



PRESCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Family Handbook 2025-26

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Table of Contents

Section 1: PSA Overview - page 2

- Mission and Values Statements
- Inclusion and Diversity
- History of Reggio Emilia
- History of PSA
- History of our Approach to Early Education
- Board of Directors
- Administrative Staff

Section 2: PSA Community - page 5

- Classroom Pairings and Teaching Teams
- Float Teachers and Substitute Teachers
- Art and Music
- Conflict of Employment
- School-wide Communication
- Family to Teacher Communication
- Teacher to Family Communication
- Conferences
- Our Approach to Discipline at PSA
- Children with Special Needs and Special Rights
- Educational Supports at PSA
- Responding to Separation Anxiety

Section 3: PSA Program and Logistics - page 9

- Enrollment and Contracts
- Changes in Schedule
- Classroom Assignment
- Summer Enrollment
- Child Forms
- Confidentiality of Student Records
- Absences
- Drop Off and Pick Up
- Parking
- Kindergarten Attendance
- Visitor Policy
- Family Involvement
- Custody Issues
- Cubbies
- Clothing
- Diapers
- Toilet Training
- Snacks and Lunch
- Rest Time and Naps
- Outside Time
- Toys at School
- Birthdays and Special Occasions
- Holiday Celebrations
- Field Trips
- Classroom Pets
- Digital Media Usage
- Social Media Policy
- Allergies
- Illnesses
- Medications
- Treatment of Injuries
- Firearms
- Fire and Tornado Drills
- Emergency Contact
- Emergency Closing
- Grievance Procedure
- Disenrollment Policy

Section 1: PSA Overview

Mission Statement

At Preschool of the Arts, our mission is to nurture open-minded and open-hearted individuals who learn alongside one another and embrace the world with compassion, creativity, wonder, and joy.

Introduction to our Values

Our pedagogical practices are inspired and influenced by the early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, informed by social-constructivist learning theory and research, and founded on the belief that the arts are a natural means of expression for children. Our pedagogy is made up of a series of interconnected values that are each shaped and influenced by the others. This pedagogy for teaching and learning makes up the context in which we work.

We use our pedagogy as a lens to support us in an inquiry process that helps us understand children and all human beings more deeply. When looking at a child's development through the lens of our mission and values, we can get to know the child with more nuance and complexity. Asking ourselves, "How is our pedagogy expressed in this child's play and interactions?" helps us see the child more fully and understand our values better. We focus on how the children inhabit our values, while also thinking about how we apply our pedagogy to our own action and reflection.

Values Statements

We value a culture of **belonging** and believe that participating in a variety of meaningful, connected, and transformative experiences creates conditions for becoming and learning within a group. By balancing the rights of self and others, we empower children and adults to be advocates for themselves, others, and generations to come.

We value reciprocal **relationships** and believe in learning with children, collaborating professionally with our peers, fostering family partnerships, and strengthening our connection to the natural world. Our approach is based on trust, mutual respect, care, and a deep desire to learn more.

We value intentional **listening** and believe in negotiating our curriculum through a process of observation, documentation, and reflection which nurtures a reverence for ongoing inquiry and investigation. As learners and educators, we welcome dialogue as essential to continuous learning.

We value **aesthetics** and believe in intentionally curating dynamic spaces that are inviting and beautiful because our environments serve as protagonists. We create spaces that reflect the people who interact within them, making visible their identities, their perspectives, and their ideas.

We value freedom of **expression** and believe children are naturally curious and motivated, capable of communicating their learning in many ways, particularly through the creative arts. We acknowledge, honor, and celebrate differences and individuality, inviting all people to share their ways of knowing and being.

Statement of Inclusion and Diversity

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.

History of Reggio Emilia

The people of Reggio Emilia, a small Italian city in the region of Emilia Romagna, set about rebuilding their lives and reconstructing their society following the devastating impacts of World War II and fascism. The community rallied to envision a new form of education that would center the ideas and rights of young children through their collective advocacy, teaching, learning, and reconstruction of schools from the ground up. Alongside the parents, educators, citizens, and children, Loris Malaguzzi - one of the visionary scholars and founding teachers of the Reggio Emilia approach - developed an extraordinary way for children to reach unexpected levels of learning and cooperation with others. The resulting program was supported by the city in several schools and infant care centers, and emphasized the strength of communication and interaction between parents, teachers and children. The Reggio Emilia pedagogy combines the theories and practices of Bruno Ciari, Jerome Bruner, Jean Piaget, Howard Gardner and others including practices of the Progressive Education Movement from the United States.

History of PSA

Preschool of the Arts was founded in 1971 and has grown over time to serve nearly 200 students. In the early years, PSA operated at Bethany United Methodist Church and then at Hoyt School on Regent Street. In the fall of 1990, PSA moved to our current location in University Research Park and expanded to 14 classrooms in the year 2000. PSA is dedicated to the exploration of early childhood learning and teaching practices, and we strive to share what we learn with others who have a common interest in the wellbeing of all children.

History of Our Approach to Early Education

PSA was founded on the belief that the arts are a natural means of expression for children. PSA's founder, Barbara Goy, particularly believed that children had a natural affinity for music. She believed they could learn social-emotional, academic, and motor skills through music, movement, creative dramatics, visual arts, and sciences. This foundation in the creative arts continues to be a cornerstone of PSA's educational approach.

Beginning in 1995, PSA began an investigation of the educational practices of the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Since that time, the school has focused on an innovative child-centered, evolving curriculum, supported by and integrated with experiences in the arts. Our school is made up of children who are creative communicators developing and expressing their thinking in a variety of ways, engaged families who are partners in the life of the school, and reflective and responsive educators who are dedicated to ongoing learning.

The inspiration we have drawn from the schools of Reggio Emilia has also brought us into contact with other practitioners in the United States and abroad, allowing our faculty and staff to deepen their understanding of the philosophy and broaden their contacts in the field of early childhood education. Our commitment to the Reggio philosophy has also helped the school to attract families from the Madison community who share our interests in collaborative and innovative curriculum.

Our important and intentional work with children orients us toward the future and is respectful of our responsibilities to Indigenous peoples and the ecologies that we inhabit.

The Reggio Emilia approach encourages young children and their teachers to explore, question, theorize and draw conclusions in a rich and beautiful environment. Children's learning cycles through inquiry, observation, documentation, reflection, and interpretation. Children refine their discoveries as they are nurtured and encouraged by the adults (families, teachers, and community members) who facilitate and support their learning.

PSA draws inspiration from the schools of Reggio Emilia and expects the families, staff, and students who choose to participate in our school to be in-process as life-long learners, constructing knowledge about life and learning in our world and culture. We support families and staff with ongoing opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding through experiences in the classroom and across the school community.

It is intended that every child at PSA will have the opportunity to encounter the Reggio Emilia approach by experiencing our unique values. Although application of PSA's pedagogy will vary according to the age group, abilities, and interests of each group of children, an underlying thread is our belief that children are powerful and competent learners and that they learn best in thoughtfully prepared and engaging environments by educators who are loving, enthusiastic, joyful, and careful listeners.

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 families, faculty, and community members. Some of the major duties of the Board include approving the school's annual operating budget, approving tuition rates, supporting the Executive Director in establishing short-term and long-term priorities, and assisting in the execution of major school activities and events. Elections usually take place in the fall, and the Board typically meets once a month. Recent board minutes are available on our website.

Administrative Staff

In addition to the teaching faculty, several administrative staff members manage the school. Please feel free to communicate with the administrative staff via email, phone, or by setting up a meeting appointment.

Dr. Penny Robbins, Executive Director, probbins@preschoolofhearts.com

Abby Malesytcki, Assistant Director, amalesytcki@preschoolofhearts.com

Mollie Stetzer, Enrollment Manager, mstetzer@preschoolofhearts.com

Ross Ziobro, Environment and Facilities Manager, rziobro@preschoolofhearts.com

Noelle Al-Adra, Pedagogical Specialist, naladra@preschoolofhearts.com

Mallory Williams, Pedagogical Specialist, mwilliams@preschoolofhearts.com

Monica Lyons, Behavioral Support Specialist, mlyons@preschoolofhearts.com

Section 2: PSA Community

Classroom Pairings & Teaching Teams

Each classroom has two Co-Teachers who arrive in the morning and stay through the regular school day (3:30pm). Before lunchtime, they are joined by an Afternoon Teacher who stays through after school (3:30pm-5:30). At 3:30pm, each classroom partners with the children and teacher from another classroom to make an afterschool group.

The Co-Teachers are responsible for planning the class's activities and curriculum. In the afternoons, there are teacher meetings or planning sessions. The Afternoon Teachers provide opportunities for the Co-Teachers to have lunch and planning time. Not all of the teachers are always present at pick-up times.

Our teachers are professionals. Most have college degrees in early childhood education, child development, elementary education, or a closely related field. Teachers who do not have an early childhood background are required to take coursework. All faculty members participate in an ample amount of professional development activities throughout the year.

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

Float Teachers and Substitute Teachers

PSA has qualified staff who work as Float Teachers or Substitute Teachers when a Co-Teacher or Afternoon Teacher is absent. These teachers are PSA employees and are familiar faces around the school. Float and Substitute Teachers work to keep the classroom flow with as little disruption 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.

Art and Music

Our creative arts program is run by a team of Music Specialists and Art Specialists. Each week, classrooms typically have one day of art and one day of music with the Specialists. Specialists will provide in-classroom experiences for the youngest classrooms. The Art Studio utilizes an atelier lab model, where the Art Specialists create experiences where children engage in exploring and learning about a plethora of creative and expressive media or "languages". We focus on the artistic process over a finished product. In each of our two Music Studios, children are introduced to the building blocks of musicianship through performing, instrumental exploration, songwriting and sound design. We foster a love of music by providing opportunities for the children to sing, dance, and play through music.

Conflict of Employment

In accordance with 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, including on days when the school is closed for children but staff are expected to attend. Violating this agreement may result in consequences, including loss of tuition deposit, disenrollment of your child(ren) from PSA, and disciplinary action for the staff member. Additionally, classroom teachers are asked not to babysit for children currently enrolled in their classroom.

School-wide Communication

There are multiple avenues for school-wide communication. Our most common method of communication is through email, but we also use the Procare software, and the school website. PSA uses the Procare text alert system in emergencies and to notify families of school closings due to weather. **Please keep your email address and cell phone number current and notify the office if you have any changes.**

Family to Teacher Communication

There is an opportunity to communicate with teachers at drop-off and pick-up time each day. 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 families will also need attention.

If you have important information (like an upcoming change in your child's schedule, an absence, or an appointment) that needs to be shared with your child's classroom teachers, you may communicate via email or Procare. We discourage families from communicating with staff via text message.

If you need to speak with your child's teachers for a longer period 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, virtually, or by email. Each PSA teacher has their own PSA email address.

Teacher to Family Communication.

Teachers strive to send regular communication about the activities in the classroom, by email or through Procare. Documentation emails will describe activities, dialogues, and reflections and may also include upcoming projects. Teachers share photographs so families can see the children in action. Logistical emails will also include any information or reminders needed by families. We discourage staff from communicating with families via text message.

Teachers of children two and under will provide a summary for families each day, including information on diaper changes, eating, sleeping, and what activities the child participated in during the day.

Family-Teacher Conferences

Conferences will take place in the fall, winter, and spring. Teachers will distribute a sign-up sheet. 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 your child's development using PSA's research-based portfolio system. These conferences are opportunities for shared information and understanding of the child. Other conferences may also be arranged as needed by families or teachers. Conferences may be held virtually or in person.

Our Approach to Discipline at PSA

Our approach to behavior management begins with having engaging materials and activities so children are positively occupied throughout the day. It is expected and typical 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 choices and behaviors, discussion of the problem, enabling children to find their own solutions, and positive redirection.

Because each child is an individual, behavior intervention 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 reset. The teacher will also assist the child in processing the situation and in planning next steps, as appropriate. If a child's behavior continues to be a challenge, teachers may consult our Behavioral Support Specialist. Teachers will contact families to

partner together as needed. No form of physical discipline or humiliation is acceptable on the premises of PSA, whether initiated by families 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 Behavioral Support Specialist.
- In rare cases, the child's family 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, the teachers will:

- Ensure the safety of all children in the classroom.
- Work with the Behavioral Support Specialist on a case by case basis.
- As needed, the Behavioral Support Specialist and the teachers will work together with the family to create a plan that encourages social emotional learning until the child shows marked improvement.
- In rare cases, the child's family may be called to pick up the child from school. In extreme cases, the child may be disenrolled.

We encourage families 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.

Children with Special Needs and 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. Families are encouraged to share details of any diagnosis, individualized plan, or special need that may require accommodation. This will enable us to work together as a team to find the best way to support the child.

Educational Supports at PSA

Our Behavioral 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 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, Behavioral Support Specialist, and/or Pedagogical Specialist(s), 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 maintained at all times. Each plan will be individually created because each child and circumstance is unique.

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

- Classroom observation by the Behavioral Support Specialist or other staff member.

- School recommendation for the family to consult the child's physician and/or outside resources.
- School consultation with outside resources, such as Madison Metropolitan School District (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, when possible).
- 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 families and children. If a child has difficulty transitioning into the classroom, please communicate with the teachers to develop a plan for helping this transition. Families are welcome to call the school at any time to check in on their child. 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 families demonstrate their confidence in the decision to leave the child at school, the child will learn it is okay.
- Have a specific routine at drop-off. For example, "I will give you two kisses and a high five, and then I will go."
- If the child is upset, the teachers will comfort and reassure them that the parent/caregiver will be back and redirect the focus to a classroom activity.

Section 3: PSA Program and Logistics

Enrollment and Attendance

Enrollment and Contracts

Registration materials for current families will be sent virtually in late December or 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.

When a child is not signed up for after school, they may be able to drop in on occasion. The drop-in rate for after school is \$17.50/day. Please note that after school may not be available in every classroom.

PSA cannot guarantee that a permanent change in your contracted schedule will be accommodated. The ability to make permanent schedule changes is dependent on enrollment, staffing configurations, and other classroom needs. If a schedule change is requested and determined possible, a \$100 schedule change fee will be applied.

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. For younger children (toddlers and twos), we follow a looping classroom model, where children move classrooms together, often with their teachers.. As children get older, they may move into a new classroom with their peers but with new teachers. Typically, older children (around four years old), will move with some familiar peers and some new peers into a new classroom with new teachers.

PSA reserves the right to determine classroom placement for each child, including making changes to classroom assignments or progression if it is in the best interest of the child, classroom, or school. If there is a compelling reason suggesting your child might benefit from a change in the classroom progression, please talk with the Enrollment Manager. 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 child while meeting the needs of the school. Please submit a written request for a classroom change to the Enrollment Manager, specifying the reason for the request. A committee composed of the Enrollment Manager, other administrative staff and/or teachers 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, families 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, may be reconfigured for the summer program. It is possible that your child's class will have different students and/or different teachers during the summer.

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 change 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 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.

Failure to submit your forms before your child's first day will result in your child not being allowed to be in care. All information about your child must be current. Please share any changes such as address, authorized pick-ups, health information, or otherwise as they happen. We must have an emergency contact number for each child **who is not a parent or primary caregiver** on file in the event the parents cannot be reached. In the event of an emergency, we would always contact the parents first.

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/caregivers to pick up your child, please indicate this on the Child Enrollment form. All pickup information should be given to us in writing (email, Procare, or on a specified form). 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 only be shared among faculty and staff on a need-to-know basis.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent, please 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@preschoolofthehearts.com. If your child is sick, please inform us of your child's symptoms so we can track illnesses. If your child is diagnosed with a communicable illness, please inform the teachers.

Drop Off and Pick Up

Our school day begins at 8am, and we encourage families to arrive by 9am at the latest. **Please make personal contact with a staff member each time you drop off or pick up your child.** This ensures that teachers are aware your child has arrived or left. Please note that child supervision is the responsibility of the families before and after school, and at all social gatherings. Children should be in sight and sound of families during transitions into and out of the classroom.

When picking up your child, you will be asked to sign them out of care. This signifies that you are now responsible for your child, and PSA teachers and staff will no longer be supervising your child. If you are picking up your child, but would like to stay on the PSA grounds, we ask that you exit the area where children are being supervised by PSA staff to make it clear the child is under your supervision.

Since we base our staffing on the number of children enrolled in each class, it is imperative that you adhere to your scheduled pick-up time. You may always pick your child up before the usual time, but we must be informed if you expect to come later, as maintaining teacher-child ratios is critical, and space may not be readily available. **We will keep a record of late pick-ups, and families arriving late are subject to a late fee of \$25.00 after the first 5 minutes, and for every 10 minutes you are late.**

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 available in the lot outside of PSA. We ask that you do not leave your car idling. Once you are done with drop off or pick up, we ask that you please exit the parking lot as soon as you can, freeing the spot for someone else.

Unless you have a sticker on your car indicating the need for accessible parking, do not park in the accessible spaces. Failure to follow this law can result in a parking ticket of \$100.00. Parking is permitted in the PSA parking lot or surrounding neighborhood only. **We do not have permission to park in neighboring lots in the Research Park (VA Clinic) nor the cul de sac; please refrain from doing so.**

Kindergarten Attendance

Children enrolled in the kindergarten program at PSA will be subject to the following policies. While children are not required to attend 5 year-old kindergarten in Wisconsin, once they are enrolled, Act 41 makes attendance mandatory.

- **We ask that you arrive at kindergarten no later than 8:15 each morning.** Attendance will be taken each day.
- If your child must miss a day, we will ask for you to submit a note to the teachers in writing. If your child is ill, you may be asked to submit a doctor's note.
- An excused absence is defined as an illness, medical appointment, or family emergency.
- If your child misses multiple days with *excused absences*, your teachers will provide your child with a packet of learning materials so they do not fall behind in the classroom.
- An unexcused absence is defined as travel, oversleeping, or anything that can be done when school is not in session, like haircuts or visits to a grandparent's house.
- The state of Wisconsin defines habitual truancy as **five unexcused absences per semester.** In the event that your child has multiple unexcused absences, we will be happy to meet with you to help troubleshoot the obstacles keeping your child out of school. Please note: We are required to report habitual truancy to the Department of Public Instruction each semester.

Visitor Policy

Families are welcome in the building, but need to be let in by a staff member for safety and security reasons. Only PSA employees should know and use the door codes. PSA must know who is in the building at all times. If you would like an appointment with a teacher or administrator, please contact them directly by email or phone.

Family Involvement

PSA encourages 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. As curriculum develops, families should discuss topics of interest at home. Families are encouraged to read and participate in their classroom's documentation. If questions or concerns arise, please consult with your child's teachers first. Teachers can often be reached by email, or time can be set aside to meet outside the classroom.

Families can also be involved by becoming Room Parents, running for Board of Directors positions, or volunteering for a variety of activities throughout the year. These activities 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.

PSA may organize special events for families, such as music concerts, parenting education events, or other social events.

Custody Issues

Families 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, family/teacher conferences, minutes, and notifications of meetings. PSA staff will remain neutral in custody cases and will rely on parent agreements or court documents to honor parental requests. If a child has a court-ordered custody arrangement, PSA will require a copy from an attorney. PSA is not responsible for enforcing specific pick-up days but will do its best to abide by a provided parenting plan.

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.

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

Clothing

Children should wear clothes that are comfortable and easy for the child to manipulate independently during toileting. Young children spend a great deal of time on the floor, and should not have to worry about getting their clothes dirty. Though smocks are available for projects, they are not always required for participation in an activity. 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 clothing items. 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 western-style boots and clogs are not recommended. Some classrooms ask that families provide indoor shoes or slippers to keep at school.

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.

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 in inclement weather. In order for children to enjoy outside play, they must have proper clothing. During the summer months, we ask that you bring a bathing suit to be kept at school. Classrooms may ask for rain items such as boots and raincoats for rainy days. See Outside Time for more.

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 families know when additional diaper supplies are needed. While we support sustainability, 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. We ask that potty-training children wear either underwear or diapers at school throughout the learning period. If a day is particularly difficult, it may be less stressful for the child to return to diapers temporarily. 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. Snack menus are posted weekly in the classroom 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 change to the menu is made or a special snack is served (other than what was prepared by PSA staff), families will be notified.

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. Families may also provide breastmilk or formula for children, as needed.

Lunch is a whole group activity with teachers and children sitting together to encourage conversation and healthy eating habits. PSA does not provide lunch; families are required to send a lunch from home. 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.)

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 families 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. Please make sure all items are cut as appropriate for your child and are ready to eat (e.g. 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. We ask that families use lunch containers their child can open independently (such as bento boxes) when possible. Please do not send foods that are choking hazards, such as grapes or hot dogs, in young children's lunches unless they are appropriately prepared. Lunchboxes should be labeled.

Please note that PSA classrooms are peanut and tree-nut free environments. See Allergies section for more.

Rest Time and Naps

Children who stay past 12:30pm 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 or cot for the nap period. This mat will be cleaned and disinfected weekly. You may 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 an extra large ziplock bag, or a laundry bag with a tight drawstring. Please mark your child's name clearly on the bag and on all nap items. At the end of the week, you will be 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 suggest that each child have weather appropriate clothing, so their outdoor experience is optimal. Good rain gear, snow pants, coats, hats, gloves as well as rain and snow boots will make outdoor time enjoyable.

All children are required to have a period of outdoor play each morning. The amount of time spent outside each day is determined by the teachers, and may vary. 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 inclement weather such as thunderstorms, when the temperature is below 0°F (including windchill) or above 90°F, or poor air quality. Children under the age of two will remain inside when the temperature or wind chill is below 20°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. In cases where a child has a specific medical condition that does not allow for them to be outside, the families 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.

PSA provides helmets, which are mandatory for all children when riding any type of wheel. Families may provide their own helmets if desired. Helmets provided by families must be labeled and stored in your child's cubby.

Toys at School

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

We do not permit guns or any other weapon play at school; we ask that families 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-limits if they are used as weapons.

Birthdays and Special Occasions

Birthdays are significant events in the lives of many preschool children. We can help you recognize your child's birthday. We understand that not all families' cultures celebrate birthdays and respect your family's wishes around special events.

Here are the guidelines for birthday celebrations at school:

- Children may bring a special treat to share with their classmates. We encourage healthy treats. 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.

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. Because our Reggio-inspired curriculum is emergent and negotiated in ways that reflect children's needs and interests, the amount of time we spend on holidays will vary from classroom to classroom and from year to year. We will observe children and seek input from families to help us decide how much time and attention we will give to any given holiday. Families are encouraged to communicate with teachers about holidays they celebrate and share with the classroom.

Field Trips

Children should wear their PSA t-shirts or other identifying clothing on field trips. PSA shirts are provided by the school and are available in the front office. Transportation for field trips must be on a city bus or other chartered bus with a professional driver. Neither families nor teachers may drive children who are not related to them on field trips. We often contract with a company that provides yellow school buses for transportation. Rules on the bus are very strict for safety reasons. Children must use inside voices and remain seated at all times.

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 family volunteers. A minimum of the regular classroom ratios will be absolutely required.

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

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 at PSA: rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, hedgehogs, birds, fish, frogs, various insects, and baby chicks and ducks. Please let us know if your child has an allergy to any of these animals. Please note **no other animals are allowed at PSA** without special permission.

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.

Social Media Policy

Families 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, TikTok, or Instagram. Families 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/caregiver. 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 parent/caregiver has signed a photo release form.

Allergies and Individual Health Needs

Please notify us via the Health History form of any and all allergies your child may have and what specific precautions must be taken. This includes animals, foods, or any other allergy. 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 fill out the Food Allergy Action Plan contained in your enrollment forms.

PSA does not allow nuts in our classrooms. This includes peanuts and tree nuts. 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 families to meet this goal. We prohibit food items that contain peanuts, peanut products, tree nuts, or tree nut products (included in the ingredient list) rather than food items that may have cross-contamination of nuts (manufactured in a facility that also processes peanuts, peanut products, tree nuts or tree nut products). **This means that we do not allow peanut butter, nut milks (such as almond milk), and products like Nutella in children's lunches.**

Snacks made at PSA, in our classrooms, and in the school kitchen will 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 into the classroom (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 (e.g. cookies for a celebration) must not contain any peanuts, tree nuts or their byproducts.

If your child eats peanuts, tree nuts, or their byproducts 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.

Staff are permitted to consume peanut and tree nut products in the staff lounge only, and must wash hands before returning to the classroom.

We ask you not to bring open food on the grounds of PSA. **Please ensure all food is finished before dropping off your child.** You will be asked to discard any food your child is eating or holding prior to entering the building.

Illnesses

We ask that your child stay home if they exhibit any symptoms such as fever, cough, stomach upset, diarrhea, headache, extreme tiredness, or other illness. 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 PSA 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 being sent home sick:

- **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.** Parents will be notified after the first loose stool, and asked to pick up after the second in the same day.
- **Vomiting**
- **Certain rashes/discharge of skin lesions** such as 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.

PSA reserves the right to request a doctor's written release if such a statement is deemed necessary.

NOTE: If a child is sent home sick, they 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. 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.

Teachers may require that children over two mask in the classroom following certain illnesses or during a time where illnesses are rampant in a classroom.

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 or classroom teachers. The school can not give any medication, prescription or otherwise, without the medication being in the original (prescription) container. Families must complete an authorization form for medication kept in the front office, which must be signed. **No child may medicate themselves. 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/caregiver. For topical ointments, such as lotion or lip balm, families will be asked to sign an authorization form or give written permission.

Treatment of Injuries

Teachers will give the families 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 families 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. Families 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 families have the opportunity to make this judgment. Other events that would necessitate calling families 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 families. If an injury occurs at school and 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 families once the emergency services have been contacted. We will make every effort to contact families 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. All of our staff are trained in child and adult CPR.

Firearms

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

Fire and Tornado Drills

Fire and tornado drills are scheduled regularly throughout the year. 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 drills occur. Teachers and children practice leaving their classrooms as quickly as possible, and teachers track children to ensure that all children are accounted for.

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. Other administrative personnel will be available in the event of both the Executive and Assistant Directors' absence.

Emergency Closings and Lockdowns

PSA will be closed due to inclement weather (e.g. snow days) when the Madison Public Schools are closed. PSA may also make an independent decision to close or remain open. Other, non-weather related situations may also require an emergency closing. These may include but are not limited to malfunctioning HVAC systems, power outages, or other scenarios that would result in an unsafe environment. Announcements will be made through the Procare text alert system and by email as soon as possible once the decision is finalized.

If PSA staff become aware of a dangerous situation in our area, such as an active shooter, toxic spill or other event, we may respond by locking down the school, bringing children inside, or sheltering in classrooms. PSA Administrative Staff will prioritize children safety and communication with law enforcement staff, but communicate any such situations to parents as soon as possible.

Public Health, Dane County, the State of Wisconsin, or the federal government may also force an emergency closure due to communicable diseases or other community emergencies.

Grievance Procedure

Interpersonal conflict can arise in complex social environments. Whenever possible, PSA encourages direct, face-to-face communication to deal with conflicts as they arise, with both parties communicating in an effort to understand one another and come to a shared agreement moving forward. Bi-annual staff and parent "pulse check" surveys are issued in the fall and spring each year to provide *indirect* means for expressing minor concerns and recommendations from both the staff and parent/family/community.

Dissatisfaction or disagreement with the PSA staff, administrative team or a teacher about the day-to-day operations of the school is not enough for a grievance process to be initiated. All daily operations of the organization are managed by the Executive Director, and NOT the

board of directors. As such, the Executive Director has the final word regarding determinations on all matters related to the daily operations of Preschool of the Arts.

A non-exhaustive list of possible examples of grievances:

- Harassment and/or discrimination, including bullying and intimidation
- Inadequate support
- Breach of confidentiality
- Inadequate health and safety measures
- Financial misconduct
- Administration or faculty violations of the Family Handbook

The cornerstone of the Reggio Emilia 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, utilizing the organization's conflict resolution process.

Step 1: The parent or legal guardian should discuss the concern with their child's primary teacher(s). In order to focus on the issue, the parent/guardian is encouraged to request a special meeting time either in person or by phone or video conference 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(s) 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 a timely manner (if at all possible) after the parent/guardian has contacted the Executive Director. The majority of 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 (can be requested from the front office) that includes the following:

- a) The nature of the complaint. Names of individuals involved, applicable dates of incidents, and a detailed description of the alleged misconduct.
- b) What steps you have taken to address the problem directly with the person and/or administrative staff at PSA.
- c) Describe how the action violates the policies and procedures outlined in the PSA Family or Employee Handbook (e.g. the section on factors leading to disenrollment).
- d) Describe the relief sought.

Step 4: Submit this form to the external HR consultant within 10 school days after meeting with the Executive Director.

Step 5: Upon receipt of the grievance form, the external HR consultant will review the issue. Every effort will be made to respond to the grievance in a timely manner. Those filing the grievance will need to tailor their own schedules to work with the external HR consultant who will facilitate the investigations into all grievances submitted. The grievance investigation will proceed as expeditiously as possible with the intent of processing the grievance in a timely manner, ideally no longer than a few weeks.

Step 6: The external HR consultant will render a decision on whether additional action and/or intervention is required. The external HR consultant will partner with the Executive Director on actions items or with the board of directors if the complaint involves the Executive Director.

Step 7: The external HR consultant will be responsible for the closure of the grievance with all listed parties, only sharing information that is relevant to the case and each individual party (confidential employment information will not be shared).

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. 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;
- 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.