected and normal for young children to 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, enabling children to find their own solutions, and positive redirection.

Because each child is an individual, discipline must be tailored to meet individual students' needs. When a child is having a difficult time monitoring their 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 or dysregulated, 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 or the Educational Support Specialist.
- In some cases, the child's parents may be called to pick up the child from school. In extreme cases, the child may be disenrolled.

In cases where a child intentionally hurts another child or teacher: Families will be called to come pick up the student for the rest of the day. This is not intended to be a consequence, but a message to the rest of the classroom students that teachers are here to keep them safe. We view this type of behavior as a level of discomfort or upset that needs support. A change in environment or authority can often help a child calm down. If your student needs to be picked up, you will be contacted by your classroom teachers who will explain what happened.

We encourage parents to talk with their child about their 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 school such as staying near an adult and using walking feet in the hallways. Please note that child supervision is the responsibility of the parents before and after school, and at all social gatherings. Children should be in sight and sound of parents during transitions into and out of the classroom.

### **Children with Special Rights**

As a Reggio Emilia-inspired school, we believe that every child is capable and has the right to play and learn. We strive to maintain an environment of inclusion, where all children are respected and supported in partnership with families and faculty.

Sometimes a child may be identified with a special need or condition before enrolling in our program. Parents are encouraged to share details of any diagnosis or individualised plan their children may have. This will enable us to work together as a team to find the best way to support the child.

### **Educational Supports at PSA**

Our Social Emotional & Behavioral Support Specialist, as well as other members of our leadership team, is available to support the teachers at PSA. When a teacher has questions or concerns about a child's behavior or learning, the Social Emotional & Behavioral Support Specialist will gather information, then share ideas and resources to support the teacher, student, and family in creating a successful learning experience.

Any concerns about a child's behavior or learning will be communicated to the family in a timely manner. The classroom teachers, in conjunction with the Executive Director, Social Emotional & Behavioral Support Specialist, and/or Pedagogistas, will initiate a meeting with the parent(s) or guardian(s) to discuss concerns and develop a plan for addressing them. A reasonable timetable will be established to implement and review the plan, and it may be amended as the child's needs and classroom dynamics change. Written records of meetings and related documents will be kept by PSA staff, and confidentiality will be kept at all times.

Assessment and support strategies will vary depending on the particular situation and may include, but not be limited to:

- Classroom observation by an educational consultant or other staff member.
- School recommendation for family to consult the child's physician and/or outside resources.
- School consultation with outside resources, such as MMSD Child Find, Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program, or the Rainbow Project. Representatives from these organizations may be invited to observe the child at PSA. Students who are part of the 4K program may be eligible for additional assessment and support services through MMSD.
- Reduction or other modifications of student's schedule (in which case tuition payment obligations may be reduced).
- Additional staffing funded by the school to provide extra classroom support (short term only).
- Additional staffing funded by the family to provide extra classroom support (long term).

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

### **Responding to 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 the child to school on time. It is often difficult for young children to join an activity that has already started, and the transition is easier when they feel a part of the group from the beginning.
- Say goodbye and make a firm exit. Don't sneak away. If parents demonstrate their confidence in the decision to leave the child at school, the child will learn it is okay.
- If the child is upset, the teachers will comfort and reassure them that the parent will be back and redirect the focus to a classroom activity.

### Section 3: PSA Program and Logistics

#### **Registration**

Registration materials for current families will be available online in early January. Current families are welcome to submit their registration contracts for their currently enrolled child AND sibling(s) anytime during the specified priority time period for current families. To receive this priority status, current families must submit their registration by the specified due date. More information will be communicated to families by email as registration time draws near.

#### **Changes in Schedule**

Once a contract is signed, it is an expectation that the financial obligation of the contract be fulfilled.

For temporary schedule changes, *made in advance (when they are possible)*:

- \$15 to add before school, per day
- \$35 to add after school, per day

For temporary schedule changes, *made day-of (when they are possible)*:

- \$20 to add before school, per day
- \$50 to add after school, per day

PSA cannot guarantee an accommodation of a permanent change in your contracted schedule. The ability to make permanent schedule changes is dependent on enrollment, staffing configurations, and other classroom needs.

- When the number of hours remains unchanged, there will be a \$100 schedule change fee.
- When the number of hours is increased, the schedule change fee will be waived and tuition payments will be increased to reflect the additional hours.
- When the number of hours is decreased, there will be a \$100 schedule change fee. Please note that tuition payment obligations are not reduced when contracted hours are reduced. In situations of financial hardship, exceptions may be made if approved by the Finance Committee.

#### **Classroom Assignment**

We prioritize classroom placements with teachers and peers that foster ongoing relationships. We value the relationships that are built in 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 assignment or progression if it is in the best interest of the child or the school.** If there is a compelling reason suggesting your child might benefit from a change in the classroom progression, please talk with your classroom teachers. The school does not generally make changes to classroom placement once the school year has begun. It is important to 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 composed of the Admissions Coordinator, Emotional Social & Behavior Support Specialist and Executive Director will review the request for classroom changes based on the needs of the child and the school. A final decision will be communicated to the family within two weeks of the request.

While we try our best to keep 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 with the faculty.

### **Summer Enrollment**

We strive to keep each child's summer classroom experience consistent with the rest of the school year. However, due to the number of families with 9-month contracts who take the summer off, as well as our commitment to granting extended time off to our teachers in the summer, **the classrooms, including teachers, are often reconfigured for the summer program. It is possible that your child's class will have different students and/or different teachers 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 are adaptable and 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 the 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 teacher to determine a classroom placement that meets the needs of each child. These decisions will be communicated in May via a parent letter explaining the decision-making process and discussing plans to support children through the transition.

### **Child Forms**

All required forms for your child must be submitted **prior** to their 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 an emergency contact number for each child who is not a parent, in the event the parents cannot be reached.** It is helpful if you indicate which parent is the preferred one to call in the event of an emergency.

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 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 authorization for a new pick-up person. 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, they 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 on a need-to-know basis.

### **Absences**

If your child is going to be absent you can inform your classroom teachers ahead of time. If your child is going to be absent or late last minute, you can call the office at (608) 233-1707 or send an email to [absences@preschoolofthearts.com](mailto:absences@preschoolofthearts.com). If your child is sick, please inform us of your child's symptoms so we can track illnesses. See also COVID-19 Handbook.

### **Drop-off Time**

After your child's health screen, please park in your assigned lane upon arrival. **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.** This ensures that teachers are aware your child has arrived or left. Please note that children must always be within sight and sound of a supervising adult. See also COVID-19 Handbook.

### **Pick-Up Time**

Since we base our staffing on the number of children enrolled in each class, 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 ratios 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.** See also COVID-19 Handbook.

### **Impaired Authorized Pick Up**

If a child's authorized pick up appears to be impaired by drugs or alcohol or appears to be having a medical impairment at the time of pick up, PSA reserves the right to refuse the release of the child. Another authorized contact on the child's list will be called to pick up the child.

### **Parking**

Parking is only allowed in your designated parking area. We ask that you do not leave your car idling. Once the teacher has collected your child or dropped off your child at the end of the day, we ask that you please exit the parking lot as soon as you can, freeing the spot for someone else. See also COVID-19 Handbook.

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 or 455 Science Drive 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.

### **Open Door Policy**

Because of COVID-19, the school building and classrooms are temporarily closed to anyone other than the children, teaching staff, and administration. If you would like an appointment with a teacher or administrator, please contact them directly by email or phone.

### **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 place their belongings.

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, or contact the office to check lost and found.

### **Clothing**

Children should wear clothes that are comfortable and easy for the child to manipulate independently during toileting. 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, they are not always required for participation. Art projects can get messy, and clothing can get stained.

Every child needs a complete change of clothing to be kept at school at all times in their 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. We recommend socks and closed-toed shoes or sneakers. Heavy soled cowboy/girl boots and clogs are not recommended.

**IMPORTANT: Please update the clothing kept at school as the seasons change and as your child grows. Additionally, please be sure to put sunscreen on your child each day before they come 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 go outside to play each day, except when it is storming 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) who remain indoors when temperatures are below 20 degrees.

IN THE SUMMER: During the summer months, we ask that you bring a bathing suit 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. Menus are posted weekly 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. During COVID-19, we have switched our snacks to meet health and safety guidelines. We will only be serving pre-packaged, individually served, or simple whole foods for snack. Our snack menu is mostly organic, locally-sourced when possible, and vegetarian. If a special snack is served (other than what was prepared by PSA staff), parents will be notified by email.

Snack may be offered as a choice during work time or as a whole group activity. Children have a choice to drink either water or milk (provided by PSA) with snacks and lunch.

Lunch is a whole group activity with teachers and children sitting together to encourage conversation and healthy eating habits. Children will bring packed lunches from home, and we ask that they be packed in plastic, metal, or resealable plastic so that the teacher may wipe down the outside before bringing them into the classroom. **Please no fabric lunch boxes!** Per Wisconsin regulations, lunch must be composed of 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 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 do not send foods that are choking hazards, such as grapes or hot dogs, in young children's lunch unless they are cut.

**Please note that PSA is a peanut and tree-nut free environment.** See Allergies section 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 ask that you bring healthy treats, store purchased and individually wrapped. Examples: Baby Bell cheese, bags of Veggie Straws, bags of all-natural fruit snacks, etc. Please check with the classroom teachers to learn about any allergies that affect the class.
- You may choose to purchase a favorite book for your child's teacher to read on your child's special day. It may be fun for your child to unwrap the book as a gift to the classroom as well, commemorating their special day.
- Please do not provide balloons, streamers, hard candy or take home treats for the birthday celebration.
- Please communicate with the classroom teachers concerning birthday plans!
- At this time, parents are not allowed in the classroom.

### **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, and learning about animal habitats. The following types of pets may be found in PSA classrooms: guinea pigs, hamsters, hedgehogs, 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.

### **Indoor and Outdoor Environment**

Our physical facility plays an important part in keeping us healthy and safe. Our team of professional contractors represent the best professional services available in the Madison area for cleaning, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and overall building maintenance. We maintain a membership with the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials in order to stay current with issues of health and safety related to our building.

We value our school grounds as a space that creates opportunities for environmental education and connections with nature. We strive to maintain our property in a manner that supports natural systems by practicing organic turf management, minimizing herbicide and pesticide use, and landscaping with native plants to encourage healthy soil, insect and animal life.

### **Holiday Celebrations**

Preschool of the Arts respects the cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs of all persons. We will, therefore, not engage in any specific religious education at our school. PSA classrooms may choose to experience a variety of holidays based on the interests, cultures, and traditions of the children and we 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, or 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.

Preschool of the Arts maintains its own social media accounts. We only post photos of children for whom the parents have signed a photo release form.

### **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 they receive 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 enrollment forms.

PSA strives 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 prohibit 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. 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**

During COVID-19, we ask that if your child stay home if they exhibit any symptoms such as fever cough, stomach upset, diarrhea, headache, extreme tiredness or other COVID-19 related symptoms. It is extremely important to the health and wellness of our environment that any symptomatic children or adults stay home. Children who become ill at Preschool of the Arts must be picked up by a parent, guardian, or authorized pick-up person 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.

For more information about illness, see also COVID-19 Handbook.

For more information about specific communicable illnesses, please visit the website of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p4/p44397.pdf>

### **Medications**

Sometimes, children need to receive prescription or over-the-counter medications during the school day. 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 himself. 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. For topical ointments, such as lotion, parents will be asked to sign an authorization form.

### **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. 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 completed and shared with the parents. If an injury that occurs at school requires medical care by a doctor, PSA will follow up for more details and report the injury to our state licensing agency.
- **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 services have 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 are trained in child-adult CPR.

### **Naps/Rest Time**

Children who stay all day are required to rest for at least 30 minutes a day, including school-age children. 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. This mat will be cleaned and disinfected every day by the child (when able) or by the teacher (when the child is too young or unable). You will be asked to provide a crib sheet (which fits over the pad), and if desired, a small pillow, blanket, and a small stuffed animal/toy for your child to snuggle. All nap items must be placed in a sealable bag, such as a pillowcase with a zipper, extra large ziplock bag, or laundry bag with a tight drawstring. 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 launder items as appropriate, and then bring back the bag the following week.

### **Outside Time**

We know that spending as much time as possible outdoors is important during COVID-19, so our classrooms will be spending more time than usual outdoors. We suggest that each child have weather appropriate clothing, so their outdoor experience is optimal. Purchasing good rain gear, snow pants, coats, hats, gloves as well as rain and snow boots will make outdoor time enjoyable. For suggestions on brands, contact the office or your teacher.

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. 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 them 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 will 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.

### **Digital Media 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**

Currently, all field trips have been suspended due to COVID-19. Classrooms may go on walks in the neighborhood or to nearby parks.

### **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, or take cover for a tornado when this occurs. Teachers and children practice leaving their classrooms as quickly as possible, and teachers track children to ensure 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 Contact**

The Executive Director is PSA's emergency contact. In the case of the Executive Director's absence, the Assistant Director will be the contact and in charge of any emergency plan.

### **Emergency Closings**

**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 through our text alert system, and by email as soon as possible once the decision is finalized.

Public Health, Dane County, the State of Wisconsin, or the federal government may also force an emergency closure due to COVID-19. If this occurs, you will be notified by email and the text alert system.

### **Parent Involvement**

While COVID-19 may limit in-person parental participation in the classroom or school building, Preschool of the Arts continues to encourage parents and family members to be involved in your child's learning. Involvement can be on a number of levels, in a way that feels most comfortable to your family. 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. 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.

### **Custody Issues**

Parents and courts will establish the terms and conditions of custody of children. In any custody arrangements, unless parental rights have been legally waived, both parents retain full parental rights regarding access to school records, portfolios, assessments, parent/teacher conferences, minutes and notifications of meetings. PSA will remain neutral in custody cases and will rely on parent agreement or court documents in honoring parental requests. Any changes to the status quo must be agreed to by both parents through a court order. PSA is not responsible to enforce specific pick up days, but will do its best to abide by a provided parenting plan.

### **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 the relief sought. Grievance forms are available in the front office. 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 another board officer 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 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 is committed to the well-being and success of every child in our program and to working collaboratively with families to achieve this. As Reggio inspired practitioners, we expect children to exhibit a range of abilities and approaches to learning and staff members participate in ongoing professional development opportunities to stay informed on how to best support a diverse population.

There are times, however, when it becomes necessary to end enrollment. When school and family have attempted to work together to promote a child's best interests at school and these efforts have been unsuccessful, disenrollment may be considered.

Factors leading to disenrollment may include but not be limited to:

- Non-payment of tuition and fees;
- Non-compliance with PSA's policies and procedures or Registration Agreement;
- Uncooperative, disrespectful or harmful behavior by parent(s) or guardian(s);
- The school's inability to meet a child's needs, such as unusually challenging behaviors in the classroom or behaviors that may cause harm; or
- Child's need for support or resources beyond what can be provided at PSA
- Family's unwillingness to work with staff and/or obtain outside support services.

Disenrollment may be necessary when reasonable attempts to identify, support and/or accommodate a child's needs have been unsuccessful. PSA reserves the right to disenroll a child and release the parent(s) or guardian(s) from the enrollment contract without penalty upon reasonable notice. The determination to disenroll a child shall be made by the Executive Director and this decision is final.